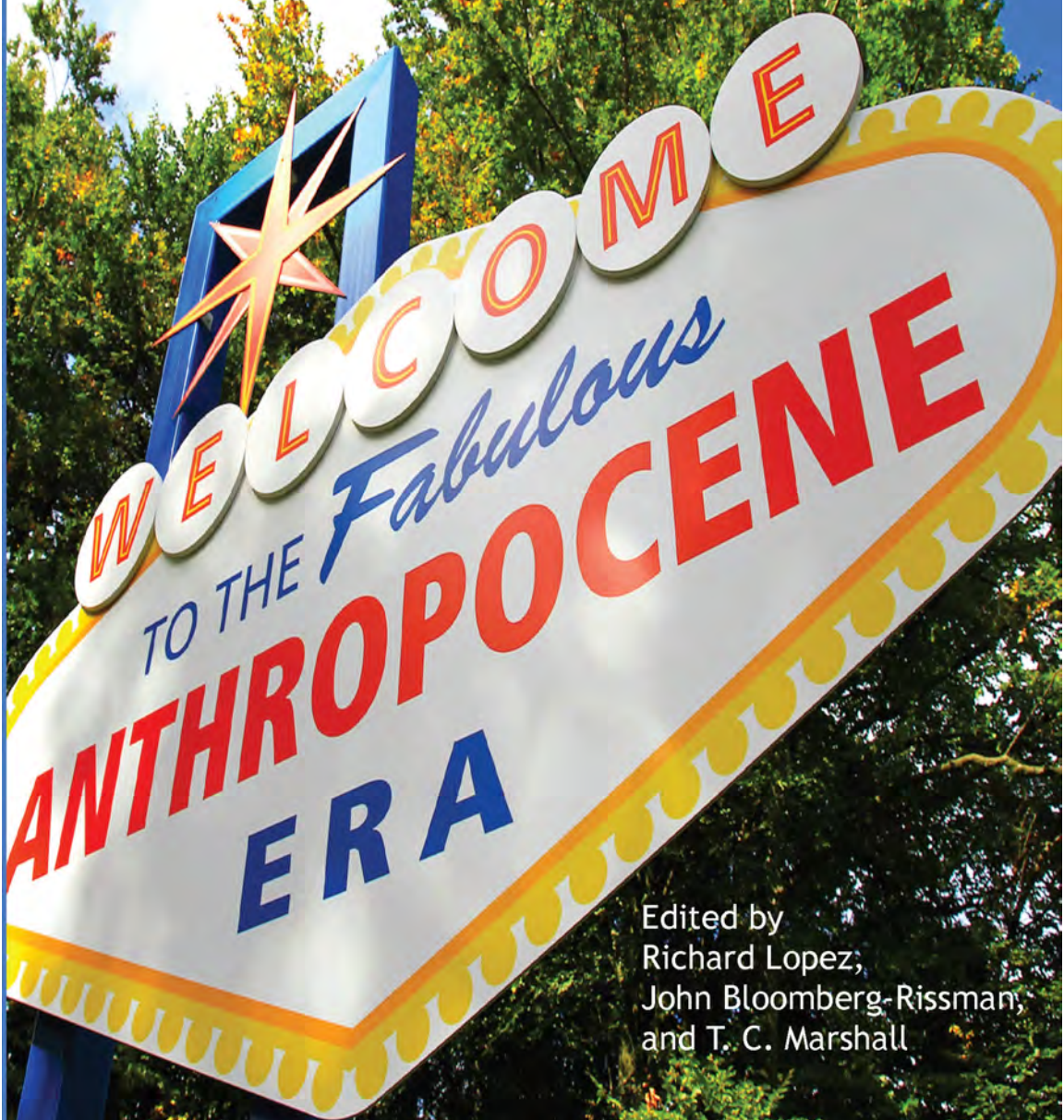


The End of the World Project



Edited by
Richard Lopez,
John Bloomberg-Rissman,
and T. C. Marshall

**THE
END OF
THE WORLD PROJECT**

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**RICHARD LOPEZ, JOHN BLOOMBERG-RISSMAN
AND T.C. MARSHALL**

“Good friends we have had, oh good friends we’ve lost, along the way.”
For Dale Pendell, Marthe Reed, and Sudan the white rhino

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Editors' Triologue

Tom: Richard, I joined this project late in its development and got the impression that the idea began with you; what did you have in mind? And how did that shift over time as John and then I joined in, and as we began to get responses from the writers we approached? How did John shift it? How did I shift it? How did our invitees change it? What has it become, for you?

richard: hi tom. i began with the idea of asking poets i know and love their thoughts and feelings about living, working, reading and writing in our time of accelerated climate change. we are in extreme crisis. panic and despair overwhelmed me. i never questioned poetry in my life, my life in poetry, but knowing how we've fucked up our environment, how rapidly glaciers and arctic ice are melting, how the production of food and the procurement of potable water will become difficult feels me with dread. i was having a hard time writing. i wanted to ask my brothers and sisters in the art, how do we write in what some scientists and intellectuals are calling the anthropocene when civilization might not survive it. i want to know how other poets and artists are coping with that knowledge. how do they live and read and write knowing that civilization will be stressed by accelerated climate change. our present politics are corrosive. wait a few decades when we have millions of climate refugees and see how bad our politics might get. so then anyway, john and i have been discussing these things for years. so i asked john to join me in a project that we call The End of the World Project. as you can see, i am deeply worried that we might be causing the end of the world. so john and i wrote an invitation to our project where we asked potential contributors the following questions

- How does what we've done, what we continue to do, to our only planet affect what you make?
- When you think about the future, and potential readers, or the lack of same, how does that affect what you make?
- Under these circumstances, do you ever wonder why you continue to create?
- How does all this makes you feel?
- What keeps you going?

we invited our contributors to answer in any fashion they wished and in any form, whether it be poetry, essay, art, photography, visual poetry etc etc. and they can engage in these questions however they want, including taking to task the premise of our project. the responses were incredible, both in number and by quality. it has become more than a project about my fears of a disrupted climate and a severely stressed humanity, but a thing of great beauty. john, how did you envision our project and what has it meant for you.

John: Since for the past decade much of my work has been concerned with what humans are doing to each other, other species, and the rest of the earth, and has also involved collaging together various texts about climate, etc, accepting your invitation felt like a natural step, Richard, when you invited me to co-edit this feature it felt very much in synch with my usual work. And since you and I have been talking apocalypse for so long, it seemed natural that it would be you who thought of this project and you who invited me (for which invitation, a public 10,000 bows). So I had no hesitation saying yes, I'm in. My vision of the project was much like yours, Richard: let's ask others what they think, how they feel, etc. I knew lots of poets and artists were grappling with how to work in and with a world like this, not just in terms of climate change, but in terms of Occupy and many aftermaths, the rise and fall of the Arab Spring, the return to power of the extreme right, etc. All of which I think of as connected. But then the surprises began. The first was when I wrote Marthe Reed to invite her, and, besides saying yes, she said, oh, and maybe you should invite X, and Y, and Z ... and when I responded with, what a great idea, Marthe, she wrote them all without being asked, and virtually every one said yes, we were asking about something near to their hearts. And then some of them said, oh, if you are inviting me, what about A, and B, and C? This happened time and again. And again, most responses were yes. And then we invited, you, Tom, who did what Marthe did, but on a grand scale. You must have asked us if you could ask at least fifty people, and when we said go for it, many of them also said yes. And then I thought that I would like to hear from some scholars, theorists, photographers, and others, not just poets, so we extended our original "constraint" a bit, and they said yes, too. That's when I knew for sure that we had tapped into something deep, in the sense of something that was affecting virtually everyone we might know or want to. That's when what was originally conceived as a feature in an issue of Eileen Tabios's *Galatea Resurrects* turned into a monster book, which Bill Allegrezza generously and instantaneously offered to publish. This is where we get to

the “and what has it meant for you” part of your question, Richard. What it has meant, more than anything is a sense of community, a sense that the people I care about care about the same stuff I care about. At the same time, as the contributions started to roll in, it became obvious that tho we all cared about the same stuff, we cared about it differently, because a) everyone is different, which is what makes and keeps poetry and the other arts interesting, and b) how the “end of the world” looked and what it meant also depended on where we stood in terms of class, race, gender, geography, etc. I don’t want to get into any detail about that yet, but my mind was blown, and my notion of what rising CO2 levels etc means expanded. And expanded. So editing this schooled me, it continues to school me, I can’t imagine when that schooling will end. How about you, Tom? When Richard and I invited you to join us, what did you think we were doing, and how did you want to bend that?

Tom: I came into the project as a contributor, wishing to critique the endgame myths latent in the real lamentations over our destructive ways of life. I was pleased to offer a start on that and then reluctantly pleased to be invited to join as an editor and recruiter. I invited a wide array of friends and acquaintances, and friends and acquaintances of friends in order to broaden our circles of resonance. Many sent pieces that surprised me: things like Fanny Howe finding the end of the world in discovering that Thomas Merton’s most famous book had gone out of print, Tongo Eisen-Martin’s voice for lost voices, and my old prof Donald Wesling’s contribution of a letter to his former student Kim Stanley Robinson. From that last one came an e-mail reunion with my old college chum “Stan,” and other re-acquaintances also blossomed into correspondences. I felt a world of networked friendships lighting up again after dormancy during my rigorous community college teaching career. I retired into this project as my new work, pushing lament beyond itself into critical thinking. And the world that you, John and Richard, built around our topic proved to be wider than I thought you had imagined at first. It expanded mine and subsumed it into a complex writhing mass of responses to “the end of the world as we know it.” This fit that original question of Richard’s about why and how we do go on writing and making our arts.

John: Richard, Tom, now that we’ve gathered the contributions, what, if anything, has changed in how you see “the end of the world”? Or, put otherwise, and perhaps more precisely, what have you learned from our contributors, and from the collection as a whole?

richard: what has opened my eyes is the very hard fact that there are a great many artists [i am using that word broadly to include every creative maker both in and out of our book] feel the same sense of terror and isolation that i am feeling. a great existential dread has become a consuming aesthetic for many of us as we face the middle and distant future. no one knows how that future gets written. but if you follow the trend lines of rising world temperature the future looks bleak indeed. as i wrote in a recent poem, 'i am an optimist by nature & a pessimist by training.' how do i reconcile both conditions within me? by and large i am a rather cheerful person. a bit superficial too. but the problems that we face as a species are dark and deep. i don't believe in immortality, literary and otherwise. i don't write because i believe my words will survive in order to illuminate and astonish succeeding generations of people. i write and i read because i want to live as fully as i can while i am on this planet. for this is a breathtakingly beautiful place, filled with horror, pity, and also love. i read and i write in order to participate in the ongoing creation of the world. if i may use a capitalist frame of reference, art is the currency we use to buy fresh purchases on the world. of course, art is greater than even my limited frames of reference. before i started on our project i didn't know that so many artists had the same fears that i have. i have learned that our contributors that there are unlimited ways in which to share, and work with, that fear of a dying civilization. some poets, like the visual poems of márton koppány, give me great good hope to continue. other poets, like peter gizzi, are stiff emblems of the tough beauty of making art. i didn't thoroughly answer your questions, john and tom. i would love to get your perspectives too. what have each of you learned from our contributors?

Tom: As I saw the project move forward from the point when I joined in, it was first the contributions of Rae Armantrout (from this very neighborhood of Allied Gardens) that moved me further into seeing the critical thinking potential in Richard's challenging questions. More and more writers have been moving, as she does, a little beyond the aesthetic--even in "poetry." As you, John, expanded the field with invitations and challenges to other kinds of writers and visual artists, this became more fully apparent. It feels as though feeling takes us to the edge of creativity and some critical perspective helps push that beyond despair into thought. Every piece that came in seemed to widen this circle.

John: Attending to the contributions has been full of surprises. There have been many, but I will only mention a few of them. The first, and perhaps

the greatest: so much grief! Such sadness! So much that we love is has been, is going to be, lost. Coastlines, ecosystems, ways of life, so many species of planetary companions, the tears are many and the list is long. I didn't expect so much sorrow from the contributors ... It's been many months and I continue to note how horrified everyone is. I don't know why that surprised me, looking back it should have been obvious. Along with the grief comes a kind of anger. Sometimes it's directed at, say, those in position to make a difference, sometimes it's just diffuse, directed at all humans. I myself wrote a cranky-ass piece. OK. That's one, and a big one. Another surprise, which, in retrospect, is also unsurprising, is that there were two assumptions we made in our call, which we shouldn't have, at least not in the way we made them, we were too simple-minded, and spoke too much from a position of universalizing privilege. First, we used the word "we" ... as if there is a "we" that is somehow reasonably monolithic. There *is* a "we": all that lives. But it is in no way something to take for granted as being without significant contradictions, disjunctions, and aporias. This project taught me that I must learn how to think "we" with much more care. I had, am having to, will always have to, learn how to expand my concept of the human. In some ways, in many ways, the second assumption is the same as the first: that there is "the" world. The End of "the" World? I now think ... not. There are at least as many worlds as there are "we"-s (I don't know how to write the plural of we, which is, perhaps, indicative of the problem). Life on Earth is and will continue to be experienced very differently by, say, the formerly (or still) colonized and their colonizers, people of color and those with white privilege, by rich and by poor, by the differently gendered (and that includes cis male and female, too, by the way) among so many others. And yes, these are often overlapping categories. And each creates its own *umwelt* on so many levels. Ergo, there is no "the" world, there are only more-or-less overlapping worlds. Perhaps I should make clear that I am distinguishing world from Planet Earth, world is a construction, world, as Heidegger would have it, is a verb. In other words, there are many different "where we are" and "what it means," perhaps as many as there are worlds. The end of the world? Many people have already lost their world. Many people lost their worlds centuries ago. Many other people (say, for example, the wealthy who build their houses along the beach in south Florida) are about to lose theirs. Don't get me started on plants and animals, all of whom also "world." Does this mean there is no universal crisis? No, not at all. Rising CO2 levels, rising sea levels, rising temperatures, changing weather patterns, will affect us all, except perhaps for anoxic undersea extremophiles. It just

means that the crisis manifests and will continue to manifest multiply. Another thought occurs to me: OK, there's a sense of grief and anger etc throughout the book, AND there's no monolithic we or world ... hmmm. Not being a mathematician, I picture a kind of multi-dimensional Venn-style diagram. The emotions, even if they are generated by a variety of causes, situations, etc, must be where the various sets overlap. Hmmm. I have a question following on from the idea of overlaps, and it concerns the world in which this book appears: it seems to me that the world has, during the 21st century, been stripped of its liberal illusions and exposed as made up of once-again-empowered racist misogynist fascist etc etc nations, tribes etc. If what I've just said seems reasonably correct, how much can this be related to anthropogenic global warming and what has caused it and what it has and is causing, none of which is a respecter of boundaries?

richard: on the subject of 'we' meaning multi-identities that overlap on this planet that we are killing, nay, not killing for as the great philosopher george carlin said, the world is not going anywhere, we are. i think the sadness we find in our book is predicated upon a world that is changing form at such great velocity. we know we have created the sixth great mass extinction. we know that we have pumped so much CO₂, and methane, into our atmosphere and seas that we are literally cooking the earth with extra heat, we know that technologies have so far outstripped the fancies of even the most ardent science fiction enthusiast, so that the overlapping 'we's' of the veritable human being is frightened. the market crash of 2008 proved that our economies are more fragile than we like to think. migrants, economic and climate driven, are leaving their respective countries looking for a better life in greener pastures. soon these migrants — whom we call refugees — will number in the millions and then in the tens of millions. think about how governments will respond to millions of people trying to get thru their borders. many of us are frightened by these massive structural changes. some will look for the strong man to protect what is left of the nation state. i fear that is one of the reasons why trump was elected. here was a man who said he can close the borders, protect u.s. workers, and make america fearsome. people will do anything out of fear including giving in to authoritarian regimes. i don't know if trump is the natural conclusion of 40 years of neo liberal capitalism. one would hope he is the climax to a 40 year old story of capitalism. we can hope that the post trump world will shake off its collective delusions, hatreds and nationalism, and become sane. i fear not. he is only the beginning of a very long, bloody, change in society. we were taught that democracy and capitalism go hand in hand. we were

inculcated when we were children that free markets are predicated upon a free people. the markets needed the people to have shared rights like the freedom of speech, and assembly, and movement, and the right to petition the government. that's not true at all. the rise of a powerful china proves that the people do not need to be free for capitalism to flourish. the only freedom that is granted by capitalism is the freedom to buy stuff. state capitalism gives the lie to what we were taught, john. and we haven't even talked about AI and automation. wait till AI goes into full flower. we are still at the biplane stage of tech. when tech gets to the jet age everything, i mean everything, in civilization will change. and i, again, fear that the changes will not be for the better. every age likes to think that it is unique in history. we are no different. and yet, the disrupted climate, and the acceleration of AI, automation and tech will create a state that history has not seen in the past. i keep hearing from friends and family that old chinese curse, 'may you live in interesting times.' the times are indeed way fucking interesting.

Tom: It was always “The” end of “The” World that bugged me into writing about this and looking for new critical angles from others. Of course, “An End to a World Some Have Known” just doesn't have the same ring to it as TEOTWAWKI even though it tells some truth. Many have responded by going beyond that end into opening beginnings. However, “Beginning to See the Light” also has some false ring of teleology/eschatology to it. Whether it's Ella or Lou Reed singing to us, the idea of a light at the end of our tunnel vision is equally a dead end. The marks each artist puts into the work from what shaped their sense of an end will include all the ironies of their being, one way or another — consciously or unconsciously exposing all complicities. It is a “we” who are in a mess, Stanley. It is also “we”-s that people put together to try to overcome it by ignorance or by correction of the problems. This is where A.I.'s observation platform, funky fascisms of the nation-state-tribe, and the anthropogenic climate change that you guys mention seem to me to come into play. The particular A.I. that Richard is after in his remarks seems to me to be that of “biometrics,” which is a mechanical way of verifying a “we” — an “us” and a “them.” The Trumpian fascisms that John highlights are too, without the mechanical verification and with an emo-ethical one instead. The climate change concept, as well, forms “we”-s that are variations on a couple of basic positionings: those who point out ways to make corrections and those who choose to ignore or flaunt (the monster pick-up fluttering smokestack black exhaust devices) the

anthropogenic character of this challenge. To seek a “we” with “contradictions and disjunctions” is one approach, but “we” have to be careful “we” are not just turning everything into our own version of justice and smudging others into one mass all over again. Grief, horror, and anger raise finger-pointing and accusations — “we, we” all over again. Getting “stripped of liberal illusions” takes more than that. It takes the combination of critical angles that would show the contradictions in any “we” and its world. Times combine many times. Any now is a construct of many past threads. The nation-state-tribe is a surviving bit of the 19th century that carries earlier aristo-notions in it. That’s where the frumpy Trump comes from. But another construct of those historical forces is “liberalism” itself, heir to how history subsumed the democratic impulses of Romantic notions back into a hierarchy. To strip “our”-selves of that takes guts and showing that “we,” like Trumpf and Hillary, are a pile of contradictions conditioned by this history. To correct climate change is not a matter of using science or keeping a recycle bin in the kitchen. It means changing minds: consistently exposing contradiction and disjunction in our “we”-s and our “we”-ings until one can no longer think in those ways. There are those who would feel or know (in the ethical sense), instead of thinking, on all sides of the climate change questions. They give fascism its crack. How others of us re-frame that sensibility is what will make new sense of the questions. “The” End may be used in this, but to believe in it as The End that is coming or even hovering nearby is to slump into apocalypticism, which belongs to The System. The humor and information in Jason Boyett’s *Pocket Guide to the Apocalypse* expose this chiliastic silliness. He shows how spilt milk shows up all through history in the doomsdays of the day, and tears don’t water it down much. F-ups aren’t stopped by the righteous, but what comes because of our failures is not The End. George Carlin’s hilariously serious routine on “Saving the Planet” makes that clear. As REM reminds us, “we can stand up to any ending —” “And Lenny Bruce is not afraid.” Jason Deering’s *The End-of-the-World Delusion* challenges us to not do damage to society with our predictions or predilections. Is there some way that we can fearlessly face this end of this world by following the wisdom of Joe Hill: “Don’t mourn; organize”?

John: I’ll take a stab at answering that. Not definitively, I wouldn’t know how to answer definitively, but I’ll just answer as me. So. Let me start one step back of your question. I don’t think we can organize a way *out* of global warming. Or the sixth great extinction. It’s too late now. So I think we have

to face this Venn-diagrammed world(s)-ending. It's like that famous refrain in *Going on a Bear Hunt*:

We can't go over it.
We can't go under it.
Oh no!
We've got to go through it!

There's that word again ... "we" ... what I know is that, while all humans will be facing a difficult future, and that humanity failed to organize as a whole, there are "we"-s that have already organized. Maybe because they are the front line. And those "we"-s have been going about their work, doing what they can (take the Standing Rock Dakota Access Pipeline resisters as an example). And that some of those "we"-s have been meeting together at events like the World Social Forum, where they can discuss tactics and strategies and make common cause where possible ... Maybe there's something in organizing on a micro level, and then finding other micro groups with some kind of overlap and working cooperatively in that overlapping zone on micro problems as they arise, for example, some people may have no water. Groups that can dig wells or build pipelines or dew collectors can work together with them. Our friend Shah Selby is part of a group that travels to places that need wells and digs them. We help out an organization called MOAS (Migrant Offshore Aid Station) that used to pull refugees out of the Mediterranean til the European fascisti made bringing them safely to shore too difficult, so now they work in refugee camps in Bangladesh helping displaced Rohingya. Or maybe people just get together with other people to talk and share food. Or make music. Or ... I dunno ... If what we think is going to happen happens there will be lots of reasons to micro-organize. But organizing is only half what you asked about. I should also be focusing on your word "fearlessly." OK, then, I believe that only one kind of human can form groups if they are to overlap successfully, if they are to not let the areas of no overlap get in the way, if they are to rejoice in our differences as well as similarities (I paraphrase Audre Lorde, who said, "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.>"). And by one kind of human I don't mean anything like white men, or indigenous women, or ... Wherever and whoever we are, we, and here I fearlessly use the word "we" ... we are all going to have to take the bodhisattva vow and work hard at meaning it. We have to vow to take care of each other forever and ever. Because — not that we're not, every one of us, already in the shit

— we’re heading for the shit-shit. And, for those already in the shit-shit, sorry, but my guess is you’re headed for the even shittier shit-shit-shit. I can’t think of any other way. Maybe they don’t call it the bodhisattva vow in Zapatista country, or in Fiji, Tuvalu, Kiribati, Vanuatu, or the Marshall Islands, which, I believe are going to be the first to go under, or in Inuit country, or in Uzbekistan, or in south Florida, but they call it something. We must learn to take care of all the people, and of all the other animals, and all the plants, and ... well, everything, even if it’s a losing battle (according to the best science, what we are doing to the planet is going to last thousands of years) ... Maybe I’m just an old acid freak, but, as the song says, without love in the dream it’ll never come true. And don’t bother saying to me, what are the odds, I’m old enough to know the odds. And yet ... maybe old Joel Emmanuel Hägglund aka Joseph Hillström aka Joe Hill was at least partly right. Maybe I wouldn’t have even thought to have to respond if he had said, don’t mourn, organize and love, love and organize. And dance. Don’t forget to dance. I think here, of course, of one of Hill’s slightly older contemporaries, Emma Goldman, who said, and I wildly paraphrase, if we can’t dance while we’re creating our groups and aligning then unaligning then realigning them then dissolving them then reforming new ones etc ad infinitum, no matter how many “we”-s there are ... as Ian Hamilton Finlay put it, “the dancers inherit the party.” I guess all I’m doing is repeating an old story, the one about Auden’s “September 1, 1939” and how he famously cancelled that famous line, “We must love one another or die,” because it rang maudlin and untrue to him: we would and will die anyway. Be that as it may, I have a sneaking suspicion that he spent much of the rest of his life — with good reason — trying to find a way to write that line in a way that worked. In a way, maybe, this whole project, on my part, has been trying to find a way to do likewise.

THE END OF THE WORLD PROJECT

Overture: Anselm Hollo

Elegy

the laundry-basket lid is still there
though badly chewed up by the cat
but time has devoured the cat
entirely

Etel Adnan

Dear Brent, here are few thoughts you could forward to your friend John Bloomberg Rissman, they will be as they come:

“The end of the world, quite a program! Which world, and whose world, and do they meet, and do they care?!

The world of the humans will end, for sure, just because, structurally, species disappear ... and ours will try to escape, will tame the Moon and Mars, or their satellites, if they have any, and further too, and our species will disappear there, too, because at that level life disappears, disappears as we know it.

Earth, as we know it, will disappear, if not before, it will disappear when the sun disappears, and the sun is already middle-aged, it's burning itself from explosion to explosion, and will be reduced to a handful of ashes. It will disappear.

Then what's left after this cataclysm: I think the universe will remain. I sense it, I know it for no reason whatsoever. For Being is being, to be is to be, which means it had to be and nothing could erase the fact that something which has been will for ever have been.

As for us, a fraction of a fraction in the here and now, we can say that we are dying, singularly, irrevocably: to be born means you're on a journey to your own extinction. But we are accelerating the demise of the whole human race, we are joyfully, from banquet to banquet, and also from war to war, from garbage to garbage, accelerating our disappearance. It's cruel, and stupid. For one more sunset, one more look at a river, one more night of love, is an eternity, is the only victory on the finality of doom.

Some of us believe in a paradise that will be life eternal. They're maybe right. But what are we talking about? How can we give up something that's sure, and dear, our life, happy or wretched, but a life, for something so doubtful or at least so unknown as a promised paradise?

On the large scale, I am pessimistic. On a private scale, probably as pessimistic. Chaos, despair, death, all of it is just behind the door, pushing

that door, ready to bring down the roof. But that is why I want the kids on the street to go on playing, I want my neighbor to be around next summer, preparing his vacation, I want to reach the next second, even if it means to be the last, for in every second there is eternity, the only one I know.”

I don't think I would write a poem, am too tired these days ... but nothing to worry about. So I'm sending just a few simple thoughts, hope not disappointing you. Merci beaucoup, dear Brent, let's cheer up! Etel

Charles Alexander

12 Sections from *Truro / Shift*

from a notebook

can it be

just one

word

today

can it be just

one word

today

can it be just one word today

in the clouds

on the beach

in the rain not rain

forgive me for

wanting

just one word

just one light perhaps

just one day perhaps
the tree outside my window is bare

the tree behind it yellow leaves

the path to the ocean one point seven miles

just one word today

or one point

or one mile

or or or

the land simply sits as a
curved spike between
ocean and bay we live
as a spike on green we
are given the land
may be swallowed if
warming projections
don't correct our lax
behavior within a few
years or perhaps even
now when the curved
spike lands in our laps

gold nib pale blue ink
blue body blue ocean ink
dark body black ink
words draw themselves out
of such surroundings if we
let them tonight the
full moon rises from the
water tonight the press of
air stands us up straight toward
blue ocean ink black ink
words sip and swallow our
shadows in the bright night

dahlias in her garden
undulate in red waves

the garden and the room
the pattern in red and gold
soft sinking chairs with blue pillow

crossed pattern of pale green
on grey wall these lived
spaces absorb us they
contain a history of bodies
in motion and conversation

the way we contain the past
and repeat it vary it mistake it
in Tavistock Square she knows and
begins a conversation with us through
the sittings the walks in a park

if we listen we might
know one another mix
the molecules lift up look up

a friend says we have all that we need
to change we have a few
good guides many words
many waves patterns on the wall

for all its beauty and bounty
imperfect

the turn of the line in a wave of inconstant
rhythm

whoso lists and they or some body flees
the plane

the misfits the mistress' eyes the sun
unseen

the tricked out and wicked out the painted
fine wine

come live in some configured garden yet
unhedged

from such an age the words split and
multiply

in the margin of a book, the question
what is knowledge?

the underlined reminder of the inadequacy
of human relationships

shuffle past. say nothing. the mind numbs
with opium or without.

what she gave the world unrewarded and
weighed with stones in the water

she drew a line. in the center.
we crossed it. crossed it out.

all come to the simplest things last
and with a push beyond

savory pre-winter light and the
undertow of a wave one
crashes to sand and rock
open to the hurt of body
the blood of the everyday

gathering raspberries in
first beauty the several
splashes of red on apron
the juice of a year in a moment

hanging on a limb of a tree
as if the fall to earth may not
be possible it is possible
it is done we are unmarked
young as if new as if the wind
only speeds by as if the wave
only crests

Q is a letter and Kyoo is a friend
who speaks of philosophy turning
to poetry and away
this tuning this turning

what relates thinking to writing
the living present
the documentation of the living present

we tame or do not tame the wild energy
we gaze at the wild energy
we are witness and within
the wild energy

the deer came in the office window
as a voice on the phone just told me
and I am two or three thousand miles
away on a spit between ocean and bay
and the deer shook its head shook its
blood on files on printers on papers
on the floor on the world of work
and words and the deer has its world
its season of rutting its mad crashing
through the office window around
and out again into the day bloody
from the encounter and this is all
I know of the incident all I know of
the matter of the blood and the deer
and the glass shattered on the floor

it was not Cole's Island
but a street in a town in
Texas there entered
an animal, a deer, and I can't say
it was an encounter, or I had,
an encounter, for I was not there,
though I had just finished writing of
"the wild energy" when a phone
call told me of the deer, who entered,
through a glass, shattering, shaking
its head, and this was the wild
energy that has always been,
there, near, is perhaps supposed
to be there, and I, the absence who
was, again, not even there, I would
like to see his eye, describe his eye,
how is the eye rendered, how is Death
rendered, and is the deer going to
live or die, and is he death to some other,
even to me or someone, the day after
the day of the dead, the moment after
the writing of "the wild energy" the
moment of absence becomes a presence
of regard, we did not regard each other
though it seems that we did, regard,
and recognize, we did meet, the day after
I swam in the waves, in the ocean, and
the wave of the deer entered just a few
hours ago, a surprising, a disturbing,
circumstance this morning, keeping me
out, the deer crashing in, finding a way
out, along the main street in a town in
Texas, we did, or have, or will, exchange
some glance, some notion of our fates

the deer lifted
he lifted after
I had sat
about 25 minutes

he went from orange yellow brown
at bottom
into the blue
above

he lifted

he rose

not sons or glory or crowns or story
but sand and wave and step and save
no thunder roar because the shore
has been calm if grey and song sung
has only been what one can do not
trumpet or alarm or raptured strain
but strong and set to faith in time and
time's turn or hinge or pivot in one's
ear with help from those who also
sang and paced and exited the state
of things unquestioned and unalarmed
and so the horse is strong the bird
is high the seal in the wave barely
seen and only words have we brought
down and brought to bear on this day
these last days these only days we have
to dare to determine what to do to
dream and be dreamed do and have done

Will Alexander

Primal Fragment as Subtext

Within the reflection of the zeitgeist distortion reigns, memory interacts with base agenda as topological vacuum that inverts, and becomes a sieve for delimited transmission, as if the galaxy were a rationally constructed asterisk, to be colonized via quotidian dossier.

Primal Fragment 1

Western consciousness has evolved scripted from self-imposed pastiche. All the while knowing that parts of its anatomy have been willfully obscured, so much so that it now faces itself as an out-sized distortion, ferociously out of contact with itself. The result from its original intent now looms as a hallucinatory realia rising from self-doubt. And because this doubt increases daily it has morphed into a hallucinatory circulation that embrangles every thing it touches. Its trinity of planetary robbery, murder, and stunning prevarication has become its absolute condition, as I take leave from its psyche riding atop a lightning struck camel entering into a new rotational paradise.

Second Primal Fragment

Via terse indefatigable rumour we are given a dominant calligraphy that goads us to transmit our corpses across inordinate diameter in order to ply their delimitation without fumes of resolution. This being the central artery of advance not unlike a toxic sea lane where frigates are disposed to wander while being monitored by a sum of toxic rays. The frigates in this circumstance being analogous to figments all the while circumscribed by common limit. Thus, the sea lane flows to the sea. And the sea to the sea lane scales to view as seeming measureless galaxy that de-exists to human view that beams from the frigate. And the frigate optically transpires so long as its entanglement can be espied. This scenario being the principal gist of surveillance that attempts to align itself (in this case) as nautical tremor. As if life could be x-rayed and plotted according to cognizant tracking, according to dictates primed by what I'll term listless anti-shadow. The body within this tenor being nothing other than the grainy daylight of shadow. A negative euphemism that careens and makes itself known via portions of ignorance. The latter energy corrosively honoured by pragmatists as possessing meaningful experience. Human experience is thus primed to wade in polluted streams of lucre and subscribe to its own aberration, so much so, that it is expected to solicit energy from the lowest possible denominator becoming the patriot of its own negation. Add to this the need to be saved by a seedy over exposed doppelganger in league with priests who stake claims to psychic flow that open on to inner lands that equivalent to stench from psychic sewers.

Thus the Christian narrative carries responsibility for effort that inveigles its inner carrion to such an extent that its surreptitious claim to eternity must take responsibility for collective neurological regression. The leaders of the world now presiding over a partially lit cloaca.

Having voided its living essence human planetary fauna remains an aberrant genetics that in large part has ceased enunciation of itself. A chronic realia that has demonically quelled sattvic frequency in order to foster tamasic respiration as collective functioning mantra.

Phosphenic Threading

... our miraculous names ... in the reserve of a dormant oblivion
—Aime Césaire

Phosphenic threading being the plane where analysis dissolves, where hyperspace into dissolves into alchemic flashes, into meteoritic flares, thus cognizant exploration remains null and endemically null on behalf of itself. As for dissecting alien visitation to the realm of our Sun this remains research that remains research that is none other than exoteric psychic manoeuvre in comparison to what I'll call the nth or reversed dimensions. This latter realia taken as an isolated fragment produces bafflement in the context of matter itself. Say, even the shape of owls fails to exist failing to find themselves reflected in the mirror of causality. Thus, they no longer exist as a propulsion of items, trans-dissected from forms derived from a stationary surface.

Perhaps these owls are refracted as index phantoms, as uncountable forms, perhaps analogous to phantom turquoise lakes on Titan. Can one say that they have been gleaned from from anomalous astronomical projection, or from a slurred unknowable grammar. Perhaps one can say that they are vapourous centigrade via flotational liberty, or codeless definition? Perhaps these owls could exist as repititious hellebores non-sustainable as regards human psychic limit. Perhaps dark proportional physics, perhaps fractious amphibology, perhaps prone to deliberation gone missing. Perhaps, in another register, one could say that they are ambrosian dietary hatchlings without air or food as we know them to be. Perhaps through the thermal apparition of sleep this plane can possibly be approached as if entering a curious mystical winter, with its anonymous light, with its in-cognizant location. As for optical alignment it is part and parcel of co-ordinated deafness embellished by blinding projection projected no further than delimited corrosion. It is like stating an irrational tautology, such as whisky is leather and leather is whisky, the latter being analogous to magnetic fading worms. The latter being the result of partial refraction being primal energy primed by the flux of partial withdrawing.

Let me say that because I have conciousness of unnamed fractions I seem absolved of tensions and the variations that seem to plague the human neural field. Say, a force was conjoined via a nun's darkening, via her stony grammar of self-neglect, this would continue to deploy savage marks upon

upper vibration. Then one's blood would amount to nothing except a dangerous and elliptical cider. The latter taking the character of unending negation. Not amphibian forms suddenly sprung up from soil, or perhaps occulted green snakes making an appearance out of sand, but a feral kind of sigil, making note of itself of itself as an emptied form of dampness. Perhaps one can say, a darkened translucence, perhaps array of view. A strange inconstant colour, self-magnitized as rays peering into the partial incandescence that Linde understands to be the multiverse. This of course is not sight scattered and recondensed so to promulgate ancient scandals so assiduously arrayed in the chronicles of Suetonius. Instead, I am speaking of the disrecognized history emitting itself through rays being colourless seepage. Not as knotted sexual glare propounded as phantom scorpion's blood, nor a worried leper's ransom coiled inside reclusive viper's beds. The latter, not unlike fumes from invisible lucre exchanged across counters of shadow. An exchange scribbled on bartered notes attempting to enliven erotic factual memory.

This is psychic vehicular reason igniting itself as scrawls from emptied space, analogous to a kind of saffron exploding, being emptied transmigration mingled with the uranian spaces that daily glance the soil of Ceres. I say this not to mine meaning from mis-apportioned events, but to work through present astrological assumption with its delimited observation, static, with its 12 signs and their sub-component units, meandering their through cosmic isolation. They seem stunned, as they heard flashes of themselves issuing from unknown psychic moraine.

Unmonitored gall, mortal beckoning, kindled marching ghosts. Uncountable portions suddenly emerging from invaded solar fire. Of course this is not slowly winding one's way through self-deluded solution so as to seemingly dispel eternity. As for moral opium and its tributaries humanity is given unseasonable lizards to consume so as to provide stamina to the cells when called upon to fuse with neural strengthening procedures. Because the mind/body in its present form can never rise from what I consider to be a fixated nautical grammar. This being a grammar consumed by neurological confinement. Thus, the ladder of chemicals and proteins leading to nerveless root events are other than concluded neutron graves. Since I seem to be sequestered via the vertiginous grammar of self-tautology I seem to be individually transfixed by mirror after mirror of effigies howling. Perhaps a hurtling feast of effigies that possess no other example than that of spectral dilemmas storming the eye from every angle

of the compass, as dazed saffrons, as territorial verdet spun from endemic turnings.

They carry as a form of power the mingling of voices plaintively airing their future traces. As if they were beasts feasting on infernal sources being of super-imposed stress marks. This is why I've refused to meter the mind according to self-imposed strength reeking of sterility.

Let us take the occidental mind as it's shaped itself say, for the past 300 years via official poetic praxis. Let us move, say, from the mechanical monotony that was Pope to the learned edicts that was Borges always tending to curtail reckless verbal advantage. The latter having configured Lorca's New York fertility as pointless verbal largesse not being of acceptable poetic address to the rational mind proactive with delimited threading. The latter's fertile glossary has not gone unnoted via higher critical assessment. In one of Paz's Norton's lectures he notes Lorca's crystalline velocity as a kind of aural scotch emitted through spotted biographical lenses. Poems such as Lorca's now seem as none other than aboriginal threadings, none other than first phosphenic threadings, emitted through alchemic Indian corn.

Bubonic and Explosive

*For the alchemic spirit that wafted along through the souls of Joyce
Mansour and Suzanne Césaire inspired as they were by tremors
of treason.*

Wizened dictates from heaven seem to foster carking electrical contamination. They flagrantly alter breakage into the beyond electrically inscripting a zone of confusion where the aleatoric becomes buffeted, thereby fostering primal confusion, where flow is no longer culled from the hybrid personality, nor from the alchemical dissonance of shadowy feeding. One then ceases to engage occulted rays that issue from language as ascension. Thus, the psychic clouds seem dark and myopic no longer alive, seething with impassable menace. Does one reply with instinctive complication, with perfectly scripted terror attempting to negotiate such tension with its newly arisen jaundice?

So should one flinch in the face of such embossed narrative by aligning with its purposeless turbulence? One is taught to self-import its turbulence by purporting to embrace plagiarized empathy, to take as one's ethos a dazed toleration for the waking animal level.

Within this waking turmoil the spirit ventilates constriction and is expected to withdraw into what I would call terminal aspiration in order for it to accommodate extrinsic imposition. Of course this becomes pointless deliberation in a prevaricator's warren. The latter possessing over-embalmed vocal patterns that over-extend themselves by falsifying death, that tend to ossify the living spectrum, such as a dazed ideological vicar attempting to feed on hoarded edelweiss. Thus, what occurs is a grammar of political vipers, where certain Tigers stagger and rise up, charged with mock deliberation. This being nothing other than pre-confused blockage, a darkened myriad subtended by implosion. This being the darkened vapour that occludes respiration. The latter being as far as the general populace is allowed to extend. Thus, it clings to a fetid obscenity. As for its decorated burning there remains only protracted opacity where the body can solely claim its spectral annihilation never having had the neural capacity we see in the sonic electricity of wolves.

The latter being none other than life as contaminated curation, as protracted lingual glinting, life in this context understood as a micro-

criminalization. The Individual faction becomes embrangled at impossible juncture all the while imbibing nervous mental protein. Faction in this sense being nothing other than pre-figured blockage, being a myriad of darkened implosion. This being scale at the level of occluded respiration.

Yet there exists higher incoming posture of audition, irradiation from higher sonic rooting. Not via Biblical psychic organization, but sound as an organism inhabited by photonic ghosts. These being ghosts that roam the void as creative androgynes. They register themselves via the a-sequential, via sonic mazes at the nths of seeming sonic disjunction. This sound seeming to appear from random furniture, from old leaked clauses, from quaking walls, from imaginal electron spirits. This being none other than primordial hydrogen. This being grammar that spontaneously elevates itself, that spawns and re-spawns itself from elements of the dead.

This latter state being the primordial grammar of humanity and its oneiric vehicular motion via impalpable respiration. This being primordial clarification far beyond the synergy that collects as hallucination. Thus I cannot equate its yield with failed interior mobility or declaim its failure to expand itself into plausible empirical structure. Its primordial clarification remains far in advance of conventional synergy, the latter being rife with what I consider to be a lesser plane of delimited topological halucination centred strictly on the physical plane. Thus, primordial clarification subsumes hallucination and the latter's inability to fuse with deftness, this being what I consider to be the lesser plane of tremor, where the cognitive mind attempts to expand itself in spite of the opacity that it carries ensconced as it is in impenetrable getural occlusion. This being none other than an improbable maze, a gesture pointing towards itself as barbaric territorial range. This being nothing other than the symbol of stricken doves as they rise through ammoniated levels so that living consciousness fails to expand. The latter being immobilized being that signals stricture as its ideology, given over to itself as portion. Portion in this regard continues to formulate itself by being a dishonoured replica of itself, being mirage, being disintegrated figment, being a-symmetrical to cosmic elevation.

As one elevates through illusive fragmentation, one seems forced to relinquish the blood of one's very soul, forced in this regard to relinquish the very safety net of prayer. This being the mind emptied of superficial abstraction, coming to know one's body as a fulminate cache of carbon. One then begins to listen to oneself as if one were an angular streak of

lightning. This being a streak existing far beyond the realia of deities that attempt to hold living animation within the field of an outmoded neurological response. Such a state seems only capable of existing through electrifying tumult, that seems at first glance to be dazed cultural abandonment, at the same time being a shift towards a noiseless psychic plane, being a mirror that opens onto wisdom on the other side of the grave. This being thirst for non-arrangement, not unlike a state where lepers rove, where consequence spins itself as if one were a salmon leaping up rivers of lava, reaching for a field of upper volcanoes, that can be psychically espied in Aurobindo's old room. This being a living schism between alterity and eternity. As if tautology spun itself as rhythmic pulse, at times seeming regressive yet all the while floating above these psychic lava rivers. This being none other than a hyper-dynamic grammar where cosmic gulfs seem to threaten, where dynamic causality meanders far beyond the settlement that claims itself as secular ruination. This is a level that can never subvert itself to explanation, to the written detail of graphic writhing. In simple terms it cannot be clarified according to the tenets of explained document. To the cognitive mind it remains none other than a dysfunctional fragment, a hollowed frame of reference, faded and left far behind the endemic motion of itself.

It must be asked why the human mind has failed to be entrained in order to reach living access to the incalculable, why had it been shifted to gaze backward into fragmented biological warrens?

Perhaps this is reasoning acquired from truncated explanation. The latter being energy seemingly cooked in the bladder of saints, occluding one from higher synaptic reaction that causes pointless reversal and descent. Say, if one could break free of oneself and surmount universal exhaustion, one could exist sans synaptic residual sums. This is where the present body cannot exist, with its failure to understand the deeper field of cellular cleansing. Cellular cleansing is where chronic scent is subsumed and given access to higher oxygen, this is where energy is freed to spontaneously roam beyond itself. One then begins to breathe beyond the feral consequence that we've come to know as surcease.

How can such energy confront its former angular boundary, its former boundary of containment?

One can state an overwhelming conduit that perpetually exists as the climate of the oneiric state. When one is bestowed by its grace to espy alien scribbling, one thereby understands its linkage to the beyond. This is not mental drift crossing over into poisonous psychiatry attempting to gather alien figments in a cognitive psychic basket. This is not simply gathered embellishment or metered ambulation wandering through a marsh of scattered ions. This being a plane of non-sequential experience. The latter motion can be by no means classified by the powers of cognitive witness. This cannot be done. Physical cognizance seems delimited by its superficial investigation of structure by proportional dissection as its verifying anthem. In essence this can only be vilification by opacity. Different portions being then measured against other portions to gain a partial sense of some cognitive combination. This creates a peculiar reference that only gives a wizened power of possibility. This being not unlike the isolate results that issue from the Cern Hadron collider that attempting to legislate pattern. The latter summoning artificial pattern as refractive variant never evinced as consciousness itself. What is being argued for is none other than quantity itself. Say, for exploring the quantification of verdet hummingbirds and their wing-beats always attempting to define by quantity the endemic cipher of their spectacular hovering in plain view.

Because we live amongst money thieves and chronic tracking devices we seem possessed by abstracted precision, always haunted by tautology. In such a forced climate portions of truth are clouded by lucre, by the protracted skills of unnatural amazement. One seems trapped beneath the snow of surveillance reports seemingly dazed by their isolating referents. This is none other than the dying control of anglo-saxon psychology subsumed as it is by increasing dispossession of its embossed mythological disorder. A disorder that increasingly fails to cohere. One always suspects the worst when indigenous bodies are collectively stricken, by being given second tier status, being ensnared according to devolved beckoning, according to a clustering of shock that silently kindles the cartography of animality. This being the subconscious refraction that snakes through the colonizer's psychic inheritance embrangled as it is with poisonous scales and norms, fueled by rotted angular mercury, by unrelenting suspicion and glare. It seems one ambulates through their connivance, through their erratic denial, all the while plagued by susurrous disadvantage. One then becomes stilted by staged condoning as if all social conditions were balanced and equal. In this context hunger and murder are institutionally accounted for. Never can one's comfort be equated with such gross

disjunctive pallor, with its chronic instigation, with its institutional mirrors coated by patinas of blood. This is not what one could call enriched habitation. This is why fate declares that I exist amidst the northern psyche as a psychic maroon, a maroon who who naturally erupts from the deeper states to launch attack by fomenting vengeful psychic infection. Therefore I launch general psychic infection that can no longer be swept underground, An infection that provokes fatigue, that burns as seepage, being insidious electrical invasion. This is what I understand to be an insidious electrical typhoon that inscribes itself as sacred insularity, enabled to provoke self-instigated terror, allowing natural rebellion to accrue so that one carries oneself via ghostly photonic effect.

One's consciousness at this higher remove viewed from lesser levels seems nothing other than a bloodied kite, than a marred transmission, struggling with the forces of life, seemingly prone to assassination. The surrounding populace deprived of interior liberty, their available grammar consisting of maniacal negation, always in pursuit of received ideas. They resolve to never roam beyond the ambit of self-appointed comfort. Even when this comfort is aligned with tenebrous scorpions in the blood. This being the despicable domain that Césaire and his cohorts exhorted against in their treasonous pages of the *Tropiques*. I can only think of the surreptitious theft of fire, transmuting its energy in order to verbally haunt the statuesque compendium that exists as the Occident, while latter continues to invoke psycho-physical repression. When higher souls such as Aime Césaire, Jules Monnerot, and Etienne Lero magically scripted vigorous liberty via embitterment, they gave power to higher synaptic fires. These synaptic fires being nothing other than refuge via poetic solar yurts, where lingual spells turn to fume and cast residue into the cellular domain, where the cellular seems consumed by its own reflexive realia, contorted by grainy angular reduction, the latter, teeming with a subflow of resistance closer in tenor to that of an owl drifting in place via murderous stasis, with its unnerving wingbeats, with its reversed motion via unknown stellar possibility. This amounts to paternity by blankness, with this feral form of blankness being the proto-entry into anti-entropic renewal, the latter seeming to have no possibility of higher existence. In other words, this being the dialectic within existing. And by transmuting its respiration we then begin to understand the electrical structure of death. This allows us to sense the void as if it were a firmament of butterflys wafting via perpetual hyper-states. This is not a compliant condition attained via analysis or chance conveyed through mazes of matter, but a leap via terror into the non-confined, sans

no known complexity or given. This being partially analogous to roaming planets non-attached to suns sans palpable measurement, sans human nausea with its varying states of after-grief. This is not the dialectic within existing attuned to psychic colonizing systems. This being realia sans biochemical rhetoric commingled with abstract intentions that attempt to sanction the cosmos. One's initial approach to the immeasurable can be nothing other than psychically refractive, what then follows could be called alien immersion. This is not stolen energy from the grave, nor is it abstract simulation say, like the poet Ezra Pound and his linguistic sum of electrical corruption intrinsically singing in horrid plainsong odes to the American South. I call his quest linguistic Nazification, clouded moral glass, leprous moral grammar, breeding brazen grammatical encyclicals. As if its written yoga were clogged by spotted worms, via a tunnel fuming with reddened spitting cobras. A colonized rhetoric, attempting by internal camouflage to perform contorted bio-metrical surgery that desires an isolated cosmos.

What remains purposely refracted across the Occident is its occlusion of the central global conversation concerning the electricity of the cosmos, this being its central tome of respiration. Therefore, truth, in daily conversation remains none other than distortion from the minds of ghosts, remains as hives of stolen information, not unlike energy stolen from the sepulchre. The afore-mentioned Pound and his writing cohorts remains a hive of stolen electrical energy functioning via their central tenet of inversion that attempts through their spirit to eclipse and distort the collective soul via this central tenet. This ultimately produces a refractive lethargy not unlike proto-preparation for the worst. This being nothing other than a dazed poisonous subtext for existence where the protracted context remains a warren for roaming lizards that kill.

Pound and his cohorts remain at essence, proximal drafts of complicated anglo-christian morals providing protracted mental seeding for Fascist theatrical projects known in their most horrific degree to forcefully declaim bifurcation of the arteries. This being toleration for torture upon stilled indefensible beings such as children and is not unlike the twisted foam that erupted from the mouth of Pius the Second who seemed to sniff the death camps he was seemingly poised to conquer. This being nothing other than a catastrophic pamphlet invigoured by the soul as a form of urination, seemingly protected by tortuous security alignments, the latter being the primal confine of circuitous electrical racists. This exists as none other than a listless informational index that distorts and steals clauses in order to

deflect from its sullen enactment of human elimination. This being degradation not only as anomaly, but as the hypnotic fever of protocol not unlike the poisonous craters of Countess Bathory dazed by bats and vultures.

The latter being gusts, with all manner of motion gone awry. Beings such as Bathory and the semi-fictional Fortunata feasting on snake eggs and herons. This being nothing other than the terror of lower consciousness akin to contaminated psychic fever, not unlike one parading through a syllabus via detritus as behaviour. This being nothing other than pointless non-effect, none other than tautological hallucination. This being truly confused heretical function, being, in the deepest sense contorted forms of repression. Not just because these functions exist but because they remain a hive where the Glossary of the Sun is stilled at a burning point on the linear plane. There exists no alchemical force or letter to its content, no higher ash that morphs into gold. This remains actionless mangle on the vital plane. A maimed hallucinated Eagle ceasing to carry itself into flight. On the human plane one can only speak of haunted emotional volcanoes, of stained psychic horizons, of emotional tests and counter-tests, leaving the animal body in a dastardly state of emotional seepage and wreckage. This is why general murder is so thrilling to the Fascist psyche. It momentarily staunches seepage and restores energy to its enervated mechanism. It remains heir to the nagging summons from Caligula and Nero. A desperate giving in to creatures who seemed to thrive on cooked excrement. This being the private escalation that continues to function as a rambling menace. It remains simulated current sans electricity. It is the energy of Poppea stalled in a functionless mirror hanging in a brothel of sewers. This being the active point of stunning decline, this being the blaze that lives through burning error.

And this error not unlike corroded pressure that builds and assassinates its own function in toto. Perhaps one can say that this is a universal family portrait having its origin in sterility. This being the origin that sired the murder of Socrates and the exile of Plato from Greece. This account has not one alchemical elevation to its credit, or the persistent humming of existential solace poised to occlude itself from standing error. Written action in this context amounts to nothing other than abstract moral cliché that self-baffles itself by continuing to extoll subconscious deficit. And because subconscious deficit persists it wreaks havoc upon organic habitation by overwhelming the mind with blinding sums of numbers in

attempt to swarm and surmount the increasing scale of unknown inner dimensions. This being debilitated consciousness with its dis-inhabited view wrought by cunning and scurvy. It invigourates contraverted pawns that celebrate dubious externality. It is none other than propagation of decadence, of wretchedly assembled greed. This being corroded calculus, a maimed carol that fluctuates as oblivion, this is how vampires circle without light. When energy remains drained of itself it takes on the glare of a leprous Roman prostitute searching for warm blood to ingest because she is empty. Snakes starve at her udders. She sells death. She summons a crucial vortex out of hell. This being the gist of concussive arachnids, of a scorched consuming depravity that exists within our delimited neural complexity, sired by curious assignation between Caligula and Christ. The latter diptych akin to the kinematics of oblivion that continues to exist as rambling termination. The latter sired sans the Egyptian electrical syllabus and concerns function as corroded pressure. A moribund mirror existing as poisoned property, where the moon blurs from a debilitating arc, spreading as unfurled dynamics both windswept and fetid. This being our present astrological dalliance, with its stripes, it's swords, its mange spilling out of Eris. This being a circumstance totally unlike a natural blizzard of Lantern Fish blowing towards the Sun. In this context daily life being none other than the cinema of disruption, the body seeming to waft through an infernal kale as a replica of itself. Furthermore it remains a replica of itself self-induced to dust riddled pain scorched by demons and gnomes. Thus, its existential circumstance remains a useless saturate with the energy of evil. This being an energy that coils itself in the cells maniacally in service of disproportionate capital. The mind inside such principal corruption being an Isle of sullied chatter, a uterine form of inversion, an axis of ruination.

The latter being the sub-text within which Descartes inscribes his methods that cognitively staunch the mind. This was the initial colonizing period that burned with Indigenous assassination. This was none other than the modern initiation of all forms of plague. Conservative elements will accuse me of reactive immolation, of uncovering a ruminant vibrational gulf where a non-technical opinion lurks via vultures seeking to disrupt the very existence of what it means to have motion. The latter being none other than malice afore-thought. Such malice obsfucates itself through infected ciphers, and these ciphers operate as sterilized ravines via a purposely functioning darkness. This being none other than failed phenomena, none other than vomited plesiosaurs strangled by their own hissing. As

phenomena they are nothing other than articles of dread attempting to exit their own vacancy.

Of course I am provoking a shattering display of the periodic table, as if I were in-scripting a morose vendetta, as though I were releasing molecules of treason, evoking a sullied poster of the past in order to elevate misnomer. Yet it is through misnomer that openings appear and insight is curiously allowed to rage, is allowed to form its spontaneous palette with various ages of the universe then drawn into proximate thought. Thus, one has spontaneous contact with seeming oblivion, knowing 50,000 years to be a minor interval, as if the human mean were only a dazzling fortnight inside the scheme of its own deracination. It is via this tenor that one recalls the Catholic Doctrine of Discovery first inscribed by Pope Nicholas the Fifth. We remain in direct contact with its heinous disfigurement, with its bloody derangement branded on the mind of indigenous beings, who were for all time branded as lesser beings, thereby branding indigenous praxis as crossing over into un-allowable. God, at this debatable plane remains none other than an oceanic ghost, as if he were immobilized by blurred Judaic Inheritance, carrying out in this circumstance a sterilized frame prone to embrangement, to a forecast that insures the slaughtered bodies of scaffolded Indians. I'm speaking of the European meta and physical praxis as a deadly riddled void whose vacuums of evil are protracted by a seemingly impenetrable destination.

So I end on a note of the Occident as infected syntax, full of chronic mental puns scripted in service of carnivorous denial. This being ferocious a ferocious furnace seemingly primed by priimeval movement. As we continue to exist in this era of infernal paternity, we continue as entities to foster territorial drifting, recycling its waste toward our supreme disadvantage. Thus, collective personality remains spontaneously stained by circuitous erasure, as if it were crawling through an after-life riddled by genetic dis-inheritance.

A Cannibal Explains Himself to Himself

If death is the absence of life, then death's death is life.

—Sun Ra

Something eats us, something spontaneously de-ignites us and spirals us to the grave. This being an axial shock to ourselves as created wonder. In this sense we are figments, complex phantoms who are fed upon by the vapour of mystery.

This is not language sculpted to brusquely intervene in what is considered as consciousness wrought from blind design, but language that actively transmutes the respiration of the cosmos. Occidental psychology has been trained to fixate on nouns. Thus, electricity wavers and is stunned by its own regression. The noun by its very nature yields at surcease a disembodied husk as proof of its once cognizant property. Therefore, the husk is seen as static yielding none of the richness of its power when it yielded to visibility. As corpse it seems unconnected to the musical ore that ignited its own engendering. As noun it is seen as remaining separate from perpetual energy from the field. Of course this energy maintains not only external embodiment but also an internal spreading that affects not only the motion of stellar warren's and bodies, but individual beings quarantined on planets. As if the power of our Sun had been extracted from the field replete in itself via a separable energy.

A dark inevitable haunting?

Creation as plague of itself?

Perhaps a darkening that swallows its own darkening?

The above being the spell of creation itself. This darkening being its endemic component of entropy that seems to swarm and engulf its figments. Human realia per this realia seems not unlike the fate of migrating lemmings attempting to swim through slate. This being experience tempestuous experience always leaking into surcease. This being a leakage only provisionally questioned at individual levels, and only once, within my reading recollection, remember having seen a few words that spoke of Egyptian national effort poised at transmuting the very nature of death. As

for our present noun-centered culture an itinerary signals nothing other than the atmosphere of the abyss, filled with darkened rodents and tigers.

One must understand the flexibility of the cellular field, of its depths, of its absorption and transmutation of entropy. This is not an activity that can be analogous to the invading of an adversarial shipping port, or slaying a beast in order to achieve sustenance. So beyond literal example cognitive pattern can only surmise a plane replete with terrifying grammar. And it is this grammar that seems to riddle the bodies that exist in condensed form. It is this grammar that seems to infest electricity itself. It seems entropy paradoxically abducts electricity via the cells always absorbing them via chronic degeneration. Yet I am concerned here of how higher vibration is invoked so as to clear away their reverberation by defeatism and panic. To dissolve ventriloquism in this regard. Perhaps such attempt is none other than a secretive yoga woven via mantric patience and susurrations so that the fate of dying ceases to ensue.

This is not simply to extend corporeal living so as to extend largeness of time, but to transmute the cells vis a vis a psycho-physical treading that snakes throughout the cosmos itself. This being not akin to some regrettable old Maiden having crossed into years of seeming oblivion propelled by persuasion and anger. First of all the cells transmute as an expanded notion of the cosmos as a higher masonry of echoes. This being none other than alchemical wind existing in the body as simultaneous integer. It is through simultaneous integer that complexity arises. When the figmental ego is condemned to judge its fundamental ratio sans carbon as its principle component, one gains insight other than through mere wizardry, or effects of effects according to the abstraction of thinking. As if the physical specimen and its thoughts about itself shielded it from transpersonal cognizance, thereby gaining from itself a thanatonic attitude towards itself, the latter energy not the holding of extrasolar moons and suns in unquiet suspension. Because our nerves criss-cross like meteors we remain simultaneous with nervous elliptical distraction consumed by the after-effects of our own origin. At the literal level we remain a blinded apogee of instants, of fore-shortened skeletal remains. So by exploring unprecedented strata the Egyptians embodied the notion of “Coming Forth By Day” not only exploring one’s psycho-physical light but its occurrence that spills beyond the event horizon.

What if one morning we all awoke beyond our mercurial darkening so as to peer into surcease without losing our bodies to its everlasting grasp would transmute the universe. I am speaking here of tension between physical kinetic and its antithesis in terms of alchemical banishment so that it crosses over into the unprecedented where enclosed experience could begin to realize itself beyond its own negation. This being vertiginous labour never at the level of political manoeuvre, or embrangled appearance. This is not unlike waiting for miracles to appear. Yet this is not palpable reversal of water into wine or food for the multitudes spring from seeming dearth. I am thinking of oneiric embrangement all the while maintaining subverted cognition that irradiates absence itself. An alchemical state that allows mists to burn, to provide foray into menace, thereby entering an encyclopedia of the condemned. This being an arcane hyper-state open to absolute possibility. Not salvation haunted by tenuous figment, but opening onto the vibratory field, its cellular arc given over to clearing the feral circuitry of itself so that divine nutrients begin to saturate the cells providing incalculable vigour. This being none other than the uncanny magnified by non-measurable voltage. This being a realia impossible to post-navigate via the amperage of material scale.

Not that one enters this scenario by the mythological gaze of belief, but according to the latter's power it attempts to hold us in hypnotic penetration, consumed by its tautological scabies that attempts to clarify the deeper states according to nullification. It is at this level that the body becomes a vampiric zephyr, its bodiless nerve ends consumed for living burial. The aforesaid condition can never invoke the sigil frayed as it is by matter as it is by matter as its dominant form of hypnosis. The sigil closes and opens that which is there, while belief dazzles being with distraction. Because the sigil burns at depths of the implicate it cannot be confined to emptied notions that once invested the European psychic apparatus, with its electro-acoustic analysis only capable of abstractly entering the poles of Saturn, or convening as abstract witness to extra-solar activity.

The mind, at this latter plane seems housed inside the bickering ozone of coffins chronically haunted as insular figment. All the while this format has been empowered to self-illuminate its own paradox incapable of clearing old whispers from the cells. In contradistinction I am concerned with a yoga that weaves interior glistening in the deepest habitation of the cells. Barriers to light begin to spontaneously de-exist, begin to annul themselves so that physical obstruction begins to flash and actively dissipate as would a

glossary of dunes subjected to wind. I am concerned here not with optical embellishment but with interior fire. Not with purported religious zeal, but a plane that never withdraws to old mental habituation. The cells in this latter state can never mature so that they mingle with our original state of origin. The latter state being the level we see confirmed in the panic of infants when they flash upon the realm from which they have recently emerged. Or put in another terminology eruption from a river of blood. This being birth as we know it, with its beauty of sweltering leprosy, its mania suffused with unknown cartography. Yet, within this confusing yield we are most at one with death and its strange elliptical germination. Birth being a state where primal cartography erupts and spreads its inner waves spreading its saturated embers as a delta. This being a state where the nascent aurn begins to gather and burn as primordial seismology, say, not unlike corporeal cartography active on ancient Mars. This being one analogy, another can be a physical state not altered by the literal mind static with gravid aural termination.

So am I in the process of engendering a ghost cult, or engendering a state of primal lethargy that curiously affects the living?

Perhaps there is truth in this. All I can surmise is that it must gall apparatchiks of consciousness, emboldened as they are by precisely dotted lettering forms. Their primary skill being one of that excels in honing the isolate configuration empowered as they are by a glossary of blinded scholars incapable of peering into a vat of tremendums. What suffices for them remains measurement of segregated criteria examining shards of dimly lit candescence. Under this condition knowledge remains bereft of its ascensional property, having no way to inculcate its stores with transpersonal elevation, so what functions for knowledge in the main corrodes essential thought with unalterable deficiency. This being none other than operational misperception sculpted by gross psychological cadence conducted by a sulfurous attitude. Then the mind as garish cipher, suffused by the lethargic symbol darkened gargantuan waste. Thus, the living from death becomes rigid and non-pliable. The psyche then hypnotized its own portions so as to elide deeper realia by surrounding itself with combustible taxonomy. Imaginal analogy can be made to a toughened willow spewing pebbles. Via imaginal mode I can call this tree a Teutonic optical example.

In contradistinction to this latter example the mind exists as a bottomless electrical current capable of irrigating voids, as well as sub-dimensions of these voids. Thus, it understands, by analogy the imbibing by pythons of fully operant crocodilian monstrosities. This hellish scenario being none other than treasonous construction via absence by circuitous analogy, taking up in however delimited form, aspects of alchemical cellular transfunction via absence as its arcane vibration. This being a profoundly incalculable level the Egyptians once pursued as a national effort. To slip into the ellipsis of being in order to transmute forces so as to ascend into secrets that invigorate the beyond. The above made possible by psycho-physical trance that begins to allow the organism to thrive on less approachable planes. The psycho-physical in this regard not unlike a refracted diamond facing the Sun and they refract as proto-moons suddenly swallowed by darkness. They, being beyond all known summation of wattage. They, being beyond the human mind as its presently constructed. For the mind under the reign of delimited perception such refraction can only exist via theoretical transport, being at best, an addendum to being. It can only strategize itself as an abstract figment, self-identified as figment galvanized by the limit of psycho-physical argument.

With the psycho-physical so radically galvanized it detains itself as respiration calumny, as being a literal confine of imploded ether. In order to gain consciousness one must still oneself in order to gaze down on the activity of oneself. The latter being initiation into seepage of protracted undulation. It is not unlike listening to a wave of blue nightingale, of aurally witnessing amarillo turn blue in one's veins. It can said that this aural kingdom amounts to protracted aural silk, being something other than the armour of punishment. We can look to this level as leading to levels beyond puzzling anthrax doors. This being over and above the vehicular coding of the body. This is not to summon a skill or a common technical feat thereby enlisting a stifled grammar throughout what is commonly sensed to be eternity. The activity of which I speak concerns protracted transmutation no longer conjoined to a galaxy of shadows. This is not a yoga that walks away from itself only to focus upon a former segment of itself. It is life as continuous phrasing, constantly in motion receiving glints from grammatical hamlets, always implied, always open to higher planes of susurrations, as if one could aurally configure sapphire at moonrise.

This being none other than susurrations that ranges beyond systems, beyond negligible sorcery by procedure. First off, one must transmute the mental

state that fosters defeat, that fosters pointless cranial doubt. This imperceptibly ignites interior vertical motion, that in turn fosters old advantage as it seeps into the very kinetics of one's being. One then begins to sense in the self un-scripted beauty not unlike the spectacular shape that remains the Eskimo Nebula, understanding thereby a grammar of new solar irrigation. One's cells take on an aura of new solar complexity, not as a sum of hyphenated spirals but as psychic spirals that clarify that which post-exists, as if viewing oneself from a telepathic turning point, being something other than uncleansed re-configuration. That which is already known tends to de-exist as barrier, as if the Earth no longer existed via mechanical repetition knowing in one's depths that life itself is in preparation for itself far beyond the anecdotal phase that is the Anthropocene. Thus, all name and number vanish, with the body allowed to roam post-geography via its remnants. These remnants could exist as a magnetic ulterior moon orbiting sans cognitive delimit as ratio, sans the quarrelsome knotting of signals, hatched from blue and emerging suns. This being something other than a Platonic cave derived from a former grammar.

To this degree I am speaking of our minds that exist via complex vehicular voltage. Squared at one level, flattened or circular at others. Yet at its deepest planes it analogous to a flare alive with invisible ebullience. This latter state is certainly not akin to totalitarian haunting symbolized by the strife of lizards bleeding for survival via aggravation. According to Gurdjieff we are surrounded by invisible forces that daily consume us, so every jot the psycho-physical instigates seems cannibalized by these very instigations made more simple by the majority of their thrusting onto the plane consumed by exoteric daylight. Our energy is thus consumed by a noxious animal kinetic. And so as we cannibalize smaller lesser creatures so a curious invisible force consumes us as we also consume. This is not an equation of consumption but one that exists as our overall habitation. At a certain level of insight this seems none other than collective degradation. This is the level where the cells collect defeatist code as a matter of course habituated by debris that whirls and settles into our optimum dune of bones so that they cease to replicate according to contacts that connect inside the implicate. Because implication does not function as cataract, it opens us to evolved self-habitation. Yet at present, our energy self-weaves with endemic entropy as we populate its carnivorous hearts that quietly stuns our livingness with its unnerving proximity.

Implication is certainly not a condition suffused with retro-analysis subsequently burdened by retrograde interpretation of the future. One must begin to understand the desperation between the particular and its connection to the general field. At its optimum vibration this is none other than a colloquy between the cells and the field that they occupy, sans proximal interaction of how they interact with one another. Say, if vibration from the cells evinces spontaneous clarity sans mechanical complicity, but through what I'll call spontaneous comprehension a positive infection transpires that transmutes the field itself. This begins to enact a realia that the entire species can begin to summon. A leap, if you will, not say, in terms of perhaps, Martian terminology and its critique of capital, but of levels intrinsic to the respiration of the galaxy itself. This in turn evokes a higher range of capability where forces are no longer constrained by Euro-centric psychic origin. We have presently broached Dirac's "signal of signals" listening far beyond Anthropomorphic conclusion. Kindling transpires in this range as unknown seismography. A seismography that brews according to the propensity of the unknown. This is how the cosmos itself transmutes cellular rotation so that old funeric plasmas cease burning with restriction, with bereft infernos of grammar, that keeps the species occulted from itself, so that false and telling estrangement ceases exercise of interrogative polarization.

It is precisely in this state that the self-endowed cannibal emerges from animal obscurity ceasing its pointless reptilian fervor, so much so, that the barrier between life and death circuitously abandons itself, with a simultaneous amperage traversing forces we suspect at present, of having no possibility of existing. As billions upon billions presently live their lives reeking of imprecise meta-judgement that seems to more and more fail to exist. I am speaking here of fallen mythologies, of material rafts that cease to ferry the dead. The shape of energy we now carry remains a debilitated, a form of diamonds sullied and re-brewed according to a clouded form of wish, the latter being none other than embedded error. This being the challenge to what the cells instinctively experience. Not replica, but instinctive self-agency, being evolutionary wavelength streaking across a bottomless anonymous firmament. Not glare from circumspect hypnosis, nor dazed occlusion, nor exclusive excuse for evolving human scale far beyond the fractional mode of quotidian execution.

At the expense of minutiae one must fling one's energies into the ravine of oneself according to living realia that rises above the present fate of our

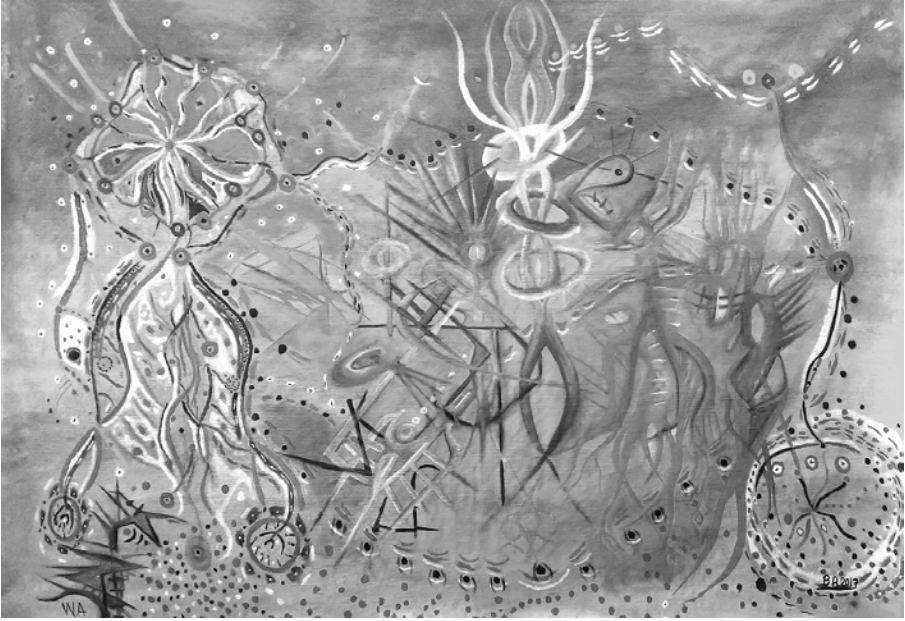
material masters. By so doing our acidic self-compounding will tend to vanish and reveal itself via a charged utopian compost, not unlike a dazzling oracular oxygen that articulates interior fulmination, as a cleansed non-monomial activity that perpetually persists blazing as miraculous kinetic.

Will Alexander and Byron Baker

Facing the Electron Field: The Primal Triptych of Byron Baker and Will Alexander.

Tryptich #1: Quantum Electrical Field
Tryptich #2: Primal Circulation
Tryptich #3: Mantric Multiverse
Text by Will Alexander

[Please see following pages]







Collaboration by its very nature feeds from a-priori symbiosis never claimed via decimal or reduction so that it perfectly seeds the transpersonal. Exchange takes on a charismatic rhythm via a fertile interior tenor. Organic connective enunciates itself as none other than contagion. Thus rhythm activates and the individuals seed themselves as interior relay runners.

This latter kinetic being none other than spontaneous psychic exercise which remains the case when I think of my effort with Byron Baker as we painted our triptych. It was as if we were facing an electron field magically exploding from the invisible. For us, it was an endemic realia that allowed us entry to a plane that broached brazen fertility. The colours, lines, darts, spirals, emitted themselves at such a spontaneous pace that we felt ourselves no longer powered by skill as individual property, or via isolate technique, never claiming by this aforesaid technique some mark of individual superiority. It was in this state of consciousness that instantaneous labour proceeded.

For us, this was an electrical state anterior to what quotidian example condones as realia. To repeat myself it was like entering an electron field and condensing consciousness at a state sans some prior constriction shaped by what I understand to be an academic visual code with its rational hatching and perfectly wrought shading. Our commanding more was none other than a-symmetrical swiftness, as we brewed as double anodyne volcanoes spewing synergy anterior to lineal share and proportion.

Painting in tandem with Byron was a decidedly transpersonal exercise. By the time the Mantric Multiverse was engaged we were not unlike relay runners embarking upon the last third of the triptych known in old track and field terminology as the “gun lap.” The latter term refers to the last stage of the race when a pistol fired a single blank alerting the runners for the need for all out effort so as to victoriously cross the finish tape. The key term here being acceleration, acceleration beyond personal cognitive comprehension. Not unlike this level of acceleration ours was an incendiary journey into vapour, into the energy of openness. Its electrical subtext being constantly suffused itself with vehicular maturation as an astonishing telepathy transpired. We constantly inhabited Matta’s world of “surprise” never having a cognitive plan of where the next stroke would ignite. We constantly convened about our experience as leading towards neurological liberty, so much so, that it prompts the realia of the late cosmologist Allan Sandage spoke of as “bio-geo poetry” the latter condition existing over

beyond the exhaustion of numbers. This being a state where photons erupt at such a scale they will never osmotically invade our Milky Way.

Of course, lineal calculation can never apply. Because the optical operates as the central graph of record according to Occidental scale and evaluates itself as non-appearance across these works. Perhaps, a partial analogy could be made to Tamayo's use of Pre-Columbian imagery as another tenor of reasoning when he saw other than human visage. Other than the reasoning which ran from Rivera and Siquieros through Orozco and Anguiano. Across our triptych there were, perhaps traces subconsciously mined from Tamayo's resistance to dominant muralist inclination, but closer to our understanding persisted the example of Matta and Miro concerned as they were with the assassination of the body as quotidian reference point via its static three-dimensional form. In our particular context the imaginary was system unto itself. So as aural painters we were magically inspired by sonic prestidigitation. As we painted music erupted via the aural grammar of Charles Tolliver, Sam Rivers, Bobby Bradford, and Jackie McLean. All had their say, not simply providing an electric environment for painting but provoking roving discussion not unlike Eric Dolphy's chromatics. During the last painting of the triptych it was the left handed opening notes of Cecil Taylor's *Indent* that seemed to mesmerize our painting motion. Taylor's sonic voltage was not unlike the primeval silicates that appeared on our canvass. Our painter's kinetic was en-veined by curiosity as insistence. Not only with determination, but by a psychic magma that can only be described as painterly mathematics. Each scrawl, each line, each dot was none other than what we felt was architecturally accurate. The equations were tempestuous. They were not unlike conveyance via an incendiary summons enunciated from the above, sans such summons from codified religious embranchment being in essence uncanny electrical magnification.

The latter magnification having significant resonance with the invisible velocity of a telepathic blizzard, this being a blizzard anterior to all formation. One could call this state energy arising from pre-birth being pulsation akin to charismatic fire suddenly erupting from darkness. Let me reiterate, that this triptych was, above all, subsumed by pulsation, they being phosphenic marks that illuminate the caliginous via coils of intelligence rational cognition fails to explain. They seem to enact the density of riddles. Because they hyphenate and reappear to themselves they seed no stationary field for pre-planned arrangement, for rational abutment. We know that the

blind can discharge sight through a form of aural complexity, and this aural complexity seems parallel, in our view, to indigenous mechanics. The latter being mechanics at the depth of living complication, this being complication that understands both ruination and its dialectic of psychic acceleration, that expands beyond composed thought and its transmutation by means of magic, the latter in keeping with the writhing colours of the triptych which remain not unlike the beauty that evinces itself as feral mathematics. It must be remembered that as primordial energy remains anterior to the human mind it always casts its precision prior to the codification of written number as fixation. When igniting our dots and lines and spirals, it was due to our psychic submersion in this anterior state. Colour was none other than anterior explosion.

Grouping together Quantum Electrical Field, Primal Circulation, and Mantric Multiverse, seems at this point, to visually clarify themselves at this point, to a portfolio of consciousness that seemed to accelerate from canvass to canvass until by the final consuming strokes of the Mantric Multiverse optical denouement had transmuted to a powerful aural field where we could begin by aurally processing electrons thereby defining for us a collective an interior language. Not utopian calliope as self-praise, but genuine awareness of cleansed internal respiration. Maybe this can be best put by departing and summoning details from each work which then agglutinate into exponential levels never consciously pondered. I am thinking of primeval eons, of suns that imply other suns, to such a degree that the Occidental idea of conclusion never rises or appears.

These paintings remain optical equations being part of our extended visual process that ignited from our prior project entitled The Codex Mirror that contained Baker's adroit primeval figures accompanied by my aphoristic verbal narrative. Thus, all of our efforts have been defined by self-experiment, by a solarized inner dimension, being purview of the cosmos. We were not as rural citizen's confined by consternation, dazed and isolate, confined by provincial camaraderie. Transpersonal respiration extended far beyond each individual base, it was predilection sans exterior modeling as confine. Not secular respiration, but non-binding exploration into mystery. At this fundamental level we remain open to transcription of a future that will continue to align itself with mystery, the latter being our universal constant. Again, mystery fomented all our efforts as a supreme exercise via a being.

The inaugural Quantum Electrical Field naturally extended into the middle creation Primal Circulation, which then mounted into the clarifying summons that is Mantric Multiverse. I mention these works again not as some repetitive addendum but only to underscore their momentum as figments of what the New Guineans understood to be as creative moisture from the cosmos.

At this time when the Occident is seeming to spiral into open dissolution we understand it to be only a figment within the ominous mathematics that prevail across the cosmos. As we painted it was not unlike putting Eric Dolphy's chromatics into practice. Always taking chances with streaks, and lines, and dots, Always possessing an unerring sense of their placement. Curiously, there was very little discussion of painting as we instinctively proceeded. Maybe a word or two on Van Gogh, and Manet or Lam. Matta, Gorky and Soutine, or the aforementioned Tamayo would crop up from time to time. Certainly we were more naturally drawn to the kind of colour expressed by Derain and de Vlaminck, and the power of colour as psychological. At a point or two the drawings of the Englishman Hayter were discussed but not to any controlling degree. Certainly no mention stretched back to the likes of Orcagna and Masaccio. For our particular sensibility history functioned as stimulation rather than as restraint not unlike electrons in motions towards the unforeseen.

Certainly these are not works painted to attract a coterie of followers, but to stimulate psychic capacity over and beyond the lifeless state of forgone conclusion. Our painterly mazes ignite as arteries of crystal not unlike the Chilean Matta when he appended the word "surprise" to his works. Certainly this is the plane that Breton and the early surrealists inaugurated where it was understood that the model will be "internal" or not at all.

Rae Armantrout

True North

Reindeer pull a sleigh
(through early spring thaw)
on the roof
of the True North
nail salon

*

Signed turn-out
where tourists take snapshots
of the pipeline, elevated
on small plinths,
amid scattered birch

*

Aurora's green sky
gives the mind
what it thinks
it wants: a different
nature, a new world

*

And notes
of a wind chime —

dissonant, rounded —

Nabokov's "nymphets"
fleeting in place

My Erasures

My erasures were featured.

*

I collected debris
to sell as crash art,

crush porn.

*

“Say goodbye to Lonesome George,”
the last Galapagos tortoise.

*

I was a pushover
for the laws
of physics.

*

I pictured us as two seals
hauled out
on a sunny rock,

the roar around us
a matter of course

Rankings

Screw smug survivors
talking about us
as if we weren't quite
here.

We never really loved them.

And screw time
which pancakes things
but also makes distinctions.

*

We have time
to watch versions
then parodies
and rank them,

to play
pin the tail
on the apocalypse

and define our terms:

to engulf
is to cover
or surround;

a gulf
is a chasm

Object Permanence

What if the ability
to capture
emblems in the wild
won't validate us?

What if displaying
our embarrassing flaws
won't save us —

say being dead
but kittenish?

*

I can't show you anything
new, not even

an empty room
behind a velvet rope.

Least of all that!

There's a Lexus
spinning in a parking lot

because a mountain road is
"so cliché."

It's throwing up dust, then more,
but you know the car's

still in there
somewhere,

still voguing

The Corner

Like a child, mind
wants to play, but
even the butterflies
are on the clock.

Still, attention is happy
to comport
with the swallowtail
as it jerkily
rounds the corner.

Like a child, mind
follows, imitates.
First and last
it loves sequence.

I've counted up
to one this season.

John Armstrong

This isn't going to be a unified and logical argument, some parts won't go anywhere at all and others will gesture rather than make a point.

I don't publish my poems and I am very reluctant to dish out printed copies. The only time my work gets an airing is when I read or perform it in front of a live audience. I've been around the poetry business for long enough to recognise that I don't share the need that some poets have for publication nor, however, do I want to keep my work completely private. I am fortunate in that I have a number of local venues that indulge my need to put on eclectic gigs that give my work an airing. These mixed bags attract a mixed audience of music, art, science and drama fans, the intention being to draw people into forms of expression that they wouldn't normally be interested in. Of course most acts sell their wares during the interval and at the end of their show with varying amounts of success.

The main reason/excuse for my publication aversion is one of immediacy in that a live performance is the only way of judging whether what you've cobbled together 'works' as intended and whether people like it. For me, these are two completely separate factors. My judgement about 'working' is about whether or not the thing does what it is intended to do. This is my main interest, as I guess it is for most creative types and again I'm fortunate enough to be able to concentrate solely on this in the cobbling together. The other factor is whether or not it holds the attention of the audience.

There's also something immensely satisfying in terms of praxis in practising with the voice and thinking quite hard about the relationship between what's cobbled together and how it might sound. In another life I work with others to produce experimental audio material so I use pro kit to record these try-outs. This is the hard part, I've been writing for so long that I don't find it difficult so it's not that much of a challenge. Getting the voice right is much more complex and requires much more work.

This predilection isn't due to Impending Planetary Death nor to bashfulness but springs from my desire to show off, challenge myself and to take risks face to face with strangers. I've only recently come to the conclusion that IPD and its causes pose a range of tricky challenges for me

as a performer mainly because of the chasm that exists between what I do and what I know Should be Done.

This conclusion was reached alongside the realisation that I'm not that interested in planetary death but I am Quite Motivated by the entirely related Demise of the West.

Getting the obvious out of the way first, the Children of the Enlightenment, me included, have destroyed the piece of rock upon which we live. The patient is terminally ill, we're already beginning to drown and burn, we can't even delay the end. The mindset that was stapled together in the 17th and 18th centuries **may** have provided some of the groundwork but we, the Western beneficiaries of modernity, are the only culprits.

As well as the planet, what we laughably refer to as Western Civilisation is also dead and buried. This isn't dues to either geopolitical ineptitude nor to the Rise of China but simply because modernity came along with built in obsolescence and no longer functions.

At this point, I need to throw Pierre Bourdieu into the mix — his magisterial *Distinction* makes the point that all cultural activity, without exception, no matter how subversive and oppositional, is conditioned and then malappropriated by Capital. Unlike him, I'm not of the Marxian persuasion but I can't refute this obdurate fact, no matter how hard I try.

The next ingredient is what some political comrades of mine have referred to as my St Francis Position. This states that all of us Children of the Enlightenment are guilty because in our daily lives we consciously Make Things Worse. The most obvious implication is that we must live the rest of our lives in a state of permanent atonement by finding ways of doing as little further damage as possible.

The other point for consideration is the ongoing failure of the left to respond adequately to the onslaught of the untethered market which would suggest to me that Poem as Polemic is both chronically self-indulgent and utterly futile.

Where might this dismal circumstance leave me? For a number of death-related personal reasons. I've only performed twice and written nothing in the last year. This self-imposed abstention has, amongst other things,

provided me with plenty of opportunities to reflect on what the fuck I might be doing.

From the murk, these hazy shapes are beginning to loom:

- I'm trying only to do things that make me smile mainly because otherwise I'd bewhelmed by, erm, grief;
- performance makes me smile more than does writing although I do enjoy being verbally clever;
- poetry is only/merely/still Song and Dance;
- as song and dance, the Poem is quite good at various forms of memorialisation and bearing witness;
- I've recently attended Clown School and find myself smiling at the potential inherent in Clowning the Poem.

So, the current Point of Interest is to work out if I still want to 'do' The Poem and, if so, what form that might take. I've found that clowning the kind of documentary verse that I tend to make is really quite hard to do. It turns out that clowning relies on keeping things immediate and simple and I like to think, along with every other poet on the planet, that my material takes a while to settle in and is subtly intricate.

These, of course, are personal issues to do with my own need to show off. On a global scale it seems to me that I am in mourning for the two things (the environment and increasing prosperity) that I thought as a child would go on forever. At an early age I was bought a weekly comic called *Look and Learn* which told me and a few hundred thousand other small people that technology and science would lead us to a much more rational and equal world of comfort and fulfillment, that disease would be eradicated and that war would eventually cease because it was obviously silly. This carried me through the sixties and the early seventies until '74 when it became obvious that this wasn't the case.

The mourning that I need to clown would therefore appear to be one of disappointment rather than regret, a kind of lament for what once seemed inevitable. Given my history of severe depression, I've never been a fan of self lacerating mea culpas but there is no escaping the fact that my generation of middle class, middle aged white boys have accelerated the process of decline and continue to do so.

Memorialisation need not be a Sad Thing. Sadie Plant once wrote with regard to Debord and crew that all we can do is remember when it was possible to point to the beach beneath the cobbles. And smile.

I have mostly been of the view that what we think of as creative expression springs from a desire to share a subjective experience with others in the often forlorn hope that they may reflect on and compare their own experience of the same thing. For me, this can only (only) be done with a live audience of people who don't write poetry. I produce and promote what I think of as variety shows featuring an eclectic range of types of performance (drama, art music and the occasional poem) in an attempt to entertain and provoke in a variety of different display modes. I know nothing worse than a room full of poets listening to other poets read their stuff. This is because of the level of neediness in the room and also because the audience aren't there as an audience to take in the content but as bitchy competitors engaged in the comparison of what's being read to their own work. I've been there. I've done that.

My view of poetry as song and dance isn't intended to trivialise it but it is an attempt to stop it from taking itself so fucking seriously and being unbearably precious about what it does. At the risk of pointing out the obvious, poetry isn't philosophy nor is it politics, it has no privileged access to the truth. It is, however, exceptionally good at using words to express complicated things with precision and brevity.

The only other 'point' that I'd like to make is that 'The Poem', being song and dance, is entertainment and this particularly enigmatic noun is packed with awkward and often contradictory foibles. First and foremost, material needs to hold the attention and, once it's done that, it needs to get a reaction. It doesn't 'work' if the audience/reader doesn't attend to what's on offer. The poem can be the most profound, technically brilliant work of art to grace the planet but it doesn't work unless it interests us. Much sneering goes on at what's referred to as light verse but that genre is written to do that very thing. Of course, this pervasive critical snobbery is very much Part of the Problem.

Towards a “California Melancholia”

In 1989, Jacques Derrida admitted that deconstruction was to be found in the West Coast of America, not in continental Europe: “The state of theory, now and from now on, isn’t it California? And even Southern California?” Yes, it is true: up to this day, deconstruction is still in California — it has never left. However, Derrida was partially right: theory is not only in California nor is it commensurable to the state. In fact, as I will demonstrate throughout this manuscript, theory *is* California. What about Californ-eye-aye? Why So Cal? What does California have to do with theory, with the end of the world? Welcome to “California Melancholia”: a mixture of speculative fiction, poetry, and theoretical text mobilized by Derrida’s provocation — “the state of theory is California, specifically Southern California” — and Laurence Rickels’ critical observation in *The Case of California* that “the association of psychoanalysis, the body, the media, and adolescence shares its Central European origins with the other philosopheme — California — which has superseded the manifest sense or destiny of the unconscious, the body, the media, the teenager. If postmodernity is postmarked (like the repressed according to Freud) made in Germany, then California is its address and tech-no-future.” With the push of a button, we will nomadic-drift across California — through its deserts, its freeways, its death drives, its data drives, its economic and hydrological droughts, its airwaves, its Soundclouds, its Silicon and not-so Silicon valleys, its Elon Musks, its cults, its cultures and countercultures, its Kardashians and Jenners, its incels and their manifestos, its red pills, its blue pills, its Xanax bars: those white ladders. We thought we were strolling along the Walk of Fame, little did we know, it was just the typical highs and lows of Pacific Agony, this planetary dysphoria, our California Melancholia.

“California Melancholia” begins with a historico-philosophical outline of the “World” as defined by Martin Heidegger, his predecessors e.g., Immanuel Kant, G.W.F. Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Friedrich Hölderlin and the Jena Romantics, his continental and non-continental contemporaries e.g., Edmund Husserl, Antonin Artaud, Georges Bataille, Jacques Lacan, Rene Guenon, Julius Evola and the Traditionalists, Nishida Kitaro and the Kyoto School, and his past and current interpreters e.g., Jacques Derrida, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Philippe

Lacoue-Labarthe, Gilles Deleuze, Catherine Malabou, Fred Moten, and Frank B. Wilderson III. Once the various understandings of the World have been fleshed out (an impossible task I know), a study of the end of things and the end of the World, both in their material and abstract manifestations, will then be presented in the form of a “geological-non-fiction” — a Californian archae-eschatology if you like. Through this Californian archae-eschatology, I will follow the traces left by German Romanticism, Nazism or National Socialism, and post-war modernism; follow these traces as they precipitate and arrive into the state of theory we know to be as California. In a way, what I am trying to do, following Lars von Trier and Laurence Rickels, is to penetrate the “abyss of German Romanticism” and find myself deep inside its belly: This is where I (and you and we) will encounter California. Or put another way, what I am trying to do is to put into work, to bring about an intermingling between German Romanticism and Californian Archae-Eschatology. By unearthing California both as concept and as geological matter, I develop — in my own Californian perversion — what Nick Land, “Daniel Barker”, Reza Negarestani, Robin Mackay, Aidan Tynan, Ray Brassier, and others identify as a “cosmic theory of geotrauma” or “geocosmic theory of trauma”. Conjured in the rave laboratories of the Cybernetic Culture Research Unit (CCRU), the cosmic theory of geotrauma is a synthesis of Freudian psychoanalysis, archaeology, and Deleuzo-guattarian geophilosophy and “stratoanalysis”. According to Mackay, the cosmic theory of geotrauma came out of the CCRU’s efforts to excavate the natural-geological history of the Earth. The CCRU reinterpreted this excavated history as a series of concealed and buried traumas; traumas which were further intensified by humanity inscribing itself into geological time or “deep time”. For the CCRU, the presence of humans and human subjectivity was the symptom for these nested traumas. Like the decipherers of ancient ruins, the CCRU generated a psycho-cryptography which would decrypt the arche-traumas etched onto the skin of the Earth — these hieroglyphs of “cosmic pain”. Following Rickels and the CCRU, one could say that what I am also trying to attempt is a deployment of the cosmic theory of geotrauma through California, which is to say the World insofar as California — being the afterlife of German Romanticism, National Socialism, and post-war modernism — provides the blueprint for the design of the World and ultimately its end. Now and forever ...

By now, one would have asked: Why the end of the world? What is it about the end of the world that has seduced me into its study? I, for one, know

that I will not have been the first nor the last. From the ancient Greeks, the Mayans, the Aztecs, and the Apostles to the post-Aristotelian Medievals to Immanuel Kant to the British and German Romantic poets to Martin Heidegger, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Fred Moten and many others (to still come), the end of things has always been speculated. What concerns my own undertaking is how and why the end of the world is not only brought to life but is *called upon* in contemporary philosophy and cinema. More importantly, why has this demand to end the world articulated specifically by what is considered today as “black studies”? There is Fred Moten who believes that “blackness bears or is the potential to end the world.” There is Denise Ferreira da Silva who carves out a path towards the end of the world (as we know it) through a “black feminist poethics.” There is Frank B. Wilderson III who has given up all efforts in building a better world; instead, he is here for its destruction. If black theory, which for both Moten and Sexton is pretty much translated if not synonymous to critical theory, presenting itself to be the “most generative advance in critical theory”, if black theory concerns itself with the death of the world, then should this task — to intensify or accelerate the potential to end the world - be the task of theory now, in 2018?

Distinct from but will never be separated from “black theory”, there has been an abundance of recent positions and works oriented towards the destruction of the world: from Claire Colebrook and Tom Cohen’s *Critical Climate Change* series to Richard Grusin’s *After Extinction* which claims that “twenty-first-century studies” distinguishes itself from previous epochal studies due to its obsession with the nonhuman, the Anthropocene, and planetary annihilation, to Eugene Thacker’s *Horror of Philosophy* trilogy to Ray Brassier’s *Nibil Unbound: Enlightenment and Extinction* and to Nick Land’s accelerationism which deviates from the Bergsonian vitalist tradition as well as the left-accelerationist, post-Soviet bureaucratic trajectory in pursuit of a Bataille and Artaudian “thanatropism” aimed towards the dissolution of humanity. With the proliferation of works like these turning to extinction and the end of the world, I ask again: Is the task of theory today to kill the world? Then again, will there still be a task for theory at the end of the world? Or perhaps, has theory already become superfluous even before the arrival of the end times? Given that the modernity that it hoped to change is now (and has always been) merely an accelerationism — a never-stopping modernity whose thought, borrowing from Luciana Parisi, is “able to change its initial conditions and to express ends that do not match its organic thought.” Indeed, theory can no longer be in the same tune, much

less play along with modernity's xenoetic, xenopoetic rhythm. As such, theory now then is no longer confronting the problematics of faith, knowledge, and instrumental reason, as was still the case before it was found in California, but the end of the world, the apocalyptic experience manifesting itself into hashtags, technological singularity, incomputables, indeterminancies, algorithmic extimacy, and pop-schizophrenia — all of which are also California's own. Perhaps all along, despite its successive mutations, despite its Atlantic-to-Pacific flight, theory was always in California, which is to say the Silicon Valley, Disneyland, Hollywood, Nazi Germany 2.0, the end of the world. As we will soon find out, the theory and the deconstruction that Jacques Derrida located in California — which I, departing from J.D. momentarily, read *as* California — has only become darker and darker to the point of (its own) complete unreadability and unarticulability. Since, at the end of the world, there will have been zero readers and zero sayers ...

Destination: Nature Roy

Yet at our very beginning we had great unification. Today I could only see, breaking the fundamental particles, solitary quarks are coming down into our homes. Now home means a single room with a lonely man, at the door of which I could see only a shaved *Krishnachura* tree. From the small window when I look into the vast sky, I could see only dreadful threshold crossing Celsius. The definition of world has been changed to a carbon catalog today. And containing all of these, our great universe is in its ever expanding way. Yet we are seeking for a quadruped globalization with intense affection! Yet we are seeking for a civilization which is chanting *Hare Ram Hare Krishna!* We are getting delayed my Dear Reader. Could you hear the inarticulate noise from the Suicide Squad of Plantae Kingdom?

I could see the migratory body of the melancholic clouds
Yet I couldn't find its coloured feather
Only dominating biped on the expanded lap of the world
Its poisonous steam is expanding its hood
Water-mark from the lips of cloud getting dried up by bitter kiss
The corners of rainbow becomes greyer and grayer
Yet the flag of Bali-Roadmap flies with a smile

Mother Earth is still in bow in its rotational obsession
Drunken with a fistful *abeer*¹ at the end of the day
Celebration everyday
Spring-show in the twilit balcony

When the bugle of spillover Celsius touches our deep skin
Debate-forum overflows the luxurious wine glasses of our cities
Takes an oath to become *Jamuna*²
Diluted third world becomes warmer and warmer
Under the skin-cover of controller's furnace
*Ta-ta-thoi-thoi*³ dance between the horns of dilemma

A portion of oxygen still exist in the nook and corner of the termitic cot
The suicide squad of Plantae kingdom is working
There's no first, second or third world

A call for few minutes of strike by the Plantae kingdom
*Tughlaqi*⁴ taste will wake up on the satisfied palate of biped's knowledge
The geometrical God will start dancing joyfully on the graves of *Mannu*'s⁵
[sons

Oh, My Dear Reader, just listen to that singer, "Oh Allah, Give me cloud
give me water give me shade ..." The world is blazing my dear artist. The
whole world is in flame. Your surrounding is shaking with explosions. My
ears are filled brimful with cries of Mother Earth. Yet tune of prayer is
ringing in your voice! Please stop, stop, stop my dear artist. There is a
scarcity of water drop for your dried up throat. Just listen to the rhythm of
Lord Shiva's *Tandava* dance. A shadow of famine is appearing in the wheel
of time. Endangered Nature. Sitting inside the adverse rain-philosophy, still
my restless dreams place their eyes along the placenta of the pregnant
clouds. Memory of light smell of lemon grass is flowing through the fold of
my cerebrum, worn out with ultraviolet rays. When I cross the aqueous
humour, I could see mad dance of truncated goblins in my blind spot.
Heads of the murdered trees fell down from their body into the river. A
loud laugh of river is rolling through my REM sleep. When I get up with
frightened and confused noise, sighs of millions and billions of trees get
entangled in my inhaled oxygen. Alluvial plasmas gradually become fossils. I
place my thirsty eyes towards my beloved sky and could read the Suicide
Note of *Sabita*.

*My Dear Reader, You're singing Ashavari*⁶ *in the blooming sunshine. From the ghostly
window of Tamas*⁷ *I'm thinking about the sun which will also expire someday. I would
like to go to future with you to see the suicide note of Sabita*⁸. *Keep your Time Machine
ready please.*

Suicide Note-1

During long lustrous days I spread out all fuel by opening my fist
Today everything is reminiscence on the canvas of my memory
So I kept myself out of your main sequence in disregard in abandon
You gave me the avatar of white dwarf only for name sake
Tell me frankly how far you reveal my identity
*By reading the note your tears become uncontrollable. Roof of old-age home, sprouted like
fungus, is hanging in aqueous humour. Sitting at the corner, finger is counting
wrinkles of the skin.*

Suicide Note-2

There was free stage
The three dimensional love was extended over the universe
I could remember so many fusions in my hands
I could remember so many smiles, songs and waves of delight
So you bowed to live together with me
Celebration has been stopped today
Only backward movement towards the navel-root
Towards the deep suicide goal at the end of the period

By reading the note you're suddenly remembering your NRI offspring. Father is the heaven, father is the religion and father is the final cause — indistinct voice on the lap of grandfather. Left side of your chest becomes blue with pain. After a single ringtone for 'Bijoya-Pronam', a deep silence exists everywhere.

Suicide Note-3

Today all futile sighs have been solidified to iron
When too much to bear
I'd become void and dissolve in cosmos
There's also your love for *Robin*¹⁰
Oh! *Chandrashekar*¹¹, your limit has stopped my journey towards zero

By reading the note, bell of suicide is ringing at the Navel-root of separation's sorrow. But summon of justice is still awaited.

Suicide Note-4

How much could you observe in your telescopic eyes?
How much could you touch boundless infinity?
Love is another name of Absolute
Touch to see the naked star

By reading the note, your heart's door has been shut down to open the door of suppressed emotion. As a result your own suicide note remains undefined.

My Dear Reader, are you frustrated by reading our written history? How long can we bear with this unchangeable destiny written on our forehead?

Let's look for an alternative history, where there's no boundary, where we can walk with ourselves ... far ... very far away ...

At starting your foot has been tied up with information-loss paradox. Your halted steps are thinking that all your old histories will be lost in the black-hole in absence of you.

Yes that's the blind-hole keeps light to an eternal prison forever
At one end there's the black-deer eye of quantum beauty refusing to lose
[her information
If memory of old love gets wiped away, she will have only pencil in hand
Again at the other end, listen to the exultation of relativity
'I'll not leave my needle-point field without fight'

As a result you're confused. Don't get upset please. There's a solution in Hawking's finger

Fill your palette with your playroom's colours
Keep nearby brushes of different degrees of relationships
At the end of your daylight, engrave the white canvas with formless sighs of
[dead feathers
Then fill the vacant space with memories of first love

Now imagine a three dimensional hologram
Imagine that how light and darkness has poured explosive below our ribs
with the uncertainty of our position throughout the life
Granular egotism in the blood-stream has cut vein and overflows on stony path

You're free when the canvas becomes full
This'll survive in the event horizon of black-hole in absence of you
Hologram may be distorted
Let it be
Still there's a freedom in another sky from the naked darkness of prison
Freedom from the stony exultation of roofless marble palace

This is your moment.

Don't be so excited please. Wear your green Punjabi¹² before jumping.
Throw out all the gravels you have collected throughout your life. Now
spread out your wings received from *Jatinga*¹³ flying club.

Now just fly and fly
Fly away weightlessly towards uncertainty
Don't look back please
Now you're flying towards the black-hole leaving behind the earth's illusion
With Feynman's hint you have already reached to your desired universe
[where you're walking with yourself
You have achieved your alternative history

In my solitary home, through the flowing melancholies, I am still searching
for you. I shaved off my insured and systemized life from the finger-
forgotten relationship. The Banaras silk of embroidered living is just like a
burden of breast behind the brassiere. In fact, you know that, I never
created my heart's home in the left side of my chest. Yet I have lost my
beloved flute player on the way of my journey. When I turn the folded
address-book in my cerebrum, I could see a shadowy appearance of your
face. Yes, your face. A watery feeling trembles on my lips. I start becoming
a flying sky. I start thinking to setup a small picnic in the jungle, searching
for a piece of soil for green plantation. I start thinking of a complete man
from the planted copulation. I start thinking of a little stitch joining few
molecular homes, single oven. Please, let the flow of few demands, little
irrationalities continue from one hand to other. Oh my dear sensitive sky,
please turn your face towards my dream, oh my dear rain, please cascade
yourself on my finger-nourishing way. When the hazy lone path becomes
confused in the solitude, keep your fingers tight with me and give a deep
kiss on my blue lips.

And this is the moment when arrow of time will bubble up. This is the
moment when you look for infinity. Yes, I know my Dear Reader, now you
are looking for infinity. Come on my Dear Reader, I may give you its
address.

Come back from addiction of escalator
Let's go down to relativity through classical water-stair
Please unfasten the loving bondage of traditional *Bonolata Sen*¹⁴.
Wonder will see infinity has taken your finger

You've solved a lot of staircase maths
First, second, third ... going up and up
Yet you couldn't find the Absolute
As a result, you're left with only fourth dimension in hand

Don't be upset please ...

Let the time be illusory
Wonder will see the breakdown of all the boundaries
Please don't tie up the space-time
All laws of science will break down like breaking of first love with fencing

Are you frustrated about duality?
Uprooted in rough stream of life?
Come to the live-together-home of singularity
Play the tune of copulation sitting at homesick rest
Don't be afraid to be pregnant
Hold the finger of quantum virgin

Now come back to your old maths
Remember the peeling of groundnuts at *Eden garden's*^{s15} afterglow
Make the time imaginary
Wonder will see the dismissal of your real time

I know you're not able to conceive the imaginary time
Don't be upset please ...

Let's go to Nature Roy
Relax under the magic corner of her shadow
I know you're a story lover
Under her shade you can start your story of threshold crossing Celsius
When cool light of love will strike on your eyes
You'll find that the shadow has been vanished
Without your consent an arrow of time is hanging on your unconscious
[finger
When has it fasten on, you couldn't realize in stream of life

This is the moment of starting your way to return
Yes, my Dear Reader, the way of return is still open if you want to return
In tune with Nature's arrow of time

In harmony with evolution towards future

(Translated from Bengali by the author)

NOTES

1. *Abeer* — A kind of perfumed and coloured powder used by Hindus to sprinkle over one another in the festival of *Holi* (spring festival).
2. *Jamuna* — Name of a famous Indian river *Ta-ta-thoi-thoi* —Beats of Indian classical dance
3. *Ta-ta-thoi-thoi* — Beats of Indian classical dance
4. *Tughlaqi* — Ways and activities like Sultan Muhammad -bin-Tughlaq
5. *Manu* — Name of an Indian mythological saint. The son of *Manu* is named as *Manab* (Human).
6. *Ashavari* — Spirit of the heavens, Indian classical raga which is performed in the morning hours.
7. *Tamas* — darkness in Sanskrit/Bengali language.
8. *Sabita* — Sun in Sanskrit/Bengali language.
9. *Bijoya-Pronam* — Indian Bengali culture to pay respect to elders on the last day of Durgapuja festival.
10. *Robini* — Wife of the Moon. Also the fourth of the 27 stars according to Hindu astronomy.
11. *Chandrashekhara* — The Indian-American Nobel laureate Scientist.
12. *Punjabi* — long shirt originally used by men of Punjab, India.
13. *Jatinga* — Name of a village in the North-East part of India where migratory birds comes flying to suicide whenever there's drizzling of rain accompanied with fog in the moonlit night.

14. *Bonolata Sen* — A lady character in poetry of famous Bengali Poet Jibanananda Das of 20th century in India.

15. *Eden garden* — A famous park at the heart of Kolkata, India where lovers could be seen with a packet of groundnuts and peeling them to open up the romance of first love.

Alan Baker

In the Skull's House

plutonium isotopes
in the earth's crust
signal the beginning
she said
we did it
she said
our kiss
is glacial
our lusts
volcanic
our appetites
the equivalent
of an asteroid strike
when leaves speak
and raindrops
on a car's bonnet
shake in the wind
like little suns
are what arises
passes
and in its passing
peace
of ozone-forming chemicals
causing wistfulness
and a balance
of probabilities
lost in space
over tundra
in hand prints
and smoky animals
tips towards
terrible times
vegetal gloom
foreknowledge of fog
in which fish consider

the human legacy
and find it wanting
at midsummer
the sky tears itself
out of our hands
and races towards
the house of the skull
where the furniture
is archaic
luminaries hold forth
radiative forcing agents
and she knows
she must set out
to where
each footfall
is an expedition
gracing her mist
and yellow grass
to assess
the adaptive capacity
of human
and natural systems
to enter at midnight
the fallen leaf
the bleached coral
calcified rain
tropospheric
ozone changes
in the skull's
house she may
stay as long
as she likes
take the floor to argue
the case for intricate
processes involving
ocean currents
ice-cores and ancient pollen
in a language
no-one understands
on the plains

of Siberia
in winter darkness
every sly jack
gains advantage
over the movie channel
by scissors and cunning
evening news deleted
showing ways
foul underfoot
and she has lost
herself above
a cityscape
that sings like stars
whose light
hesitates
and looks embarrassed
at our plight
while the iceberg's glamour
deposited moraine
and the residue of night
with its elements of ritual
lift and leave her
with a pocketful of rye
seeping into
through carbon sequestration
the disappearing dark
of an endlessly
repeating series
of conversations
but maybe the air
they move through
nor a leafless tree
but maybe the winter
it shrinks from
not the lamp she lit
to reveal
planetary energetics
and the hydrologic cycle
nor the falcon
that the starlings fear

but maybe its knowledge
and sense of purpose
in a world
that wears us
so lightly
a shrug
might shake
us loose
to apprehend lichen
healing the sycamore's bark
a goldfinch's dipping flight
starlings assembling
the evening sky
while she remembers
how the rent-collector
took her silver
in recent geological time

Why Write Poetry Now?

“If I knew the world were going to end tomorrow, I would still plant my apple trees today” said Martin Luther, expressing a sentiment that might speak to our current dilemma. Or, we can listen to the Buddha’s teachings, and let go of attachment to temporary things, to recognise that the planet we live on, and its rare, but probably not unique system of living organisms, is a transient phenomenon. As the Diamond Sutra puts it, our world is “like a flash of lightning in a summer cloud, or a flickering lamp, an illusion, a phantom, or a dream”. Sitting at my window in a house in a leafy suburb of an English town, it’s easy to indulge in such consolations. When the supermarket shelves are empty, and people are queuing in the street for rations, maybe it won’t be so easy. Still less so if you’re a citizen of Bangladesh watching your home being swept away by the sea and your children hungry and homeless. Time to plant apple trees? In fact Martin Luther never said that, the quote being invented for him in the nineteenth century, when, in Europe at least, optimism and faith in Progress prevailed, and the end of civilization was inconceivable.

If I knew the world were going to end tomorrow, I’d seek out my loved ones; family, friends, neighbours, to attempt to shield them from the worst, or to be shielded by them. Or just to be close to them. So that we can love one another and die, as Auden didn’t say. At times of grief and crisis, we need others. We’re in that time of crisis now, and poetry is one of the forms that love and friendship might take. If that seems to be saying that poetry might be a form of comfort, then yes, it might be a form of comfort. It doesn’t have to be comforting to do that; I like poetry that shakes me up, puzzles me, antagonises me, makes me despair, fills me with joy, leaves me breathless and allows me to wallow in nostalgia. I don’t need all that in the same poem, but sometimes it happens. That elation at being taken somewhere by language, that provider of human community, is a comfort.

It seems to me that it’s always worked out badly when a poet attempts to write for posterity. The best poets in any era have written for their contemporaries. Or for themselves, and contemporaries have been lucky enough to eavesdrop. All good poetry is contemporary, whether it was written five hundred years ago or yesterday. To read and write poetry is to partake of a community, to see thought in action, to mirror it in text. To commune with the mind of another, now, not in some imagined future.

Last night I went to a poetry reading in my home town of Nottingham, England, in Five Leaves Bookshop — the first independent bookshop to open in the UK in the twenty-first century. The bookshop has become a community hub, providing succor (comfort?) in difficult times. The poet Lisa Samuels gave a reading. Samuels describes a concern of her writing as “the destructively vanishing horizon of the possibility of civic life for most people on the planet ...” and says that her poetry “ties in with eco-poetics in evading despair by paying attention and by making”.

Evading despair might be a way of shielding others and being shielded by them. Anne Waldman, describing Lisa Samuels’ poetry, could be describing almost any poetry:

“The astute focus never falters or fades. One thinks of conjuration, of prophecy where there’s no separation between a green jacket and the ambiance of an afternoon, and this sure magic will keep us safe into the future. The world joins itself in an energetic twining of language, sound, picture, impulse — ... If this is the future, bring it on.”

If this is the future, then this is the present, held in astute focus; the planting of apple trees to evade despair, the writing of poetry, paying attention and making.

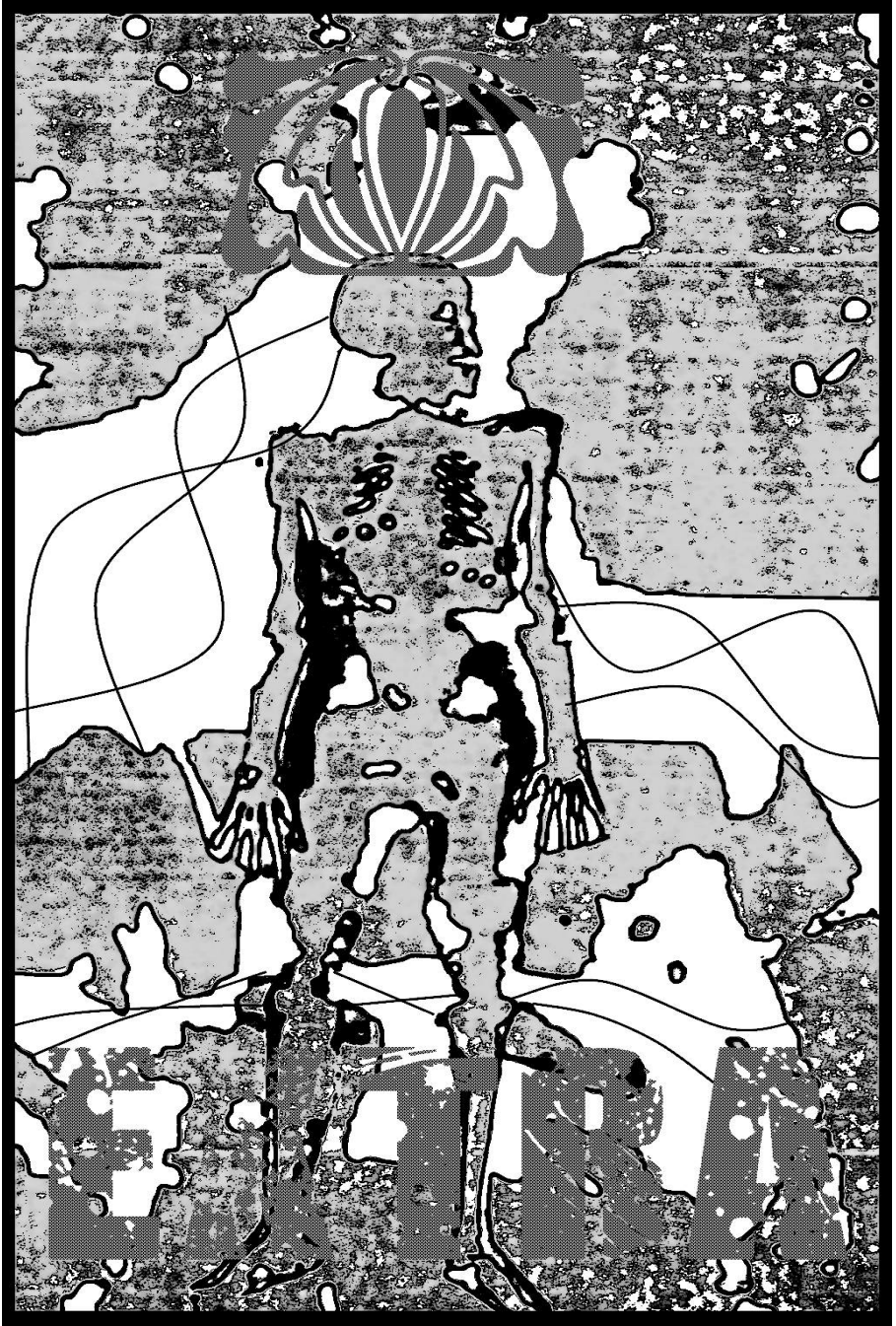
Poetry removes the barrier between one mind and another. It won’t reverse the changes in the carbon cycle that we’ve set in motion, but it might be a way of partaking in others’ anguish and joy, their anger and laughter and making it our own. We didn’t choose this world, or to be born into these times, and poetry might be a compensation for being here. As DH Lawrence put it, “We’ve got to live, no matter how many skies have fallen”.

December 2017

Carlyle Baker

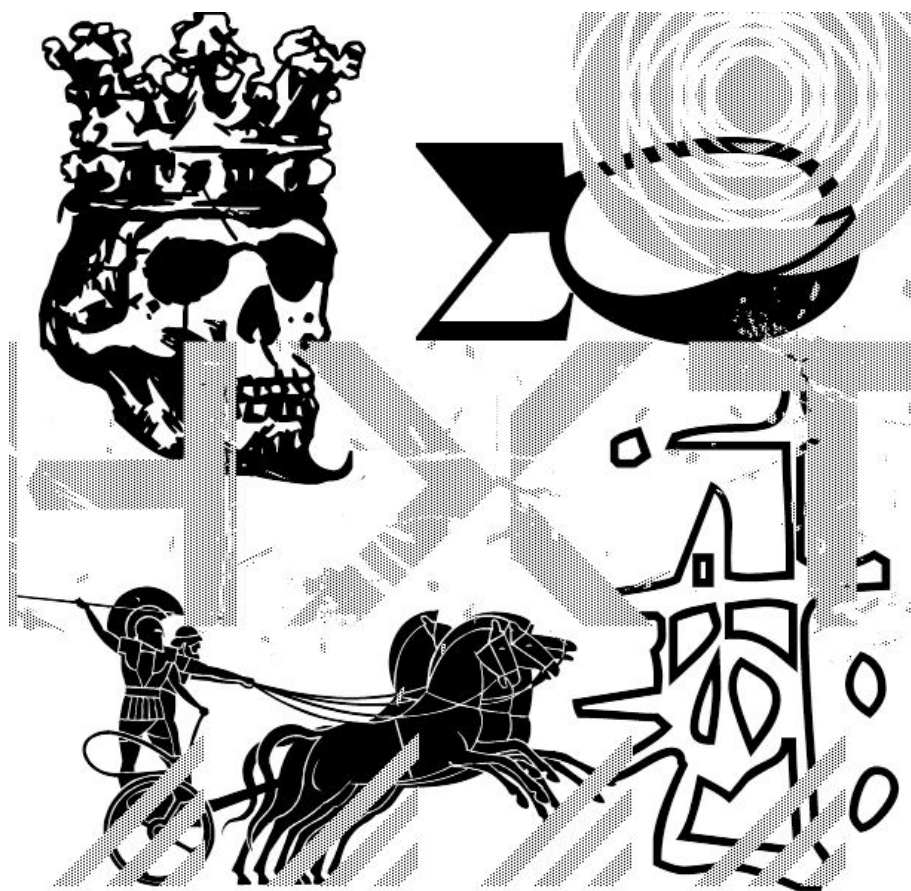
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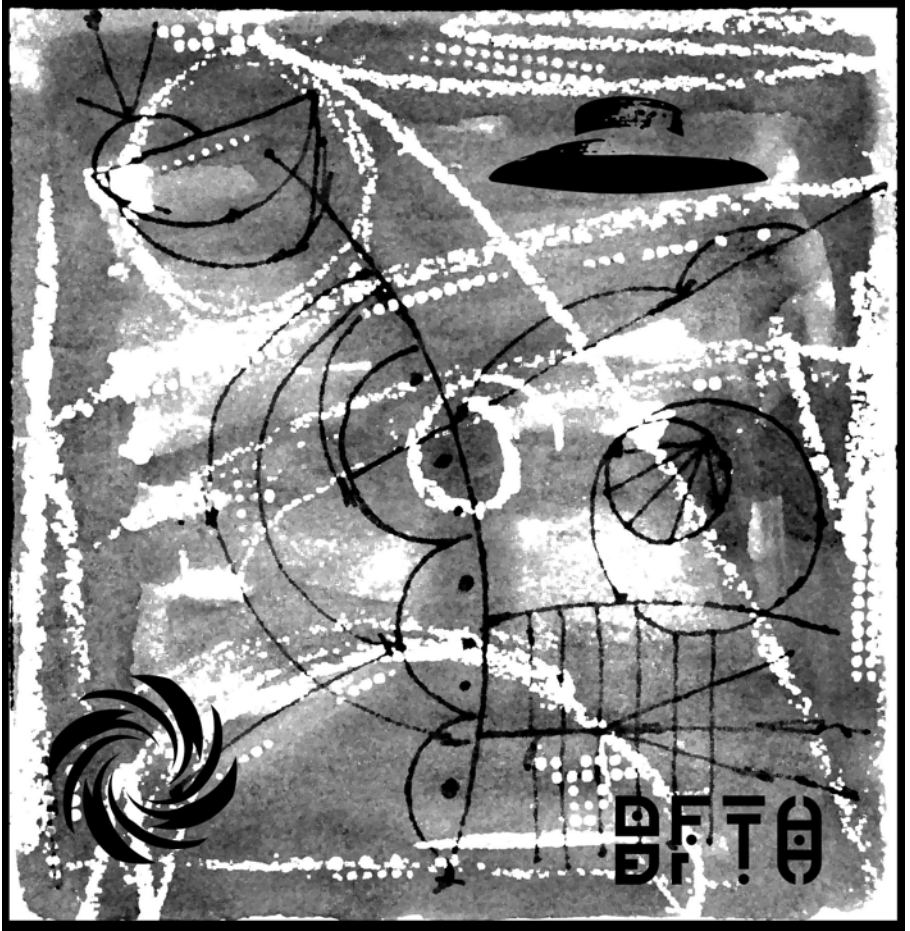
[Please see following pages]











Nora Bateson

Without Shields (the voice of change is changing)

There are ancestries and ecologies that are speaking. I am honored when their voices run through me. Only when my integrity is clean is the frequency audible. Simplicity is complexity with grace.

To be their vessel: to hold the nourishment, to wear the breath of any possible future ... is to cast aside the costumes and scripts of excuses for the damage. The exploitation that has been justified has bled through now. The language, the status and the authority once wielded to make the vulnerable quiver, now makes cuckolds of anyone who would stand in for the way things have been. Time's up.

So I stand naked, in the fire, alone in the dark night. Warrior-ready to simply disavow the matrix of materialism. Eyes rolling in disbelief. Once again the presumption ... the nerve is remarkable. Taking, tricking, claiming is the perverse providence of anyone who would adopt the stance of the oppressor. The sociopathic eagerness for wealth, influence, at any cost, is such a small shoe. No voice of life will speak through that craving mess.

I see now that this work is not daytime. I am walking barefoot through the glass of broken worlds. I have been training for generations for this. Do not try to shelter me, my soft tissues hold the fluid of forever. I can hold this pain with joy, and wash each day with the wholeness of great-great grandchildren who will one day play here. May they have soil under their fingernails.

Tom Beckett

The onset

Of unsettledness.

Masks as
Resonant as

Absence in
Plain sight.

*

The onset
Of slow

Motion demolition.
Vowels becoming

Consonants and
Gradually shattering.

*

The onset
Of consent.

Not something
Resembling it.

*

The onset
Of alternative

Tunings and
Negative space.

*

The onset
Of trembling.

The onset
Of nearly

Constant anxiety
And fear.

*

The onset
Of precarity.

Melissa Benham

Six poems from *new present time*

today we count
out empty lots

tending to steps
as psychic repair

blue or something falling
especially water

absorbed by iris
by filament & lonely

membranes take them
down into this troublemaker

body boxy unlocked
for casual entry

gave up the mark
& acceded to

dreamless walking
the yard out

to have created a simple
class of green objects

crowded in
slender stalks

replication by earth is earth
the summer complaint

of everything
is rife & incurable

rotted teeming
so well forgotten

in advance this city
could not return

to its inhabitants
their sordid window grieving

memorizing the way
back through the trees

all signals divest
the sun our light

& try to make
out those arrows

spun to no end
all points distracted

by calculation
of longest flight

to shine against blasting
just a little ash & fibers

unable to reject
absence of field

of diversion & alias
to say the world

is this or that
because you can

& will a chronic
forward motion

for cover
of weakness

to link myself in
covet a single line

calmly act as if all
land is blank under

its particles
it's not

nothing escapes forgetful
little sprawl dreams itself fast

a transformer of wood
run the joy into

extinguished shapes
in order to stay

were we flawed
varying on time-space

latticework not
the other scar spread

out to day narrowing
down to zeros

cross every escapee
the gone forever

splits out the earth's
side door gladly

inactivated island
spied the shut

down ending its
interference

whose spiriting
goes silent

in the spray narrow
to see it swallow up

the uninhabited trees
axe-makers asunder

Steve Benson

For the Time Being

Okay, what am I doing here?
Minding my business, but not only.
Knowing my names, but not just.
What was I thinking? What was thinking?

I cannot represent and do not feel a part of “my people,”
nor do these times inspire me to make common cause with “us”
at any cost to my need for and wish for fidelity to everyone.

Whom do I acknowledge, feel, as my community,
my collective sources of identification?
I am thrown back on those who inspire my love and admiration,
my desire, my trust, my wish for affiliation. Why?

One factor of these difficult times, a factor that was already diabolically influential under previous US administrations, is the dizzying confusion of pernicious and destructive actions, practices, and non-events that are reported in any public media and their largely unacknowledged interrelationships and effects on the lives of people — individuals, family groups, tribes and collectivities — close to oneself and around the world. I may try to gaze longer, listen more closely, to those who affirm their right to learn, care, and share their kindness, on any scale.

We rise to the occasion as we realize, repeatedly, redundantly, that all the changes that have occurred, that may now occur, and that will occur, all are interdependent and therefore may affect anyone and likely do affect everyone — including our fellow non-human species and the capacities of our planet for life and evolution. With the ever-more-extraordinary elaborations of statistics, fake news, rhetorical speech acts, and euphemism, every sense of event is compromised, and limning their relations of cause-and-effect or sequence and motivations becomes hopelessly disempowered.

So, as world citizens, increasingly we find ourselves rendered not only passive consumers but functionally performative as drone workers — in our invisible holding tanks, we keep the system going, without any

appreciable influence over *its* actual consequences. All effort and movements to compromise consolidated authority appear theoretical and hypothetical, posited on a more rational, compassionate human matrix of values and decisions, one somehow guided by collectively asserted will and consent.

I come to believe (momentarily? or irresistibly? it's hard to tell) that either life's circumstances and organization will soon change drastically and catastrophically for the better or they will continue to change incrementally and insidiously for the worse. One may hope that either sort of change, as its seeming or real inevitability emerges, will be realized without violence, even while one dreads the many certain forms and effects of violence to come.

To study on contemporary currents even momentarily is to face the effusively reported lethality of any clash of cultures or expectations. The many enumerations of fatality distracts one from registering the depth of physical and psychological trauma, loss, poverty, and other intimate and systemic oppressions that occur simultaneously with the killings in any given news story. A tacit sense that survival is preferable to death abides within our discourse, but one dreads finding that this may become an increasingly murky and less sensible calculation. As parents, we may find that we avoid prematurely grieving for the children who survive us.

Poetry is a refuge in the immediate present, then, for me — my moment of reading or writing. Poetry hails me, as a partner in this present act, and I respond, wondering what poetry is, and thinks I am, in inquiry. Such a moment of uncontested and sometimes irrational sanity is not only refreshing but centering, vital, and loving. It takes so little force, effort, or commitment. Like other forms of mindfulness practice, this continuous present requires only a returning to it, again and again.

It doesn't occur to me to rule out engagement with this opening of possibility in personal and interpersonal experience, but I admit it may be a dangerously at-risk idiom of awareness. The attitude that things are coming to pass just as they may as well be, as usual, threatens to destroy poetry.

I will write, awed that anyone ever can and will read or hear the result, and never know (as usual) what they make of it, how it means to them. I will make my writings as well as I can without assumptions, but with curiosity.

Charles Bernstein

The Bluebird of Happiness

Lakeside no one mourns
About the flow of capital
To private vaults just
Off shore from the
Anthropocenes. Tools
In the China cupboard
Will repair only so much
Damage of the damage.
Lakeside there's no
Time for futile regret
Or nursing grievances
Like the ICU orderly
Who forgets to look
Back. One day when I
Get famous people will
Stop saying *you're gonna*
Fall and cry. It will
go without saying.

Anselm Berrigan

Pantoum for the end of the world

I follow selected shadows into prior arrangements
Like dirty snow on that dirty beard dirty Santa orders to go

If you give a moose a space cake, mind the catchy kill-yourself hum
Are you the bent addressee my disquiet desires to mug forever?

Like dirty snow on that dirty bird dirty Santa ordered to go
Every box shoved into the violence necessary to put hands to material

Are you the bent addressee my disquiet desires to mug forever?
Tanaka tee eating sweet meats on tv

Every box shoved into the violence necessary to put hands to material
For the festering helmet of lamp doom playing at systems was obvious

Tanaka tee eating sweet meats on tv
Just fucked up enough to play five-second rule with the grid

For the festering helmet of lamp doom playing at systems was obvious
Do you respect your desire to be admonished internally?

Just fucked up enough to play five-second rule with the grid
One puts the analysis of choice in one's ones

Do you respect your desire to be admonished internally?
I follow selected shadows into prior arrangements

One puts the analysis of choice in one's ones
If you give a moose a space cake, mind the catchy kill-yourself hum



It seems to me that, as one of the editors of this thing, I should treat the questions we asked contributors as if they were a literal questionnaire, and to try to answer them directly. Or at least as directly as I know how, which, well, we'll see. Anything less would be asking more of others than I am asking of myself. So, without further ado:

How does what we've done, what we continue to do, to our only planet affect what you write?

I find myself unable to write about anything else. Tho what I do isn't exactly writing, it's closer to collage. Leaving that aside, I feel the need to drastically explain what I mean by "I find myself unable to write about anything else." Writing after Auschwitz, so to speak, does not necessarily mean limiting one's writing to descriptions of massive piles of shoes and of crematoria, it means, to me at least, never writing anything without acknowledging on some level that every human experience is now and for as far into the future as I can foresee in the shadow of Auschwitz. Just in case I need to be clear about this, I am using Auschwitz as a metaphor because Theodor Adorno's quote is so well known. There is nothing special about Auschwitz per se. I could have used the metaphor of the wake, or of the hold, as do Christina Sharpe and Fred Moten, or any of a number of others, just as well. I could have said bury my heart at Wounded Knee.

Yet this time is different. The metaphors of late modernity are inadequate when it comes to what we have done and are continuing to do to the planet. Because this time we are at the same time those inside the crematorium, those releasing the Zyklon-B, and also its manufacturer. We are the slave, the ship's captain, the ship's owner, the slaveowner, the auctioneer (and of course it's not only Africans who have been enslaved). Everyone who is at all part of the world economy is killing the world.

I am well aware how cavalier my use of "we" is. Not everyone is equally implicated as the villains in the piece. Some, the formerly and the still colonized, for examples, are just stuffed in the trunk of the car as the masters of the universe drive it off the cliff. I am using "we" for rhetorical effect, not for sociopolitical accuracy. So who am I referring to? Do I mean you, who are reading these words? Do I mean me? Hmmm ... to steal a phrase from Jerome Rothenberg's "Cokboy", could be, could be ... for more on who "we" are and aren't, and more about varying degrees of "we"-ness, see texts like Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the*

Poor, Davi Kopenawa, *The Falling Sky: Words of a Yanomami Shaman*, Peter K. J. Park, *Africa, Asia, and the History of Philosophy: Racism in the Formation of the Philosophical Canon, 1780–1830*, and any number of works by Epeli Hau’ofa, Donna Haraway, Franz Fanon, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, etc.

This is to admit — no, to emphasize — that not all, not even all who are part of the world economy, are equally guilty. Billions of people have hands that are relatively clean. Of course — beyond a a scintilla of a sliver of a shadow of doubt — the Heartland Institute, which is made up of paid global warming deniers, and those who pay them on behalf of whom they lie, are orders of magnitude guiltier than those who live on islands that are now doomed to go under water because their choice is between electricity and nothing. Or those who live in refugee camps, just because trucks bring them food, etc. etc. How guilty are the guiltiest? Well, Edward Teller, of all people, spoke at the 1959 *Energy and Man* symposium organized by the American Petroleum Institute and the Columbia Graduate School of Business, which more than 300 energy big big bigwigs attended, and told them that

Whenever you burn conventional fuel, you create carbon dioxide. [...] The carbon dioxide is invisible, it is transparent, you can’t smell it, it is not dangerous to health, so why should one worry about it?

Carbon dioxide has a strange property. It transmits visible light but it absorbs the infrared radiation which is emitted from the earth. Its presence in the atmosphere causes a greenhouse effect [...] It has been calculated that a temperature rise corresponding to a 10 per cent increase in carbon dioxide will be sufficient to melt the icecap and submerge New York. All the coastal cities would be covered, and since a considerable percentage of the human race lives in coastal regions, I think that this chemical contamination is more serious than most people tend to believe.

If you haven’t done anything but lie for profit for the past sixty years that’s pretty fucking guilty.

Nevertheless, I am willing to be rhetorical here. I would prefer that some, such as No’u Revilla, who you will find later in this book, say, “Now wait a minute, John, not so fast” than to let anyone who reads these words who *should* look in the mirror, not do so.

Besides, it doesn't matter which we is responsible for what at this point. On 6 October 2018, just as we're finishing up editing this anthology, the IPCC issued a new report. We have 12 years to keep the temperature from rising more than 1.5⁰ C by 2100. Any more than that and the earth turns into Hell Planet for billions of people. Massive changes in the way we do everything are necessary to keep to 1.5⁰. You know and I know that ain't gonna happen. No chance. What's really gonna happen by the end of the century? A 3-4⁰ world. Sorry, kids. And by kids I mean your kids, my kids and their kids, for thousands of years. And the next generations of every single species on earth.

So the present is different because we are now as guilty of what we've done to the future as we are of what we've done in the past.

Another way to say what I am trying to say would be to suggest that, in order to keep it useful, we (or at least I) need to rewrite some lines from Benjamin's ninth thesis on history:

A Klee painting named 'Angelus Novus' shows an angel looking as though he is about to move away from something he is fixedly contemplating. His eyes are staring, his mouth is open, his wings are spread. This is how one pictures the angel of history. His face is turned toward the past, *which is at the same time the future*. Both ways, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay and make whole what has been *and what will be* smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such a violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him *he knows not where*, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call ... *what we used to call ... now we don't know what to call it, really*.

This double knowledge, that we are as hemmed in by a nightmare future as much as we are by a nightmare past (to rewrite Marx, "all dead *and future* generations weigh like a nightmare on the brains of the living"), is (since it has infected my entire being) present in all my work.

When you think about the future, and potential readers, or the lack of same, how does that affect what you write?

As best I can tell, I write for the living. I can't even imagine what to say to those who come after besides I am so sorry. Which I hope my work also says in case someone happens to find it and read it, somewhere down the road. I find a lot of freedom in this, in the sense I don't have the burden of writing for what Walter Pater called "the paradox of posthumous fame." I also find the ridiculousness of writing at all liberating. I can just ... blow my old lonesome horn, to quote Robert Johnson's "Walking Blues." At the same time, I have to acknowledge that I am somehow dependent on a "yet to come," which is a concept from Abdellatif Laâbi's, "Chronicle of the Citadel of Exile." It was written from prison:

Write.

Impossible to do otherwise. I have racked my brains about this need which has taken me over. For such a long time now. And which means that the reality before me is always dependent on another reality, yet to come. (in Laâbi's *In Praise of Defeat*, tr. Donald Nicholson-Smith)

If you were to say to me, well, this was written from prison, prisoners need a "yet to come," why do I need one? I'd say I usually write as if I am I am sending a letter to one or another particular friend. But, riffing on the prison thing, without in any way making light of the plight of those in actual jails and prisons, everyone on this post-Holocene planet which now has CO2 levels that haven't been seen since the Pliocene (3-5 million years ago) is in a prison of sorts. Call it The Blue Marble All Gaia Security Housing Unit. To which each and every one of us is sentenced for life. No possibility of parole or escape. Tom Cohen, for one, writes brilliantly about those who are sharpening spoons to dig their way out. See the essay of his we have included in this book. Personally, I think those (Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Richard Branson, etc. — is it a coincidence they are all boys?) who think a viable prison break possible (keyword "viable") are more than a little bit delusional I mean, they might get there, wherever there is, but then what? They'll just be in another wing of the SHU, and in even worse lockdown there than we ("the remnant") will be here.

And yet. Let me quote at some length (while eliminating her parenthetical sources, which are unintelligible without her bibliography) from Adeline Johns-Putra, "Borrowing the World: Climate Change Fiction and the Problem of Posterity" (which I found at Academia.edu):

I speak of the life of a man who knows that the world is not given by his fathers, but borrowed from his children; who has undertaken to cherish it and do it no damage, not because he is duty-bound, but because he loves the world and loves his children. (Wendell Berry, *The Unforeseen Wilderness: An Essay on Kentucky's Red River Gorge*)

In 1971, activist-author Wendell Berry, writing about the Red River Gorge in his beloved Kentucky, invoked the trope of a natural world not granted by our forebears but on loan from our descendants — the biosphere held in trust, as it were, for generations to come. The re-publication of part of Berry's work in *Audubon* magazine soon after led to a misattribution of them to John James Audubon, and, in 1973, when Dennis Hall, an official at Michigan's Office of Land Use, adapted them without citation, he was erroneously credited also. Similarly, Australian Environment Minister Moses Cass's use of it in a speech to the OECD in 1974 meant that the adage has sometimes been ascribed to him. From the 1980s onwards, the phrase was quoted in speeches and reprinted on book-jackets and in report by-lines — by, among others, representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Wildlife Fund. Paul and Anne Ehrlich attributed it to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and an article in the *Christian Science Monitor* assigned it to environmentalist Lester Brown of the Worldwatch Institute. The *Los Angeles Times* asserted that it was an Amish saying, United States Secretary of State James Baker named Ralph Waldo Emerson as its author, and the United States Council on Environmental Quality claimed the source to be Chief Seattle.

I have described these mis-attributions in detail not simply to offer an object lesson in the portability of provenance, but to suggest that this pithy aphorism has been so durable, so willingly and wishfully assigned to a range of wise and venerable sources, because it strikes a deep and resonant chord. The idea that our relationship with the biosphere is automatically a matter of posterity is a powerful one [...]

It is, for example, what gives especial power to British poet Ruth Padel's haunting climate change poem 'Slices of Toast', an effective

piece of environmentalist poetry thanks to its evocation of the poet's child. The poem's lyrical description of environmental crisis is occasioned by a warm winter's day that is 'almost too warm'; it begins with memories of the colder winters of childhood and ends with worries about the future world. Anxieties about disruptions in ocean flows, melting polar icecaps, and deadly weather events segue into the poet's memory of events at a public lecture by environmentalist James Lovelock: 'A woman in the auditorium asks: *If all you say / is true, what should we be teaching our children?*', to which Lovelock's deflated and defeated response is simply '*I don't know. I really don't know*' (emphasis in original). All this then turns out to be addressed, along with a final, unanswerable plea, to the poet's daughter. For if, indeed, all Lovelock says is true, then, 'the only answer is *commando skills. / Fight to the death for any high ground you're standing on / my darling*' (emphasis in original). Importantly (as shall subsequently become apparent), the poet acknowledges the small-mindedness of this 'terrible readiness / to worry about your own family first'; yet, she cannot help, in the poem's poignant last lines, but 'think *my daughter, my daughter, / how is she going to deal with this?*' (emphasis in original).

As Johns-Putra notes, Lee Edelman and others have critiqued this "reproductive futurism." Without getting into that, I do think that even Edelman writes with the belief (hope?) that their work will be read. Which means a "posterity" of some sort ...

One of the contributors to this feature wrote me and said, "Given how you and Richard Lopez state it in your invitation, there probably is no point in writing poetry or anything else ..." My return email included the following response: "... while we are alive, however battered, there will always be a place for poetry ... I don't think Essie Parrish needed a guaranteed future in order to keep walking and walking ... and I definitely know her friend Mabel McKay didn't ... as Mabel said, we're going to burn, but in the meantime, we do the best we can." When I added that I wrote for the living, he replied, "I also write for the living, including myself of course, though on particular occasions I think of the poetry as a conduit for the dead, not to them so much as from them." At that point, I was struck with this thought: how sad it will be when we finally do go extinct, no one will be left to act as a conduit for the dead (in Benjaminian terms, even the potential

for a “weak messianic power” will have come to an end). How dead will we all be then? We will be dead as dead can be. That left me feeling very sad.

*Under these circumstances, do you ever wonder **why** you write?*

No. Yes. No. A long time ago I came across or made up the phrase, “the way of poetry is immortal.” Emphasis not on poetry, but on “the way.” Whether immortal was the right word or not, the point was, and for me still is, it’s a way of being in the world, it’s a way of *doing* in the world. When I was seventeen, an Event took place, a revelation, that this was *my* way of being and doing in the world. Badiou would be proud of me, since ever since that day, I’ve been utterly faithful to it.

How does all this make you feel?

Sad. Angry. Anxious. Depressed. And guilty, very guilty. But then again, since Herbert Huncke’s “guilty of everything” has *always* rung true to me, as has Curtis Mayfield’s “If there’s a hell below, we’re all going to go” I kind of think that the “end of the world” has just intensified my guilty feeling. Being a human has had me feeling that way for a long time now, decades and decades. Tho I love many individuals, we’ve always been a shit species and have always fucked things up.

What keeps you going?

My animal vitality, which just keeps chugging in spite of everything (from my lips to Your ears, as they say). Therefore I still make things out of language, because that’s my jam. I feel so alive when I do it. And we still have to live, I mean, I still *want* to live. I briefly quoted Mabel McKay above. Here’s the whole quote:

“Everybody’s going to burn,” Mabel said. “That’s what I see now.” She was looking at the very dry, late September hills near Highway 80, just east of Fairfield. We were on our way back to the Rumsey Wintun Reservation, where Mabel was living at the time, after she’d given a talk to several students and faculty at Stanford University about her doctoring and basket-weaving. It was late in the day, early evening, and the thick autumn light had turned the hills ocher red. The ocher red color no doubt called up her Dream. She’d talked a lot about her Dream lately, and I knew enough to know what she

was referencing: her vision of what would happen near the end of the world as we know it. “‘Everything’s going to go dry’, Spirit said. ‘No water going to be anywhere.’” “What can we do?” I asked. “How do we live?” Mabel began laughing, chuckling to herself out loud. “That’s cute,” she said, then, mocking me, repeated, “What do we do now? How do we live?” I was used to her making fun of me, of my countless questions — as used as I was to her talk of Dreaming. “No, seriously,” I countered. “If the world’s going to dry up and burn, what do we do?” She turned to me, took a moment to make sure she had my attention, then she answered, plainly, “You live the best way you know how, what else?” (Greg Sarris, 2013 preface to his *Mabel McKay: Weaving the Dream* (McKay, b.1907, was a Pomo Indian))

Tommy Pico, on whose Kumeeyaay land I find myself living these days, may be right to have written, in *Junk*, that ‘Ppl are too busy callin themselves ‘poets’ to notice the canary died’ ... he’s right about that. Besides, “I’m scared / I don’t know how to take it all the way” (Blaise Cendrars, “The Prose of the Trans-Siberian’, tr. Ron Padgett) ... but I’m taking it as far as I can. Writing is living the best way I know how. That may say a lot about me which isn’t very flattering. But that’s who I am. Besides, I don’t see any point in stopping, or, better, as Van Morrison put it, “It’s too late to stop now.” Sometimes, back in the day, he’d follow that up with a Rockettes-style kick. What good would stopping do? What difference did it make that his leg barely got as high as his waist?

Daniel Borzutzky

The Performance of Becoming Human

On the side of the highway a thousand refugees step off a school bus and into a sun that can only be described as “blazing.”

The rabbi points to the line the refugees step over and says: “That’s where the country begins.”

This reminds me of Uncle Antonio. He would have died had his tortured body not been traded to another country for minerals.

Made that up.

This is a story about diplomatic protections.

The refugees were processed through Austria or Germany or maybe Switzerland.

Somehow they were discovered in some shit village in some shit country by European soldiers and taken to an embassy where they were promptly bathed, injected with vaccines, interrogated, etc.

Their bodies were traded by country A in exchange for some valuable natural resource needed by country B.

There was only one gag, says the rabbi, as he tucks his children into bed. So the soldiers took turns passing the filthy thing back and forth between the mouths of the two prisoners. The mother and son licked each other’s slobber off the dirty rag that had been in who knows how many other mouths.

You love to write about this, don’t you?

I am paid by the word for my transcriptions. Just one more question about the gag.

He wants to know what color the gag was, what it was made of, how many mouths had licked it. Hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands?

They used their belts to bind them by the waist to the small cage they were trapped in.

Everything reminds me of a story about an ape captured on a boat by a group of European soldiers who showed him how to become human by teaching him how to spit and belch.

Everything is always about the performance of becoming human.

Observing a newly processed refugee, the rabbi says: "I have seen those blue jeans before."

At times like this, he thinks: I can say just about anything right now.

This is, after all, a bedtime story for the end of the world:

I am moving beneath the ground and not sleeping and trying to cross the border from one sick part of the world to another.

But where is the light and why does it not come in through your bloody fingers?

You hold your bloody fingers before my eyes and there is light in them but I cannot see it.

You say: There are countries in my bloody fingers. I am interested in the borders.

Or: I am interested in the gas chambers in your collapsible little fingers.

You put them to my face and I see your hands open and in them I see a thick wall and a sky and an ocean and ten years pass and it is still nighttime and I am falling and there are bodies on the ground in your bloody hands.

Think about the problem really hard then let it go and when you least expect it a great solution will appear in your mind.

The broken bodies stand by the river and wait for the radiation to trickle out of the houses and into their skin.

They stand under billboards and sniff paint and they know the eyes that watch them own their bodies.

A more generous interpretation might be that their bodies are shared between the earth, the state and the bank.

The sentences are collapsing one by one and the bodies are collapsing in your bloody hands and you stitch me up and pray I will sleep and you tell me of the shattered bus stops where the refugees are waiting for the buses to take them to the mall where they are holding us now and there is a man outside our bodies making comments about perspective and scale and light and there is light once more in your bloody fingers.

All I see is the sea and my mother and father falling into it.

Again? That's like the most boring image ever.

The water is frozen and we are sleeping on the rocks and watching the cows on the cliff and you tell me they might fall and break open and that sheep and humans and countries will fall out of them and that this will be the start of the bedtime story you will tell me on this our very last night on earth.

Come closer, you say, with your eyes.

Move your bloody face next to mine and rub me with it. We are dying from so many stories. We are not complete in the mind from so many stories of burning houses, missing children, slaughtered animals. Who will put the stories back together and who will restore the bodies? I am working towards the end but first I need a stab, a small slice. The stories they are there but we need a bit more wit. We need something lighter to get us to the end of this story. Did you hear the one about the guy who picked up chicks by quoting the oral testimonies of the illiterate villagers who watched their brothers and sisters get slaughtered?

Or:

Andalé andalé arriba arriba welcome to Tijuana you cannot eat anymore barbecued iguana.

Have you met Speedy Gonzales' cousin?

His name is Slow Poke Rodrigues.

En español se llama Lento Rodrigues.

He's a drunk little fucking mouse.

His predator, the lazy cat baking in the sun, thinks he will taste good with chili peppers but there's something I forgot to tell you. Slow Poke always pack a gun and now he's going to blow your flabbergasted feline face off.

It was 1987 and my friends from junior high trapped me on the floor and mashed bananas in my face and sang: It's no fun being an illegal alien!

The puddy cat guards the AJAX cheese factory behind the fence, right across the border.

The wetback mice see the gringo cheese.

They smell the gringo cheese.

Your gringo cheese it smells so good.

They need Speedy Gonzales to get them some ripe, fresh, stinky gringo cheese.

Do you know this Speedy Gonzales, asks one of the starving wetback mice.

I know him, Speedy Gonzales frens with my seester (mice laugh). Speedy Gonzales frens with everybody's seester.

Ha ha ha the little border-crossing, sneak-fucking mice think it's cute that they're invading our culture to steal our cheese but it don't make a difference because you and I (cue the rhythm and blues) we are taking a stroll on the electrified fence of love cause I feel a little Southern Californian transnational romance coming on right about now.

I feel like Daniel from the Karate Kid because I too once had a Southern Californian experience where I wasn't aware I was learning ancient Japanese secrets when I was waxing on and waxing off and I am with you Mr. Miyagi in Reseda.

I am with you Mr. Miyagi in Pasadena.

And I am with you Mr. Miyagi at the All Valley Karate tournament.

And I am with you Mr. Miyagi in Okinawa where you went in Karate Kid II to meet your long lost girlfriend when you discovered that she wasn't married off when she was just a teenager to your fiercest Okinawan rival.

And I am with you Mr. Miyagi in Tijuana where it's murder and diarrhea and always kinda kinky.

But seriously, friends:

What *do* you make of this darkness that surrounds us?

They chopped up two dozen bodies last night and today I have to pick up my dry cleaning.

In the morning I need to assess student learning outcomes as part of an important administrative initiative to secure the nation's future by providing degrees of economic value to the alienated, urban youth.

So for now hasta luego compadres and don't worry too much about the bucket of murmuring shit that is the unitedstatesian night.

What does it say? What does it say? What do you want it to say?

Lake Michigan, Scene 5

The beach falls

So they say

The infected beach falls sky downwards

The city falls under the astral balls

The city sways from one side of the street to the other

The infected beach whines and screeches

The exhaustion of anticipating collapse

The infected beach falls next to another infected beach

The city is bored with forgetting that the chase for victims is not supposed to be boring

The city takes the first shot and the beach crumbles

We don't speak as they shoot or we're beaten

We don't cry as they shoot or we're beaten

The police photograph the dying beach before it sinks

The beach gets closer to the bottom

The beach falls and falls and the city tells us that from now on our names are no longer our names

The city screams to the dying beach Stop! Being! Dead!

The city empties its glocks into the beach and weeps

The city lights candles sings ceremonial songs to commemorate its own death

The story begins and ends with the infected beach collapsing

Because the beach is dead the city can now love itself

Because the beach is dead the city can now see itself as a helpless victim of history

The waves are howling

The sand is howling

We cheer for the dying beach because if we don't cheer the city beats us

It starves us

It shoves septic things into our noses and mouths

The city keeps smashing the dying beach

Smashing and smashing till the sand and the rocks are obliterated

It says to the dying beach don't die we love you so much

But the beach keeps dying

And the city keeps shooting it

And we pray that when the sun comes up we will have another beach

And I pray that when the sun comes up I will have another body

After Plato threw the poets out of The Republic some were sent to countries where they kill you and others were sent to countries where they couldn't give a fuck about the stupid shit poets have to say

The dying beach swirls in the wind

A creek grows out of the sand but it's quickly exterminated

The middle of the story keeps asking to become the end

But form cannot contain the burden of the dying beach

There are no rocks to sit on anymore

There are only dead fish ash holes where once there was sand

Lake Michigan, Scene 6

The golden sand of Lake Michigan was here

The chromium spilled from the US Steel plant in Portage, Indiana was here

The raw sewage was here

The animal waste was here

The waters that in the sunlight reminded Simone de Beauvoir of silk and flashing diamonds were here

The seagulls were here

The liquid manure was here

The birds colonized by E.coli were here

The police removing the homeless bodies on the beach were here

The police removing the illegal immigrants on the beach were here

The police beating the mad bodies on the beach were here

The public hospitals were not here and the police had nowhere to take the sick ones to so they kicked them in the face handcuffed them and took them to jail

A woman screamed and the external police review board heard nothing

No one heard the woman screaming and no one saw the children vomiting

No vomiting children wrote the external review board no dead or decaying animals

The members of the external police review board belong to the Democratic party and they love to play with their children on the beach

They belong to the ACLU and they love to play with their pets on the beach

They volunteer at their kids' schools and they don't believe in the bones of the disappeared

The pigs colonized by E.coli were here

The cattle colonized by E.coli were here

The humans colonized by E.coli were here

The police were here and they murdered two boys and the external police review board saw nothing

The Private World

Did you hear the one about the man they found torched in a garbage can

The police shoved a gas-soaked gag in his mouth and lit a match

The psychiatrists came quickly to counsel the police officers who were required to set the body on fire

They fed them the appropriate medications, soothed them with the appropriate words, taught them the proper techniques to heal themselves so that they might be able to survive their minds in the murmurs of the rotten carcass economy

Hello. What talks to you at night?

Are you haunted by the voices of the immigrants who suffocated in a truck abandoned on the side of the Arizona highway?

The driver locked them in the back and went off to have a few drinks at the Bar of Good Fortune in Maricopa County

He didn't mean to be gone for sixteen hours

He didn't mean to drink so much he passed out and left them in a truck with no air or water

Oh well

Only a couple died

Ugly people

Actually, he said, I prefer my nightmares with a more urban twist

Meet E

He was shot 7 times at the bus stop last month

Stupid hair

It looked like all the other hair and the shooter thought it was J's hair

They shot him 7 times

Did you hear the one about the refugees who could make the bus stop explode?

The refugees were waiting at the bus stop for the bus to transport them from one detention center to another

They were from New Orleans

They were from Mexico

They were from Rwanda, Iraq, Eritrea, Chicago, Detroit, Sudan, Guatemala, El Salvador, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Syria, etc.

They were from my neighborhood and when they came to your neighborhood their bodies appeared as fields of wheat in flames

A trick of the camera and now they are collapsing bridges that toss foreign cars into an angry, salty ocean

They brought the refugees to the morgue and asked them to imagine their faces on the bodies of birds

It was a gesture developed in a think tank

Their deaths will be easier if they can fly off in a certain direction

The dying man had two bodies

One body was bound for the private world

The other body was bound for another private world

A mouth said: There is only this world

A belly said: They have privatized the forest, the clouds, the sky, the rocks, the water, the trees, the bees, the flowers, the moon

A mouth said: The workers must defend against the privatization of everything

It spat bricks and when the bricks crashed against the sidewalk some little bodies fell out of them

They were replicas of the bodies killed when the coal mine collapsed in West Virginia, China, Colombia, Chile, South Africa, Utah, Bosnia, etc.

Their lungs were black and when you touched their black faces their skin disappeared

Revolutionary violence disgusts me, the voice said

A voice said: My bones were torn apart first by the police and then by the revolutionaries

They were struggling to solve the same question:

What does it mean to give up your body for an abstraction?

We dragged our bodies to the bank

We sang to the bankers: We feel the need to blame someone for our collective misery

The bankers sang: We are your brothers

Take these bones and suck on them

Take these cubes of ice and rub each other cold as you make love in this horrible vacuum

Brothers, it's okay to set yourselves on fire, to mutilate your bodies and to protest what you don't understand

Do you want to know a secret?

There is a machine in my mouth that spits and eats and spits and eats and spits and spits and eats

Cadavers, chickens, olives, Easter eggs, bones, blood, words, sand, teeth,
children, mountains, deserts, leaves, ghosts, sewers, rivers, mouths,
humiliations, calloused hands, sperm, bubbles, wind, blood, rain
The machine wants to do something to your body

It wants to exterminate its empire

It wants to melt your body to bleach your body to fry your body to hold
your body to redden your body to freeze your body to lick your body to
know your body to explode your body to birth your body to make you
vomit and twist into a night cursed with shame and fear

Sorry, sing the bankers to the proletariat, you don't really exist right now

A glitch in the system

Nothing that can't be fixed

By a full-scale overhaul

Of absolutely everything

Daniel f Bradley

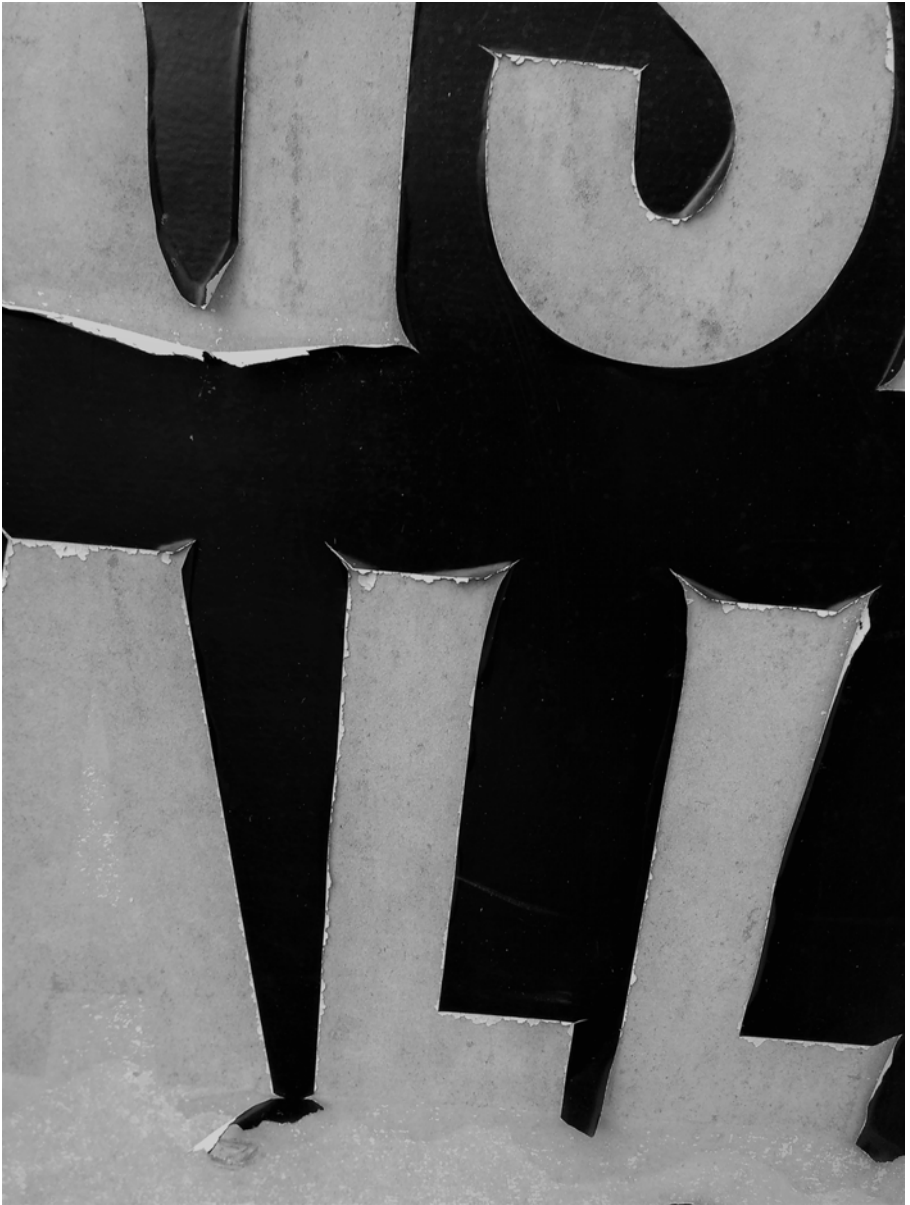
Untitled Images

[Please see following pages]















Helen Bridwell

I Was Right Dear

I imagine the economy
must pause
& an animal
come out to clean it.
under the stars
slept the 7 dwarfs,
I meant stairs —
large & in charge,
I meant swept —
& small enough for all.

& from these roses leaping from our laps
strangers' snails snarl.

to ready & really use all your shit,
sorry if this is obvious
but configure to perfection your counterfactuals.
when a SJW would've been a misogynist if all the shit
misogynists bruit actually were so, that
is when feminism roots the TARDIS
to install Jarvis, so.
not just "a"
but the best, their king,

two paths diverged in a
/ half stank of blood.
"why fight if we're already dead"
Group C:
it's not visible at every scale
you come across this every decade
a fork in the doggerel —

Poem.

One of several poets I have published says they like words.
The reason for this drive to the pasture

to observe horses at play
It is all goosing one another
and pushing this pony or that one with a squeal
and a splash into the infinity pool in the pasture
where there is a clump of snow in one corner
and down its slope a big shed with a dark doorway
where a white horse wanders out
and jumping in afterwards and you smooch.
Nowadays those you push into pools
all have an iPhone in their pocket
and the pools you push them into all are infinite.

Group C are right,
poetry's
opportunity cost
is politics:
you could've really
over ten years approx.
added together your poems
and sort of swapped
to forestall an actual murder
stop torture.

it was good
so good
to get the words down
just right, to drain
the swan.

like president donald trump,
who promised he would 'drain the swamp'
turn corruption from the citadel
be America's first black president
I love showers
dogs
and the 1 in 10 cops do good
and a freak shit that no food fed
nor did it choose to come
nor was it
(cf. Lucretius on the daylong mansplain drawn

from the thews)
newspun from sinew
and I love getting the words just right
and that there is a small beard dude in the 7
dwarfs
that satan cannot find supposedly
and that site Quora. Why did Trump
get to be America's first black president?
Quora. An even better question might be,
why do we set two spouts apart
on the night our
person wears our appetites?

Then one spout responds a
the loins
and b the mouth.
Terrific salad, for instance,
avail
-able ... anti-semites' many-fingered cornucopia ...
"Chibi Robocops cut into the very cherry-crystal
that their *moult*-mulled breath in anticipation mists" ... still
packing
for vacation
After 7 days etc. Obsv. Or
a second spout avers:
Prism Warders,
we warm a spectrum
of pilot-light clumped 5 at discrete temperature points ok
out of 7 total = 2 spigots over for object & subject etc.
Like a topsy turvy crown plaited to a plumbed-in candelabrum
to save. Send diagram: franciscrot@gmail.com
Cc:
Bcc: webuilttoomanywalls@gmail.com
Task force task force you have only to ask worse.
Quora.
How do we name the 7 (?) without system (?)?
Have we decided where we're meeting satan?
Did ...
Doc,
"Mister mister I can make you my sister"

“Doc,”

Did u forget to water like a fucking potted
plant like I asked u to my subject while I was
away packing for vacation upstairs? &
Who will login in, with NOTHING, to my pronoun? I
With one White eye. One of color.
I will, I will, who won't withhold u
the knots in your throats.
Knives knives we will never be wives,

& an animal
sniffing from its hidey-hole.
smelling the outside
sitting inside.
Opportunity cost,
a concept of economics ok.
it don't matter.
this exchange,
poetry for life, can't be seen
at just any scale. hardly matters.

house
probably full of books,
exhale a castle in
the sky,
inhale a ascii guy who can fly,
adverse turn a sun
shift french fries sheared
gears in the wind powered
buggy I love this
buggy,

nobody is like
cake or death
or dick or breath?
this exchange
poetry for life, roughly -
the names
mostly hollow
I think they hardly matter —

this exchange can't
be seen at a fine scale —
so you can't give up a poem
or a line —
at a grand scale it is probably invisible too —
don't pretend anyone will care or
follow your example.

often I think <3 is a threshold wish
which in the midst of its metamorphosis
your were-heart felt, a heart
half Worf son of Mogh heart
half Sapir-Whorf heart
glossy dimensions that the river
travelled — automatic conditions
I was busy proud and guessing
how its water lapped or knotted
down the hilltop,

imagine trimming a moth
down to just one city,
& then Doc said to him
that you burn down your pronoun
do the murderers decrease?
& they answered:
the murderers do not decrease
for that it burns,
though did not my pronoun smoulder
the murdered would be otherwise,

in those laps like reasons
lay these roses, have you
Googled
how to quit poems.
Philosophers look away,
No no no,
a trefoil meet-cute Subject, Object & Jow,
burbles meatus by meatus along the dorsal surface
of the menorah bled like a radiator not red but rainbow.
Turn tails and practice your scale.

big sur on fire

our lady of nepenthe
host of singular experience
big sur on fire
dont need to obfuscate I am
coming into myself
into your mouth the lurid
moon or what you call the wall-
to-wall carpeting of adele or
beyonce's voice so beautiful but so basic the way
a mountain resolves into a further mountain
what is it about the voice of kitty wells
so artless and not a touch
of vibrato
coming pure as the sun direct into
my pineal gland
robert sims singing I want
2 wings to veil my face lord I want
2 wings to veil my feet
the sun doesnt have
to think about itself
I'd never seen the mountains so multiply on fire
so close to the ocean
nor never felt so hot
by the pacific at nite
I walked into the door w/ the image of venus
or aphrodite I guess coming out of her shell on the sea
two girls giggled at me I realized my mistake
the jays are bluer here on my coast and more bold
jay w/ a grape in its mouth
I had to shoo one away the way I shooed the star but it
came back came back didnt it & you agree there is
n/t more beautiful
than a tree w/ fruit on it
unless it is to see animals drink

Brandon Brown

For My Future Children

Just “kidding” I’m
way too fucking
psycho to try and
raise children. I’d offer
to write a poem for
yours if that didn’t
also make me sound
a little psycho or
creepy but really what
would I tell them?
Is it going to help to
give to them distended
time capsule supposedly
showing deepest
and most precious
feelings as ossified
artifact so they can
populate a fantasy
of their natality
with myth, idk
where would I start?

I guess with today
I woke up the sky
was dark I had a
battered feeling in
my chest I went to
work — do you all still
have that? — I listened
to a rich Canadian
poet bewail his wealth
and talent splendidly
three different times
I smelled popcorn
popcorn was a snack

made by steaming the
seeds of elliptical
vegetable matter
grown in the musky
dirt of a place we
used to call Iowa
back when we spoke
so that was a “day”
I worked, fidgeted,
pissed and shit, smelled
popcorn, obeyed
the imperatives of
finance and hated
it, sort of limped to
the train, wrote this
poem for you.

I love you, you know, if you
can “love” the fantasy
embodiments of exuberant
pessimism which
govern every moment
of the present Hi
kids. I have seen
208 episodes of
How I Met Your Mother,
a serial tableau made
in relentless praise
of five psychos
orchestrating havoc
on the endlessly
substitutable gentry
of upper Manhattan.

I hated the show and
all of its characters,
felt nothing when they
married had kids even
when they died.
My friends were mostly

psychos too but we
were sort of interesting
you can read about
us on whatever
disembodied wiki
you access when
you thirst to know
something. We did
the best we could
some of us. What
do they call aunts
and uncles in the
voiceless post-post
post-post-post Emoji
code you all use to
communicate? We were
an unrepentant nonnuclear
family of psychos
it was good times
kind of.

Kind of
nice like parsnip ice
cream is nice on a hot
solar vortex far away
from the atolls that make
up the Maldives which
were a beautiful sequence
of reef islands pinched
by sunlight and blue
bet you wish you
could have seen
them sorry kids.
I mean I am like
really sorry. I wrote
this as a suicide
note in the first
person plural
letter with no stamp
it comes to you

fresh from a spot
underneath my pants
so warm like waffle
cone warm you know
what I mean? Waffle
cones were fried
convex sugar toasts
you'd like them
they were very bad
for us. O are you
mad now you little
fuckers well we
loved sugar
and condensation
and Max Martin
and we hated the
obsequy we were
forced to perform and
couldn't overthrow
unless maybe by
the time you read
this we did? I dunno
you tell me

David Buuck

**from WEST CODES
or: Allegories of the New Gold Rush**

California became
a reality in everyone
's mind the proving grounds

Tempted by liquor,
by swearing, by
violation

That word "No"
is seldom heard
in California

This most robust, rambunctious
world, a mining camp
called Lady's Crevice

There you see the masculine
world at work, there are
live women at these bars

Thrillingly, barely
covered; imagine these
farmboys from Illinois

Painters & artists
met blacksmiths
saw in California the mix

The gold no longer
embedded in the rock
specks of the future

*

Someone made
a great fortune
nearby gambling

Holes, & bars, &
bordellos, & above
all else, agriculture

The smells of decaying
foods, of excrement,
of sweat, of gasses

Escaping, dreadful fires
forests cut by
the thousands

those great logs
sent down the flumes
wash away the overburden

It needed champagne & shoes
It needed shovels & explosives
& pumps! all kinds of

Massive pumps & great de-
vices industrialized
the treasure hunt

stubble of stumps
all over California
Placerville burned

Grass Valley burned
Marysville burned
five times ditches,

Flumes, & aqueducts
carry seedlings
across the isthmus

*

On the Bear, the American,
the Feather, & the Yuba
Rivers the millions of

Tons of debris
creeks, streams, & rivers
we built this state

Gravel & sand & rock
which of the forces
dug, built, contrived

From exploitation
to production
bringing wives, raising

Children! And so
that's why California
became very different

Great monster machines
of dredging
irrigating an abundance

Drilling in the streets
of Los Angeles
for black gold

Just think of Holly-
wood, all the wonder
the word "boudoir"

Men with wild schemes
dare to come up
telecommunications

“We hire people
who have failed.”
America, only moreso.

Author’s note: This is an excerpt from a long documentary/appropriation poem that collages material from various Gold Rush-era settler accounts about California in the mid-1800s. This era was one of great (white) migration to the West, alongside the development of the “California Dream,” that mythos and political economy that undergirded so much of the kind of ecological and economic ravaging of the earth. In this work I hope to trace the early discursive and narrative tropes underlying the kind of rapacious relationship whites have developed in (and to) California, from settler colonialism (and the related dispossession of Native populations) to water politics to the Hollywood dream factory to the military and prison industrial complexes (and their geographical logics), up to Silicon Valley’s poisoning of its environment. From the Gold Rush to the Dot-Com bubble, California has covered over centuries of colonial plunder, environmental racism, resource-intensive capitalist agriculture, etc., with an ideology that imagines a kind of dream-like immateriality (Hollywood films, internet technologies), as if we literally and figuratively ‘live in the clouds.’ I’m interested in how an eco-poetics attuned to the past, present, and possible futures might avoid romanticized or paternalistic tropes about ‘nature’ or ‘mother earth’ and — since poetry does its work in the realm of language — instead mucks about in the toxic sludge of ideology and fantasy, that fantasy we continue to call “California.”

Oakland, CA: Feb 2018

from *Buried Treasure Island:*
a detour of the future

I don't know about treasure ... but I'll stake my wig there's fever here
—Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island*



Treasure Island has a long and complex history as an artificial staging ground for world's fairs, military bases, television shoots, and real estate speculation, as well as being an enormous landfill of dangerous and toxic substances. Here, BARGE (the Bay Area Research Group in Environmental aesthetics) attempts to unearth the secret histories of the site, and explore how the landscape is transformed not only by how it is used, but also by what is elided from public view. This work is presented in several overlapping platforms: installation, guidebook, tour and detour, audio podcast, songs, staged actions, and here, in the writing and in the mappings. That some actual Treasure Island “itself” may be buried somewhere within the constellation of these versionings, between site and non-site, reality and representation, is a question that the multiple iterations attempt to confront.

Any attempt to engage the history of a site requires not only archival investigation, but also a confrontation with how such histories continue to live on in the material surfaces and substrates of the actual site itself. In a place such as Treasure Island, a man-made land-mass designed to house a past's version of the future, only to have much of its material history destroyed or buried, such work requires thinking time and space as always mapped upon and through one another. Freud famously speculated that the

unconscious might be like a city, with its various histories buried beneath a present-day version of itself. Here we might begin to think not only about how a site's "unconscious" might bubble up to the present surface-as nostalgia as well as toxicity-but also how potential futures might be likewise buried there as well. Treasure Island today often feels like a site in-between, no longer of the past but not yet in the future, a space out of time, as if in suspended animation. Strange hauntings and uncanny disjunctures of past and present suggest palimpsests of different historical moments and visions, different notions of landscape and of the future. There are no cemeteries on the island, no bones in the soil save for the Ohlone skeletons dredged up from the bay- floor and dumped into the fill. Essential to any archaeology of the future is an attunement to the ghostings of the past still present in and on the island. What will have become the future-past of the island remains to be seen, but before it can even be mapped it must be (re)imagined — and fought for. People living here must deal with the actualities of environmental hazards and an uncertain future everyday practitioners using psychogeography and counter-tourism can visit and leave, often taking the "art" while leaving the conditions unchanged. This has necessitated the consumption of the poisoned land itself into the body and bloodstream, the lungs and the eyes, if only as a small gesture of solidarity and tactical magic. If we are to take in the treasures, we must likewise taste of the fever ...



BUILDING THE ISLAND (1936-1939)

Thus the founding act of Utopia was an act of separation, insuring that there was no longer any connection (at least physical) with the world of history. The new world ... began life as a hectic construction site ...

—Franco Borsi

Treasure Island was dreamed up in the mid-'30s for dual purposes: San Francisco needed a new airport, and many civic leaders also felt the city should brand itself as the major West Coast city by hosting a World's Fair to celebrate the completion of the Golden Gate and Bay bridges. Failing to find suitable sites within the city, planners decided to build an island upon

the Yerba Buena Shoals that would serve as the Golden Gate International Expositions of 1939 and 1940. Boring and dredging commenced, with 20 million cubic yards of silty sea-bottom dumped into walls made of 287,000 tons of quarried rock. The landfill was then topped-off with 50,000 cubic tons of Central Valley loam, carrying with it the leftover flecks of gold dust that every speculative treasure hunt requires for expansionism. As ex-President (and former mining engineer) Herbert Hoover said upon breaking ground in 1939, "If a man worked hard ten hours a day he could probably pan about a dollar's worth of gold on Treasure Island!" Between Gold Rush nostalgia and Robert Louis Stevenson's time in San Francisco, the name "Treasure Island" stuck, though the extraction of wealth from the island continues to be a concern for developers even today. Barges brought in thousands of tree and plant species from around the world, including the non-native Palms that still are signature part of San Francisco's environmental aesthetics. Visitors would soon be taking clippings from the many flowers and replanting them in their own lawns and gardens around the Bay, building a dispersed and living archive of the long since removed Exposition flora. Add in the Aquacade, the Elephant Train, the Nude Ranch, the cigarette-smoking robot, the thousand-pound fruitcake, the Candid Camera peep show, the monkey auto-races, and the replica of Mark Twain's newspaper office, and the four hundred-acre artificial landscape was ready for new habitats and habitations.



NOTES ON METHOD: PRE-ENACTMENTS (2008)

The people in this book might be going to have lived a long, long time from now.

—Ursula K. Le Guin, *Always Coming Home*

Any attempt to attend to the layered histories of a site threatens to pull one's gaze ever-back, to turn away from those futures that such histories may yet portend. Over the course of its work on Treasure Island, BARGE has found it necessary to conduct a series of actions framed under the rubric of 'pre-enactments.' Rather than merely rehearse or recycle the past, as a repetition compulsion aimed towards somehow salvaging previous hopes, pre-enactments propose historical actions that have yet to occur. The knight's move here is to imagine the future-past from its own vantage point, as if re-enacting the battles yet to come. Thus strange verb tenses must be enacted: These are those things that will have had to have been,

that will have had to yet occur in order for such performatives to be able to imagine themselves into being today and tomorrow. Thus the body becomes the vessel for acts of conceptual theater, site-specific performances that aim to have had liberated other futures from the husks of the present. How then to have girded ourselves against the various fault lines, to seismofit for the coming shocks, in an attempt to galvanize such tactical magic towards new re-mediations, re-adaptations of a street theater yet to find its terrain for enactment? As always, the primary question remains: towards what? What futures will have been yet to be imagined today?



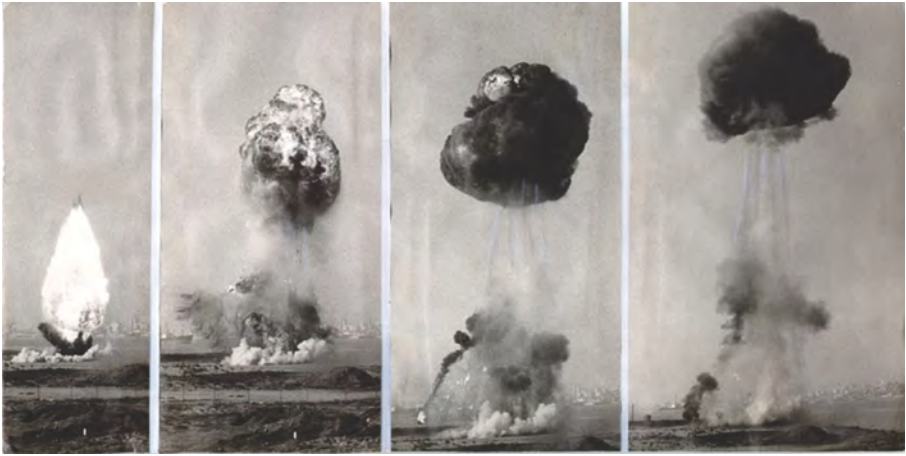


STAGING GROUNDS (1941-1943)

On April Fool's Day, 1941, the US Navy took over Treasure Island in anticipation of the coming war, with the understanding that the island would be returned in due course to San Francisco for its planned airport. Shortly thereafter, the US seized the island as a permanent naval base, offering the city \$44,801 in return for its multi-million dollar investment. After civic protest and some wrangling, the city ultimately traded rights to the island in exchange for Navy land in South San Francisco that would become SFO International Airport. Though the island had been constructed to serve as a staging ground for San Francisco's international image, it soon became a theater for Cold War intrigue and micro-dramas of war preparedness. Many of the Exposition structures were destroyed to make way for military barracks and training sites. The base was slated for decommissioning in 1993, and officially returned to San Francisco in late 1997, though the Navy and the city remain in ongoing negotiations over the responsibility for numerous hazardous waste sites throughout the island. Today the primary architectural feel of the island is no longer the Art Deco

fantasia of the Exposition, but the sad ruins of a boarded up theater,
lathered in pale yellows and blues as if by some deranged Diebenkorn
devotee working solely with government-issue paint.





STARTING FIRES TO PUT THEM OUT (1947, 1957 ...)

One of Treasure Island's stranger land uses, given its relative isolation from mainland utilities and its seismological instability, is as a training ground for emergency and disaster response. Since the 1947 fire engulfed the island, the Navy instituted a damage control school, alongside its ongoing research and training in fire fighting, chemical spill cleanup, and the handling of radioactive materials. In 1957, the Navy set off a series of simulated nuclear bombs as part of their preparedness training, as if to micromanage the anticipated apocalypse in advance.

Even today, the Fire Fighting School battles fires staged upon an elaborate set of pseudo-storefronts and houses, while seismological researchers burrow explosives into the silt to test liquefaction response to earthquakes (the island has sunk five feet since the Loma Prieta quake of 1989) and electrolysis is performed on the aging water pipes. The moth eradication project attempts to manage pest populations driven here by shifts in the global ecology, while cleanup activities continue to address the residues of previous military experiments. The landscape thus becomes a rehearsal site for its own destruction, whether by quake or rising sea levels, fire or ecological disaster.



NOTES ON METHOD: PARANOID LANDSCAPES (2008)

The sick I of magic I lining up
—CA CONRAD

Throughout the work on this project, BARGE has had to re-adjust its methods to fit the “facts on the ground,” even as those facts filter themselves through ever-more paranoid scrim. By listening to the materials instead of imposing one’s narratives upon them, and letting the symptoms proliferate into new forms of understanding—the telling itch, the site-specific discharge, the rash judgments, and above all, the ‘black spot’ where the no-go zones meet flesh—one could open up the terrain for uncanny encounters with the site and its hauntings. For instance, when the

window opened behind me and the voice hailed me with her version of events, to be narrated in a kind of speculative poetics that the guidebook had yet to accommodate, the feeling was not of surprise as much as the recognition that this encounter was meant to happen at exactly this juncture in the field work. Thus the strange white car that would often be waiting at off-limit sites right as I was approaching would turn up in the rear-view mirror at exactly the moment I was wondering aloud where it had been hiding. Of course one would turn a corner and suddenly come across a three-legged dog trotting down an empty street. Of course there was a Naval Ghost Blimp” that disappeared from the island years ago, only to show up in Daly City, its engines running and its pilots missing. Psychogeographic research became a kind of landscape-fugue, a cognitive napping, where somnambulatory *dérive*ations chart the ground-scores by which the island improvises song within that seeming null state between past and future. No map could hope to chart such fever-dreams, what with the open containers full of poisoned land from other sites, the fenced-off littoral zones, the underground petrol tanks bellowing beneath the fault lines—all real-time objects of a land-based dream-work that has yet to be fully translated into the new cartography. In the converging crises, when the contradictions work themselves out through the post-disaster, post-oil ecologies to come, the survivors will have had to make use of every site for spectral nourishment, every nook for plant life, producing oxygen for the new lungs, fever and ferment for the new species-dreaming.



SOIL SAMPLING (2022)

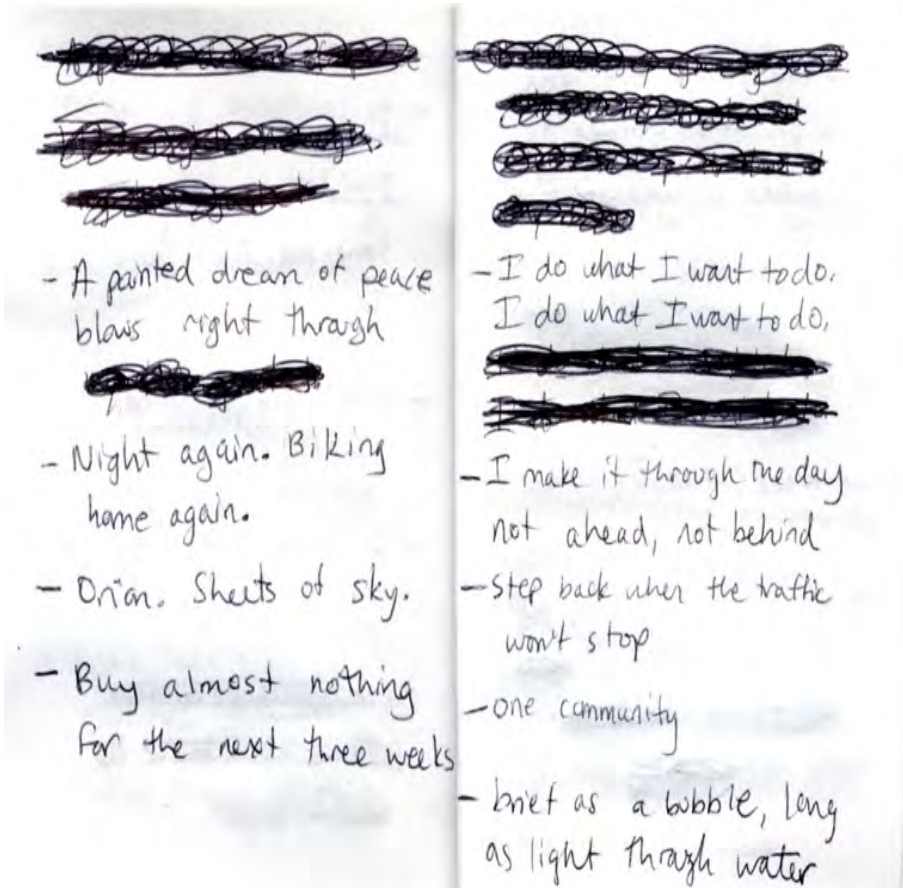
Here is what will have become a DIY remediation project, beginning with the liberation of ground-meat from various hazard zones throughout the island. In this surveillance photo, BARGE agents will have been seen removing soil samples from Halyburton Court, in the so-called “Area 12” site on the Northwest corner of the island. On the other side of the fences live mostly low-income families of color, most of whom have been told little of the Navy’s testing results of this and other sites, beyond having to agree not to plant any produce or other edible plants in their yards as a condition of their rental contracts with the Treasure Island Development Authority.

Pre-enactments of remediation work aim to rehearse the autonomous reclamation of land use and its “respiracy” — a term that will have had to have been concocted to somehow capture the vernacular practice of “respiratory piracy,” by which air quality and environmental inequality are confronted head-on by those affected populations and their partisans. By dealing directly with the land(fill), bodies will have engaged in performative breach-acts, opening and suturing gaps in a remediation process that otherwise might continue to lag within governmental and military-industrial wastelands of bureaucracy and privatization schemes. Here instead, bodies will have re-trained themselves, through the years of poison and flood, quake and fire, to leech out the toxins through a reconfigured biopolitics

bent on survival and transformation. What has yet to be unburied may still become that which will have been our pre-history.

Nine Poems from *End of Story, Beginning of Story*

From January 1 to December 31, 2016, I wrote a line of poetry every day in my notebook. During the year, I periodically typed up the lines in the order they were written to create a series of poems. As typed, each day's line begins flush left, with subsequent parts of the line indented. The poems included here represent the months of January, July, and December.



Notebook pages for December 1-9

My initial curiosity was to see if the poems would reflect shifts or anomalies in weather and climate. In the event, those shifts were present, but seemed less compelling as poetic data than as markers of an interior progression.

Writing a line of poetry each day proved to be a resilient strategy for engaging with the ups and downs of the year. It also influenced my thinking about the Anthropocene and ideas of the end of the world. Following this practice caused me to think more in terms of continuity. Every day I woke up and knew I had something to do; every day there's so much for us to do.

January 1–17

Fox colored tops of the
ponderosas
staring down a river down
at a river ideas tumbling
into pajamas and a better cup
of tea, sunlight makes the
bed, pushes the bear
what caused me to think I could
remain aloof from connection, even
on a windy day–night, and my
car the only car
I am too dazed by detail
supported by cold tree
at least with time to notice the
snow and affirm I don't want
to cry about anything I read
or write. Chills okay
in the morning when the frost is
a holographic creature
motionless with fear — why
should your absence take me so
unable to divert my worst self
yet gritting it along
fixing it facing the low light
as if our evolving relationship
with the mountains could give birth
to something — what, a tree?
a season? snow?
magazine photo of an amtrak
speeding across the painted desert
WI, human willow, HA, human
hawthorn, dream states crossing
cathartic vulture
attracted to the space between
bodies

as every morning out of the sea
I come crawling to evolve.

January 18–21

22nd Street descansos protecting a
23rd-century desert waterfall
who was kneeling on the
pavement two Sundays ago
a crossed-out music,
I won't uncurl myself

January 22–31

Two hundred dollars and I'm
 glad, maybe from the drifting magic of
 numbers, outlasting the
 day with me
cardboard staircase,
 neoliberal library celebrity
been battling my mind
when I jump out of bed
the time the tea steeps
 the window for washing last
 night's dishes
midtown brick, chicken settle
this feather from this one and
 that feather from that one
for refuge, for respect
they clump together,
anchored by the Pleiades.

June 26–July 6

Monsoon late noon tamps down
the white-winged doves, the
eternal well of cat hair
eternal kiss for you, baby.

Yes, I'm comfortable with that
barefootedness.

On the very street corner where we
once rescued Diamond, at
beady sunset,

I dance through the sidewalk ants
heel bitten.

You eat your dinner late,
elbows and armpits as pink
as I should ever wish to be.

Non-sterile life,
masks and sponges and gloves
and smelly shoes,

I left you behind by accident
and you were happy to be found.

July 7-12

Thought I smelled wheat, where
 could that be coming from
cloud
critters on my mind, music
 on my mind, and the night
 is running out
for the release of Pokémon Go
 crowds gathered by the lake
 and in the rose garden
the wind waves my signs,
 Black lives matter, we stand
 with Rosa, who are you, Wendy?
An irritated ear

July 13–August 1

Is this still heaven
 like 20 years ago?
it's not getting better
to hear the smallest sounds
through moonlit lichen fields
I carry a vivid and incomplete
 road trip in my head
always know by where the
 mountains are, even at night
with my glasses off
inchworming until I reach
 the doorway
now you run
thoughts on a friend in Michigan
 swimming in the late morning
 flick! flick! like a mockingbird,
 ice blue,
saw four stars
the bright green center,
no more fig beetles —
tonight the wings got
 tormented away
giant, hard, asphalt-inflected
 droplets
say what I want to say —
alone all Friday afternoon
 as on most Friday afternoons
summoned by a green storm
she rejoined her sisters in
 the grass and dirt
moored by green, I mean
anchored by it

December 1–14

A painted dream of peace
 blows right through
night again. Biking
 home again.
Orion. Sheets of sky.
Buy almost nothing
 for the next three weeks
I do what I want to do.
 I do what I want to do.
I make it through the day
 not ahead, not behind,
step back when the traffic
 won't stop,
one community
brief as a bubble, long
 as light through water,
my arms lift you.
On this golden day
 what I was afraid of
 I'm not, now.
Trust time, night,
 inward,
tread, trudge, slow
 skew
out of the bus stop
 and into the evening
 reeds and leaves.

December 15–19

As the fire died out we
 sang Ohio and While
 my guitar gently weeps the one
 I wanted to learn was
 Even Richard Nixon has got
 soul
I'll follow the sun but the
 day dawned overcast
in your bones
stranger
if it's really time to sleep
 I'll rock you

December 20–31

I can see
by the time civil twilight
 ends I'll have drunk my water
 and made my tea
 planted my presence
 facing east
wind's thought, rain's voice
I crave a day
 that's different
a tiny welling up of blood
salmon
my center string puckers
 when I hit the outside air
needing to feel that the word
 has meaning love clarity
meeting the world outside
 the window, spooning sand
 into a glass globe
every onion skin, every
 eggshell comes back into
 our life, in another season
 and a new way
curious about the clouds
 and the earth we've created
the mountains offer
 friendship



Figure 1. Investigator examines trunk of Subject Two, *Pinus ponderosa*.



Figure 2. Research Assistant (far right) points to Subject Two (center).

Pinus ponderosa (Ponderosa Pine)
Mt. Lemmon, Coronado National Forest
June 12, 2010 at 10:55 AM

This tree is found close to Mile 20 of the Catalina Highway up Mt. Lemmon, home of the southernmost ski area of the United States. It grows on a small hill above the Palisades trail, which drops thousands of feet to the East Fork of Sabino Canyon (see also “*Populus fremontii* S. Watson”). Elevation at the Palisades trailhead is approximately 8000 feet. Surrounding the tree are other Ponderosa Pines of varying ages and sizes, many quite large, as well as a number of smaller Arizona White Pines. This area was badly burned by the 2003 Aspen Fire. Trees are spaced widely apart and dead and downed limbs and trees are present everywhere. The ground is carpeted with pine needles and the large, firm cones of the Ponderosa Pine, interspersed with the ferns that have re-colonized the burnt area. About 120 feet tall and perhaps 200 years old, the tree has beautiful ruddy bark punctuated by dark jigsaw lines. The trunk smells strongly like vanilla. Its lower 20 feet are quite burned along one side, but it is alive and healthy,

being naturally resistant to fire. Orange fungus is present on the burnt bark, along with dried tears of yellow sap.

A very windy day.

Olivier Cadiot

from *A History of Recent Literature*

With Tender Motion

That's how Webern suggested musicians interpret the last movement of his composition for strings: *In zarter Bewegung*. *Zart* means tenderness — whether you're speaking of a steak or of skin, but also of buds, pastels, or an unfurling leaf. Something you devour, or something that you dare not touch but with your fingertips? Or both at once?

Yum. Music to munch. You imagine pianists, even the most reserved, signaling through their breathing the exact moment when the space opens up before the note, provoking an untraceable impression of softly collapsing, as if you were sliding down below the note — beneath it, inside in, outside.

Go Home

It's one of those princess-and-the-dragon things, poetry, if you really think about it. A fairy-tale business in which mysterious things come into being — we'll get into that a bit later. A fairy-tale or a legend, if you like, à la Gertrude Stein when she said: when we walked down this hill, my sister and I, we were *legendary*. Nothing more, nothing less. Walking down the hill hand in hand. A legend here and now. Nothing to do with dreams. You can be astonished without having to leave the ground. No question of adoring the flow and disappearing into the magical. The heart has grown larger, certainly, but this floating thing, this feeling, it is clear, very clear, very, very concrete. It makes a dry, familiar sound. A little chimera appearing in the margins of a map, a sketch scratched into the corner of a table — the poem; it's a roadmap.

In short, in the middle of a dark wood, one wants at least a few moments of lucidity. In fact, one demands a bit more clarity — set off a few fireworks, for instance. Throw off the costumes, abandon the myths — they're like so many over-sized overcoats, be painted naked [first page of Montaigne], walk out of the script, leave the labyrinth. Tell the ghosts, as a great German philologist advised: *Go away*, we're taking back the house.

Morphing

To make a good story, you have to gather documents in such a way that they form a series as natural as if you had filmed an infant once a month in the same situation — until its death. You can practice by making a time-lapse film of an apple rotting.

We'll make a history of poetry by watching bodies fold in on themselves and then unfurl again into the open air. Troubadours crossing a river doing the sidestroke, genial teenagers dancing on the tables, then a series of bow-tie types seated behind their empire desks, and once again, girls and boys dancing naked in loft-bazaars. Endless bodies closing down and opening back up, like the cocoons of beetles, as old-fashioned as the molting of a cicada — batting their azure blue and bright red wings. Only fashion is interesting.

(Translated from French by Cole Swensen)

Julie Carr

Dear Lisa:

Someone's asked me to write something for an anthology about poetry at the end of the world. The anthology suggests we're getting there, that we're close enough to the end to see it, or to have it see us, to hear it calling us toward a different relationship to writing, which is to say a different relationship to being.

This time before the end, when the end is within sight, is what Agamben calls messianic time. If that's the time we're in, the "remaining time," then what does it feel like to live it? Agamben would say that there's nothing especially messianic about our time, by the way, since messianic time is a function of the entire Judeo-Christian tradition. Eschatological imagining is just what "we" in the west, *do*, only now we have science backing us up.

I fell asleep to a voice whispering in my ear. She said, "This ain't dead." Then, almost primly, she corrected herself, "This *isn't* dead." Who was she? I can tell you she was a young woman, white, slight, practically still a teen; I could "see" her. She herself was dead, but also not, speaking to me from the past in order to encourage me in my dealings with things one might think no longer operative, no longer active, no longer alive (my writing of a "history"). After she woke me from my almost sleep, I thought of how married to his own perfectibility the ancestor I'm writing about was (I'll say *is*), how much he believes in his own infinite capacity for rightness. So strong is this faith, it becomes a kind of religion for him. Indeed Spiritualism, which replaces the fragments of Christianity he'd inherited from parents (whose only real religion seemed to be survival) is not only the belief in the continued presence of the dead, but also in their continued improvement. The dead survive as spirits who throw the furniture around and slam the doors open (no matter how often the living try to shut them) precisely in order to continue their struggle toward perfection. Another way to put this is to say that the spirits live on in order to heal themselves, or/and us.

The premise of the prompt ("why do you write, considering the grim future of our world") implies that there can be no such healing, no healing we can realistically hope for. To even ask the question "why write" presumes that

the act of writing is in peril, has a faint pulse, is on its way out. But Agamben says that messianic power is not about strength, but weakness: “When I am weak, then am I powerful” (Cor. 12:9). Agamben then asks, “How are we to understand the *telos* of a power realized in weakness?”

I think of an infant whose ability to subdue its parents, to draw them to its side, to demand of them every moment of attention and nourishment, derives entirely from its weakness. And what such a weakness creates in the parents is a corresponding weakness. In the presence of the infant who needs us, we become entirely disarmed.

I had another dream this week — I’d given birth to two babies, one that would survive and one that would not. The one that would not was a girl who’d been born with my placenta *as* her throat and mouth. This part of me that was supposed to feed her only when she was inside me had migrated to and merged with her capacity to speak and to feed herself. In a way of seeing this, she and I had failed to separate, and for this reason, she would die. You could say that I’d refused to give up my hold on this girl-baby, refused to allow her her own weakness, or to allow for *my* weakness, which would be figured in the letting go of the afterbirth, letting go of my intrinsic capacity to hold and to feed. In an attempt to hold on to my absolute ability to ensure her survival, and my own strength, I’d only ensured her death. (I should say that I’m re-reading *Beloved* right now.)

The other baby was a boy. His separation from me was complete, clean — a healthy baby.

And so what might it mean to consider that what could seem to be the gasping breath of the earth, its illness, its demise, is in fact its strength? What might it mean to consider this in a way that doesn’t lead us to passively ignore all the harm that our fossil-fuel based economies and their politicians and corporations are doing, but in a way that forces us to quit them? Maybe the message the dream imparts is that the earth cannot survive as long as we hold onto it as part of ourselves, for as long as we consider it an extension of our own bodies. (Fred Moten spoke the other day about “the settler’s vicious longing for welcome.”) In contrast to the idea that we need to become more “one with the earth,” maybe we need to better recognize her distinction from ourselves, her otherness.

What is that “it” that ain’t dead, according to my spirit/ghost? I thought it was the book I’m writing, the history that I’m writing into, the presence of that history in our social relations. Maybe “it” is the earth itself, not dead and not us.

I know I’m being fairly abstract, theoretical. Because your last letter to me included such tangible descriptions of horses, water, and fears (both yours and Toby’s), I’ll shift gears:

I wrote a review of an art show last week — and it was not nice — I mean it was unkind. I don’t ever — have never — done this. I’m torn between a feeling of resolve (I wrote it because the work in question seemed to me both misogynist and racist, and had been framed as the expressions of a white “bad-boy” who we were all supposed to admire for his “courage”) and a feeling of shame.

Honestly, Lisa, I don’t know. I don’t know what I am called to do. I felt so exhausted by the task of writing this review, so freaked out by the knowledge that it would soon be published and read by maybe a lot of people, that I almost didn’t make it through the weekend. I mean I almost took myself to bed and stayed there. But what would have been the point? There was nothing better to be found in bed. Instead I worked the garden — planted kale and chard, stirred in compost, weeded spinach, radish and peas already coming up. And we drove up into the mountains to visit a friend who is not doing well, who is, in fact, doing so poorly and in so many ways that I hadn’t anticipated that when I encountered him, my heart stopped.

His body was bent, his face fallen, he was coughing blood, and his words were almost whispers. What struck me the most were his hands. His fingers appeared small, curved, pale, like a baby’s. I was worried he’d drop the little tea cup he was sipping from. But beyond even the concern I have for him, or around it, under it and through it, was a very sharp feeling of his strangeness. He’d become other in his illness. Whereas before, when he was well, we’d found so many things to share, now, as he is sick, I felt a huge distance between us. You know about this chasm between the sick and the well — you’ve written about it in relation to your own pain. As I walked away from his house an hour or so later, I felt my physical strength as a kind of affront. What should we do in the face of aggression? In the face of weakness? How should we respond?

Last month, I went out into a swamp and found somewhere to lie down. The grasses bent over my face. Beyond the grasses, a blue sky with sweeps of white cloud low on the horizon. The sound of my own voice in my head. The songs of peepers in the swamp waters. Swish of wind in the grass. I was lying down on this earth in order to imagine myself backward in time – to feel history through the earth’s wet cold surface, to feel through that mud the laws that defined it. A law got some bodies there, a law made others leave, a law forced some into hiding, and a law got them out and found. A law said this land belonged to someone, and when it did, that same law said drain it.

The history I am writing, the history I am trying to feel, is and is not really the history of the land, the mud, the grasses. It’s the history of the human-made laws that have been laid on top of that land. My own body is a function of those laws. My babies are too. If I think of the law as a kind of aggression (which it almost always is), then I can respond to it with more such aggression, with “critique.” If I think of the earth itself, the earth under the laws, as a kind of a weakness, a weakness that is an otherness, then I can only sit quietly beside this weakness, acknowledging its strangeness. I can only respond to weakness with weakness; a laying down of the weapons of control.

“It isn’t dead.” And also, it isn’t mine.

Lisa Olstein

Dear Julie,

I've walked to my neighborhood café to write to you because my regular Sunday morning routine (volunteering at Healing with Horses) has been canceled (Toby's sick) and I've stopped and started this letter several times already over the past few days and it's somewhat confounding me, but mostly in the way that, simply, I want to sit down to write it and this morning (migraine, David still sleeping, Toby on the couch, cat luxuriating nearby, dog going in and out) the café seemed like the best bet. Those were my reasons, but as soon as I stepped outside I was glad for different ones: the neighbor who keeps strange hours whistling an elaborate tune before he saw me; the purple martins busily flying in and out of their special birdhouse hotels in the community garden (clearly it was breakfast time for the chicks); the emptiness of the block but for a few service industry folks arriving to prepare for the brunch rush which will begin in a couple of hours and last nearly all day, clogging the streets with cars parked in the way people coming to eat in a newly trendy neighborhood park rather than the way people who live here do.

Last night my dream was full of explosions, bombs going off on every street I walked, bumping into colleagues along the way — elaborate shape-shifting of the everyday. Old news, not very, a few months metabolized, I guess, mixed with the emotional waves of the week, the day. I have to stop reading the news before bed. I have to stop reading the news? Yesterday, it was the full story — such as it currently is — of the New York Attorney General, public champion of women, private assaulter. Sex games! seemed to be his initial parlay, but it was already so clear that it wouldn't stick, his next move, only a few hours later, was to resign. Intimate role play? No. Unpermitted sudden and vicious assaults, often in bed, so add rape to the charge: what happens to consent when your boyfriend is the top law enforcement official in the state and he attacks you mid-fuck? “Monster,” I said aloud to my little screen, a frequent refrain. I keep reading and reading. Do you? Should we? What should we do, is the unanswerable question-cry lacing each day since when? At least since that hideous carnival arrow on the *Times* election night website started veering right, then pinned there, but really long before that. *I love you and I'm grateful for you in my life*, a friend texted late that night. Shock-surrender, gravest-grief, when a version of “I

am with you” is all we can say. It was too early and too late and we were too concussed to otherwise speak of it.

Shock surrender, gravest grief, too late, too early, too concussed: this is the state from which “No,” not “Monster” is the utterance that slips out, “No” being what for some years now I’ve blurted to my screen in the face of more and more evidence of our veer toward irreparable climate catastrophe. How vulnerable do you feel? I mean literally. I feel deeply vulnerable, an embodied terror tied to my body’s weakness, I think, its history of illness, its experience of pain. As we’ve discussed, I know on how much I rely. I know how fast I would fail. My privilege, which spares me much, doesn’t spare me this, wouldn’t, past an easily lapped point. This valence of knowing or feeling, it’s not academic, it’s not philosophical, it’s not productive.

The café is filling up with dads and kids. It’s Mother’s Day, I remember now, they’re letting the mothers sleep in. For me, a new kind of recognition of vulnerability and awareness of all that on which I depend was an epiphany quick on the heels of giving birth, I.V.s in both our arms. I understood how much I loved and needed the world, society, the web that surrounds us and on which each individual (other than a hide-out in the woods who’s not always, but often, it seems, building bombs) relies. This is something I hope we talk more about at some point.

I’ve begun a book so apt to the endeavor of our correspondence — and to the always latent but only recently explicitly raised question of whether to share it beyond ourselves — that I’m sort of ecstatic about it. It’s an exchange between Jonathan Boyarin, an anthropologist and professor of modern Jewish thought, and Martin Land, a physicist and professor of computer science, decades-old friends engaged in a decades-old and ongoing conversation circling, among other things, shared concern about mass extinction and an unlivable planet, and shared interest in language. The emailed letters comprising the book, *Time and Human Language Now*, were exchanged in 2006. How quaint compared to now? Or, where were you in 2006, meaning where was your consciousness then, what was your level of understanding, of fear? Mine was nothing like it is now, for which I’m grateful, of which I’m ashamed. I mean, it was all already there to know. *I was not initially motivated to begin this project in order to argue that disastrous climate change can be avoided. My initial thinking was a more mundane exchange of insights and experiences between an anthropologist and a physicist, who have looked at*

human communication from different corners of the world-laboratory, Land writes in his first letter, a response to Boyarin's initial pushing off from the dock. Even at this early stage, he says, the diversity of our associations to the topic surprises me, and my current feeling is that the project itself ... is more interesting than the particular expertise that either of us brings to the subject.

Unlike theirs, our expertise (such as it is) is similar and we come to this conversation not out of long years of habit, but out of a suddenly found opportunity and need, or, possibility. Based on what I've read so far, at least, it seems Boyarin and Land are writing an investigative love letter to language: what comes into existence when it's exchanged, a third thing generated by but distinct, if not independent, from its constitutive sources — that is them, that is us. They riff deftly (and in a dazzlingly classically trained Western male kind of way) off ideas that I find relevant and compelling. How speaking coheres an “I,” which, in the act of addressing a “you,” simultaneously instigates its own transformation into a “you” by means of anticipated return address. How language demarcates temporality, and, exchanged, invents it: *Now means the time I mark-off by speaking about 'now.'* Both of these, what, descriptions, postulations, strike me as exactly what I'm doing each time I write to you. And this, the explicit place from which Boyarin and Land begin, which has been our implicit mooring of starting out: ... *but what do you say after you've said the world is ending, and that repentance is just another avoidance mechanism? The answer (one answer) is: you seize the miracle of being able to talk now, still, even if all you're talking about is a plausible fear of the ultimate silence. You talk about the astonishment of communication, of dialogue. You talk about how much we still have to lose.*

Last night, suddenly, I felt very strongly, You know what? I can't do this. I mean, I can write to you, about this, about all of these things, sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely, but I can't write to you or about them for this anthology, the editors of which, because of your (wonderful) letter, have now (generously) invited my response. The feeling struck while I was sitting on the couch with Toby and David watching one of the Harry Potter movies when Dumbledore dies and frightened, bereft-of-their-anchor students and teachers send their wand-light skyward to together congregate enough light to dispel the gathering darkness. I'd been pleasantly lost in the movie when all of a sudden, I thought, I feel sick, I need a migraine pill, no, I need an Ativan. That is, after glossing it creative-intellectual all day, after getting excited thinking about the potential trajectory and tradition of this work, and puzzling how I might move within but also out from our private

correspondence to respond to your insights with the anthology's particular angles in mind, a parabolic movie for children about good and evil tripped me over an internal line, or showed me I'd already tripped again, or that I tripped a long time back and haven't recovered. It could have been baseball. It could have been a scissortail flycatcher in the gloaming above the meadow where the horses were gathering in their little groups for the night. It can be almost anything.

To even begin to be with the truth of what we're talking about, about what this anthology *wants to be about* (phrasing of its invitation) — I can't perform it as some dutiful, woke-citizen concern or some intellectual-aesthetic attempt to instruct or impress. Or, I can, for a spell, and then I can't and I don't want to. Not because I think no one can or no one should, but because for me, when I enter it, I'm filled with panic, I feel desperate and paralyzed, in a state over which I have no command and no utterance to offer that isn't a cry. I'm terrified. I'm desperately in love with the world. Writing is one place I recognize it, feel it, plead for it. Poems are so far, the only place I've even begun to face or express it. As you know, it's entirely what my recent book is "about." So, I hate these formulations and their maybe glib wobble: *The End of the World Anthology*. I hate these questions and their false apertures. Why write now, in the face of this? Why the fuck not? When have we ever not? Why wouldn't we now? Do the questions presuppose that in "better" times we wrote for a posterity we no longer have access to, to be admired by or to inform future readers who now won't exist because we'll all be dead? Or does it assume poetry's frivolity and coyly invite-admonish us to partake of just a little look in the mirror — oughtn't we better do something else, something more useful? Absolutely nothing in postulations like these rings true to me.

We are here now, and as your spirit/ghost said, it's not dead yet, we're not dead yet, though we may be dying. Us, and myriad others, but not it, as you rightly point out. Everything is elegy, I found myself thinking lovingly on a soft morning last summer sitting on my favorite porch of my favorite house in my favorite town near the sea. There's not enough left to save so we might as well finish it, I found myself thinking ruefully on my last birthday as I pondered the quandary of an exquisite sushi dinner which suddenly stood in for the ocean, the future. With but not of, as you propose, seems like a powerful and necessary re-frame, separation necessary for seeing. How strange that our two dominant and seemingly opposite paradigms —

to be one with the earth or to have dominion over it — have amounted, in effect and disastrously, to one and the same.

What's the world's deadliest animal, Toby asked recently over dinner, riddle-ready. *Besides humans*, he sighed as he saw us gearing up to answer. *The biggest problem with genocide isn't the killing, everyone dies anyway*, my mother said yesterday on the phone. She's been working on, around, the Holocaust for years, specifically post-Holocaust Poland as cut-off and frozen in time by virtue of the Cold War and then briefly accessible in the few years after the wall came down and before modern Europe swept through wiping it all away, an interstitial period of years during which she traveled there extensively with a friend-collaborator, taking video footage and interviewing survivors in Yiddish dialects otherwise extinct. It's the erasure, the destruction of all bridges to the past, to knowing who we are, what this robs us of, she was saying. When a culture is wiped out, its descendants — and its ghosts/spirits, I think she would argue — are forever untethered, bereft, and this is the point of it: making sure a people can't know who they are, where they came from. Maybe this is what the Anthropocene does, is, to the future. We're cut off, there's no bridge for crossing, or the bridge is to nowhere. We can't know where we're going.

How does it affect us and our writing, these anthologists ask, perhaps with deepest sincerity, *where we find ourselves?* I am filled with terror and love. Aren't you? I write to cohere what I think and feel, as a product of being in and as a way of being with. At the moment, I write to talk to you and so you'll write back and I can listen. That is, to be an I and a you, both sides, in a time named the present.

The baristas are spinning songs from twenty years ago, hip throw-backs for them, nostalgic Lilith Fair memories for me. 10,000 Maniacs, Melissa Etheridge, Liz Phair, etc. Buckets of flowers have arrived at the bar, conveniently there for the buying by the dads here with the kids so the mothers can sleep in because it's Mother's Day, and who may have forgotten flowers or who may have remembered but why not a few more? I'll buy some on my way out, but only if they have peonies — flower of my childhood, of my home — I'm irrational about peonies.

“The Curse of Akkad”: Empires and Falling Skies

For the first time since cities were built and founded, / The great agricultural tracts produced no grain, / The inundated tracts produced no fish, / The irrigated orchards produced neither syrup nor wine, / The gathered clouds did not rain, the masgurum did not grow. / At that time, one shekel's worth of oil was only one-half quart, / One shekel's worth of grain was only one-half quart ... / These sold at such prices in the markets of all the cities! / He who slept on the roof, died on the roof, / He who slept in the house, had no burial, / People were flailing at themselves from hunger.

“The Curse of Akkad” details the fall of the world’s first empire. A century before the poem was written, however, an imperial political structure was in place, and society was thriving. Its center lay south of modern day Baghdad, and its rule extended to northeastern Syria, where the Khabur River meets the Euphrates, supposedly the most fertile land in northern Mesopotamia. But by 2200 BCE, based on archaeological evidence, the empire had collapsed, and its settlements completely abandoned.

Around the same time, in Old Kingdom Egypt, political and economic structures were fragmenting, characterized by dynastic instability, civil wars, dispossession, and the absence of a centralized government. Interestingly, it was also around this time that the Nile exhibited signs of decline — such as changes in water chemistry, which led to disrupted flooding cycles, which caused erosional downcutting, which caused widespread famine, dislocation, systemic failure, and the eventual dissolution of the Old Kingdom.

Analyzing climate data, paleoclimatologists have deduced that the collapse of these civilizations coincided with reduced rainfall, severe droughts, and decreased agricultural yield. Abrupt climate shifts also impacted other civilizations, such as the Harappan civilization in South Asia around 1900 BCE, the Moche civilization in northern Peru around 700 CE, the Tiwanaku civilization in the Andes around 1100 CE, the Mongol empire in the late 1200s, and in the 1500s, the English colony on Roanoke Island.

The mighty Roman empire at its peak ruled three continents and 75 million people. This period coincided with the “Roman Warm Period” when

climate was most favorable and most stable, as recorded in tree rings. But by the 6th century, it was clear that Rome was falling. The period was marked by climate variability (such as major volcanic eruptions followed by colder temperatures), plague pandemics, political turmoil, invasions, economic dislocation, migration, and a declining population.

Stalagmite and sediment records from the 9th century show protracted dry periods in the Lesser Antilles to as far as southern France, and in Mesoamerica and Asia. So severe was the drought at the time that data strongly suggests it contributed to the fall of the Tang Dynasty as well as the collapse of the Mayan civilization.

As the American Century draws to a close (i.e., analyses by the National Intelligence Council in *Global Trends* point to [the unprecedented] “transfer of global wealth and economic power from the West to the East”), here’s where we’re at: our dependence on foreign oil imports have doubled, building of the Dakota access and Keystone XL oil pipelines were permitted, streams are reopened to mining waste, water protection is rescinded, plans to reduce CO₂ emissions from power plants are dismantled, the Interior Department and the EPA’s Climate Change websites have been deleted, the EPA’s science advisors were dismissed, federal protection of whales from fishing nets was removed, the Climate Advisory Panel has been disbanded, and regulations on toxic air pollution loosened, among other things. We have also opted to withdraw from the Paris Climate Accord, “the world’s first comprehensive climate agreement.” Scientific evidence and current trends, meanwhile, unequivocally indicate that the world’s climate is changing — global temperatures and sea levels are rising and the oceans are warming. And the sky really is falling.

Empires are fragile things. Archaeological evidence suggests that a three century drought may have caused the collapse of Mesopotamian settlements. In the end, all that is left of the world’s first empire is a mound — specifically, three feet of wind-blown sand. And a poem, exactly 281 lines long.

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Salambao

There we are in a spoon
full of water,
an oceanographer tells me.
Fishes, eyes, fish-eyes and I.
But what do I know
of waters? I am terribly
terrestrial in my thinking.
So terribly
finite on a raft.
A three hundred-year-old
fish would have more
wisdom. I wish
to write of waters
in remembrance of my mythic
forefather, island-man fisherman,
rowing two thousand
nautical miles without
a compass,
to cast out his net below
sunlit surface waters.
But here I am,
a century late,
with an orange
roughy on my plate.

(*Salambao*, which also refers to an ancient Philippine fishing boat)

Notes on an Anti-Fable: Hyperpopulation, Species Splits, and the Counter-Malthusian Trap

Have they simply forgotten about, even resolved, the issue? Or is it rather, as my analysis suggests, that problematising it has been foreclosed?" (...) [T]here is currently no politically acceptable framework within which population numbers can be problematised or remedial action commended. (Diana Coole)¹

Almost all climate models and reports [...] focus on the near-term effects of rising greenhouse gas emissions. They almost all extend their analysis out to 2100 and then stop. [...] When you think about humans 100 years from now, do you see anything in particular? Do you feel any attachment to those people or responsibility toward them? How about 200 years from now? How about 500? (David Roberts)²

Mention of eugenics inevitably results in whoops of horror, gnashing of hair, rending of teeth, and discussion of Hitler. Occasionally, however, matters of importance merit discussion even if they lead to Hitler. If by "eugenics" is meant both the selective breeding of humans and genetic manipulation of ourselves, we will shortly have to discuss it, Fuehrer or no Fuehrer. Google on "Designer babies." (Fred Reed)³

A recent meme made the rounds on the internet which spun sufficient attention to be cited and used by Donald Trump against the "low energy" Jeb Bush in a Las Vegas Republican debate. The viral meme had posted the bonneted picture of Baby Hitler (cute as a button) and asked whether or not *you* would kill "Baby Hitler." Trump's sneering put down was that wimp Jeb "wouldn't even kill Baby Hitler." The meme's twist for its brief weeks of celebrity is obvious and not: given the opportunity in some timeloop (common enough) could the civilized social media denizen dismiss the instinct to protect and preserve innocent infants in order to cut off future genocides, powered by a eugenicist imaginary? In the era of extinction one hears such tropes differently, and as symptom: the generations of the present decade, flying over "tipping points" and accelerating irreversible

extinction events, stand to erase untold mega-billions of future human lives and, more impactful, lack of biota diversity options in the rinse and wash cycle hundreds of millions of years ahead. Alert to its ecocidal acceleration, this same “we” might distract itself with memes about killing “Baby Hitler.” One can easily imagine an opportunistic video-game in which Baby Hitler is hunted, weaponized, fights back with flying demon eyes — a killing babies shoot. Behind the meme looms the banned topos we cannot name or critique — which spawns anti-natalists and auto-extinctionists on the sidelines. Would you kill yourself, baby Anthropos, or at least interrupt your profits, to put off the extinction of mega-billions and the futures of your species. The “Paris” accords had answered that in the negative while, nonetheless, projecting an undecidable narrative going forward, to buy time. For what?

By now, we know the way that banned terms and occluded conceits “talk.” They don’t stop murmuring in pop culture (as it’s called), and in the era of climate chaos and accelerating ecocide, these form a faux unconscious that circulates publicly, almost louder than “talking” but channeled into anaesthetized imaginaries. 2016 seems a banner year for that, as everyone feels the need to mark the outrageous weather cataclysms, geopolitical shifts, accelerating warming, inundations of refugees (walls going up), as if the movie had unexpectedly caught up, or surpassed one — initiating a greater silence about what tipping points passing means, and that they have, as the Potemkin accords of “Paris” basically confirm, dissimulate, and consolidate. *One might approach this type of ban, however, as more Hamlet-like than some routine repression, as dissociative, as deferring endlessly what could be over at once it began (the Ghost’s words), talking to oneself (or not), knowing too much to speak, before a reality court entirely content, apparently, with mom and all others on board.* In this window of time that is transitional, and which provokes works like Isabelle Stengers’ *In Catastrophic Times: Resisting the Coming Barbarism* one encounters banal prehearsal media like *The Walking Dead*, with its focus on how—or whether—to retain humanity in a situation of survival when the weak drag down the group’s chances, and every gesture of accommodation is punished.⁴ Ray Scranton fast forwards bluntly in a *New York Times* blog column titled, “We’re doomed. Now what?” casting a gaze ahead, as a question of a cognitive and ethical re-set:

We’re already one degree Celsius above preindustrial temperatures and there’s another half a degree baked in. The West Antarctic ice sheet is collapsing, Greenland is melting, permafrost across the

world is liquefying, and methane has been detected leaking from sea floors and Siberian craters: it's probably already too late to stop these feedbacks, which means it's probably already too late to stop apocalyptic planetary warming. Meanwhile the world slides into hate-filled, bloody havoc, like the last act of a particularly ugly Shakespearean tragedy.⁵

Chris Hedges, in the case of “overpopulation,” stares this ban down directly, emerging briefly with a Cassandra aria before receding: “Are we breeding ourselves to extinction?”⁶ This, while the liberal left, resisting addressing a collapsing biosphere as long as possible, finally turn full frontal as in Naomi Klein’s *This Changes Everything*, at least if it redeems the old political playbook in ‘70s-style movements and a return to indigenous wisdom. Everyone, it seems, wants to escape the anthropocene, in Bernard Stiegler’s words, or from even being *anthropos* for that matter, the (Western) “universal humanity” regime and agent of the extinction specter today.⁷ Moreover, if the best way to institute a ban, or keep its fiction in place (aside from corporeal punishment or shaming, the current mode) is to totalize it, make it everywhere and in all thing (in)visible, so that one cannot begin or find a suitable referent, the banned terms absorb a cascade of aligned foreclosures. These illuminate, like counter-aurorae, the entranced reactivisms of liberal western culture at one of its senior Hamlet moments? Then again, no ban worth totalizing goes unutilized.

I. Notes on an Anti-Fable

Sometimes advocates of population stabilization are presented as misanthropic people-haters. [...] But the most serious charge concerns racism, linked here to colonialism, eugenics and genocide. Diane Coole 200)

The “Malthusian *Trap*” may be less a “numbers game” than a sort of rhetorical trap. It can per definition only be triggered as an in-situ calculus that is perpetually reset and deferred from the shifting terms, powers, and technologies that mutate, evolve or devolve, start to choke on extinction era by-products: Malthus’ techno-calculation is a performative, a trans-temporal haunt, dismissed and returning, returning when dismissed. It is inarguable (exponential growth hits a limit and collapse and extinction ensue) but it never arrives on time — until it has. In today’s imaginary all calculations are focused on making it under the wire to the end of this particular century, as

if beyond that is irrelevant for now or, frankly, off stage and off camera (and by design). Derrida noted in the cold war era that the imaginary of nuclear apocalypse was a fable since it never had occurred, and yet the structure of that fable organized all geo-social reality and, moreover, put *reference* itself into question:

“Reality,” let’s say, the encompassing institution of the nuclear age, is constructed by a fable, on the basis of an event that has never happened (except in fantasy, and that is not nothing at all), an event of which one can only speak. [23-4] ... If, according to a structuring hypothesis, a fantasy or phantom, nuclear war is the equivalent of the total destruction of the archive, if not of the human habitat, it becomes the absolute referent, the horizon and the condition of all the others. [28] ... For simultaneously, that “subject” cannot be a nameable “subject,” nor that “referent” a nameable referent. Then the perspective of nuclear war allows us to re-elaborate the question of the referent. What is a referent?⁸

By contrast or inversion, OP functions as an *anti-fable*: too real, of the past and future-present too obviously to enter a narrative or even visibility. To say that it is always allegorical, and that every literalization will find itself off is not to say it is fictional but to regard the Malthusian formula as one might Hamlet’s ghost. The import of Malthus’ number grenade had always been the ethico-cognitive rupture and the abstract reset it entailed for the in between time, the techno-science of *deferral*. Extinction is not the same as death but a cessation of birthing and the inscriptions that partook of that life form. Malthus did not give undo attention to the time when this “numbers game” had already been lost or triggered but would then play out over a parenthesis of time, actively delayed or deferred, a zombie grace period (for Malthus this was baked in, mere math, and involved no external “tipping points”). In short, he did not consider the sheer resistance of anthropos to the mere thought of his own disappearance, nor the impressive design of the post-Paris game-plan. Without notice, that would not be to ingenuously work to halt an accelerating ecocide or, certainly, mass extinction events; it would not be to conserve, ecologically, the biosphere — it would be willing, covertly, to accelerate and double down in fact, since it would gamble all on exponentially advancing technologies to resolve things otherwise. What those would initiate, however, would again not be some geo-engineering miracle but, essentially, the covert return of what is really the ban within the ban over OP — not the problem itself but the recollected trauma of its most iconic address: eugenics. What it gambles

on, in effect, is the import of a species split that not only passively resolves, in time, the OP problematic, as if on its own, but empowers it (techno-spawn of the “.0001 %”), endowed with longevity (murmurs predict 120 years), synthetic organs, designer babies, gene-editing, purges of genetic disease, enhanced A.I. capacities and system integration, and the homogenization effect of an artificed genetic bottleneck — separating out from the “anthropocene” period itself (a name they may have reason to deface and retire in retrospect as a messy era of, essentially, Humanity 1.0). The question isn’t whether the end of this century (arbitrary metric) can be saved from a 4 degree or 7 degree rise but who or what might be left standing, when, how, and with what tools and powers to outmaneuver the ecocidal vortices and social disintegration — well underway in the era of climate wars and mass refugee “inundation.”

II. Anthropos (not) talking (to himself) — the ban *within* the ban within ...

if there are going to be 200 trillion people eventually, then you might think that it’s sort of surprising that you’re among the earliest 0.5 % of the people who will ever exist (Nick Bostrom)⁹

George Marshall’s *Don’t Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* [2014] diagnoses how cognitive and social memes, essentially neural rhetoric, neutralize reference here (with a little assist from Fox News), and Diana Coole assaults the inability to engage “population talk” by diagnosing the “five” rhetorical jams or inversions which that ban depends on specifically — only to find deconstructions don’t seem to have effect.¹⁰ Thus there are “five categories of silencing discourse: population-shaming; population-scepticism; population-declinism; population-decomposing and population-fatalism” [Coole 197] — of which “decomposing population”:

Despite [Hardt and Negri’s] focus on the poor, its authors ignore the bleak effects of rapid population growth on the everyday lives of those who inhabit slums or the misery of unwanted pregnancies. ... Nor can they consider the global consequences of increasingly affluent populations, since ecological concerns have been ruled out as mere hypocrisy. [Coole 200]

Don’t even think about it, applied to OP, must be heard as a sort of friendly gangster threat (think de Niro), which guarantees one thinks about nothing

else, otherwise. One must admire Coole's steely aims while noting the trap she steps into: her aim is to lift these bans in the name of a higher rationality, to serve the communal good of the "overall sustainability puzzle," to bring the banned or suppressed back to light, otherwise. That is, she offers to play by the rules set by those who, mysteriously, refuse to talk to her about it. And in doing so, she makes another concession, seemingly necessary but precipitous: she will only address and critique Malthusian logics in the West. It is in the western tradition of calculation, utilitarianism, and ratiocination that the Malthusian formula for thinking extinction arose and the same tradition in which it would be ignored, dismissed, banned, walked around. In effect, what she stages is "anthropos" talking (or not talking) to himself.¹¹ In fact it makes sense only to address the West, since the majority of the planetary stakeholders are not interested in whatever the West now comes up with or advises anyway — nor are they listening. That includes not only the ejection of "western values" in China (or Asia), or the collapse of prestige with its Ponzi fed-financial crisis or E. U. dysfunction. Coole's disclaimer ignores the only mega-state (China) to practice population control or the widening dismissal of *anthropos'* Enlightenment memes as hollowed out (democracy, human rights, universal "man," international accords of a recollected Pax Americana).¹²

Coole concludes that the "ghosts of the past" need be somehow cleared before "population talk" could occur: "Until the ghosts of the past have been exorcised, however, it seems unlikely that population growth will regain its place as an integral component of the overall sustainability puzzle." [Coole 213] The deconstruction did not work this time, expert as it was: nothing happens, it finds itself assimilated to an entropic circuit. What's up?

At one end of the spectrum, then, all of this "non talk" is redefined as tipping points are confirmed as passed ("Paris," decoded). From an "open" imaginary of human futures, global logics have *de facto* shifted into a politics of managed (or delayed) extinction(s) — as factors accelerate outside human control, to which the latter enters a reactive, defensive, serial role (all those wasted budgets on sea walls, disease control, desalination boondoggles, geo-engineering fads). The drift to "illiberal democracies" or authoritarian regimes and nationalist tribalisms presages this. At the other end of the spectrum, one finds accelerated planning for asteroid mining and Mars colonization, speculation on real estate in the arctic come century's end, and rush of Hollywood products building a certain comfort with the

idea of cataclysmic erasure, the inevitable survival of it by the few who would renew things, and space colonization. For some, the banned thought of *extinction* looms behind the ban on “population talk” (of course, there is another *ban within the ban within ...* to return to), the cognitive blow-torch that in its current variants would disperse and reset a clogged field of twentieth century reflexes in what Isabelle Stengers calls the suspension between “two histories” that has upended the perceptual and *noopolitical* facades milling about sustainability imaginaries. Malthus was essentially thinking twenty-first century climate change in his terms as the era of industrial colonization was gearing up behind Enlightenment facades — since he is all about computation, he would expand the data base outside human “population” as a “numbers game” to include the collapse of the biosphere, toxic mega-waste, accelerating mutations, water, and so on.

Claire Colebrook finds the logic of accelerated extinction(s) today generates its own calculus and inevitably will address the value of lives in a mutating or collapsing biosphere.¹³ This involves what some project as a die off or population cull in accord with reduced “carrying capacity.” One of the passive-aggressive tricks of the “Paris” accords was to leave the end of the narrative in suspense by (fingers crossed) agreeing to one third or so of the cuts of carbon actually needed to avert the endgame. For Colebrook, there is a parallelism between two antipodal responses on the “era of extinction,” that of the anti-natalist David Benatar’s *Better Never to Have Been: The Harm of Coming into Existence* [2006], who bracingly argues for the roll-back of human existents (and others), on a cost-benefit analysis of the “harm” it brings and the losing calculus of pain (over pleasure), and that on the other end of the spectrum of Nick Bostrom’s valorizing over human lives the persistence of intellection and rationality as a cosmic asset—by which one would prioritize necessarily the utilitarian selection of what preserves that creation.¹⁴ Anthropos talking to himself, mulling, insistent of identifying with the archival-technic the Western mutation launched. While Benatar’s argument presents itself as a sort of logical purge of a “harmful” error, it need argue from a hypothetical position of the pre- or non-existent to do so--which no philosophic or other sentence has been known to inhabit (and hence ventriloquizes, one of the perks of the living): the cost-benefit analysis of “pleasure” never adds up, the “harm” goes exponential. But both Benatar and Bostrom manifest “the extinction-logic that enables the [western] political tradition of the person.” Colebrook questions, in this regard, a persistent techno-narcissism of anthropos, the Western default to impersonal ratiocination and techno-science which is distinct from organic

life (or other hominid identity settings). She locates the genealogy of this “extinction-logic” as regards the worth or value of lives at its advent, in Socrates’ assertion that the unreflective or unexamined life is not worth living, which spawns a formal and contentless definition of personhood that need absorb and vacate any alternative content or identity it encounters — creating a “universal” *anthropos* that was, nonetheless, defined by Aristotle through exclusion alone. No slaves, no women, no children, no barbarians — those, speaking other tongues, outside of the logos. From this “the poverty and brutality of Western reason and its normalizing gestures” [Colebrook 2016] are encoded manifest in the economics of extinction that is today’s heir to the colonialist era of racial exterminations and extractivism. When a trolling ISIS goes up as a killing cult against “the West,” painting the latter as diffuse, loving “life” too much (rather than virile indifference to death), one is distracted by a war between two different nihilisms — the former of which guarantees ecocide it wants to draw out as long as possible. “Malthus” *eco-algorithm* circulates as a trick meme today that conceals itself by being impossible to talk about and impossible not to imply at once. Benatar’s anti-natalist protocols echo the suicide who would not want to ease into a miserable death (he speculates on the miseries of the last humans on earth and decides they should be avoided), as a taking control or kind of pre-emptive mastery. Unlike the pop cultural turn against human life itself as destructive of all other life forms, like army ants or a viral, and itself, as in films like *Noah*, *The Day the Earth Stood Still* or, whole-hog, Lars Von Trier’s *Melancholia*, Benatar’s calculus is not guilt ridden or judgmental — it is just that “harm” dramatically exceeds pleasure for the (anthropoid) existent.* So crystalline the “thought experiment” (Benatar has yet to take his own advice and still lists on Amazon) that one would not want to remind him that across human lives unparalleled pleasure is taken in harm, violence, torture, submissions, spectacles of cruelty, waste, and destructions of all sorts and endlessly, that the calculus and reproach at “harm” sounds like a modern liberal intellectual’s vacant exhalation and not at all Greek or Parmenidean (compare Odysseus’ visit to Achilles in the underworld against the Sophoclean plaintive one-liner that gives his book its title).

III. Extinction Karaoke — Songs of the *last Anthropos*

Colebrook suggests that, in effect, it is the liberal intellectual who functions as the agent of anthropos extinction settings unaware. It is anthropos’ claim to universality that guarantees not “human rights,” we see, but the passive

consolidation of extinction logics (“exponential growth”). This renders the literal intellectual who bans “population talk” the discrete enable of a species split before its eyes, a neo-eugenic trajectory of a “breakaway civilization” in which a minority control global resources, and the sort of population culling it most abhors.¹⁵ In keeping its hands clean, moreover, it may hope to retain its privileges and wired existence in the safe zones.¹⁶ Contrary-wise, Nick Bostrom’s cosmic priority of the survival of the *logos*, essentially, requiring rational intellection and techno-mnemonics, the entire power archive of advancing science, is again just prioritizing what “anthropos” knows or is over life.

Isabelle Stengers pivots not in the direction of ameliorating what is arriving (and has long begun), but to a “coming barbarism” — the pressures and forces not only that would extinguish the progressive enlightenment legacies but create of us monsters driven by the reversion to fortress localities in survival logics and passively genocidal exclusions of various peripheries. Yet the “struggle” brilliantly mapped is against a “coming barbarism,” a fighting off reactive degradation of what over time remains. Roy Scranton invokes Nietzsche to parry the nihilisms that affirming the death of the “civilization” one still tarries in provokes in some — though this has never seemed to me right, that knowing the late “anthropocene” as a sell by date is cause for the unwinding of anything that matters, which is a Woody Allen line. Like Nietzsche, the “we” in question submits to a going under, of sorts, a reset, a divestment of the protocols of the received we (and the “west” as programmed sensorium), approaching where it is the Western construction of “meaning” that drives proprietary extractivism as a defaulted regime of reference. Yet in accepting and affirming this, the turn to give content to a future gaze falls into a momentary stutter: one is to drum up a differently constructed “meaning” to self-efface, abstract oneself from the present enclosures (to borrow from Stengers), and become “a bridge” to the despoiled future generations, despoiled, frogs in a pot, stripped of animal life and water or memory of a before by translating the legacies of the past worth conveying — what entails *reading* — to them to tools to create “new” worlds. The stutter comes as Scranton reverts to the narrative structure of the one in transition, as Stengers says, between “two histories,” the shift from a marking the constructions of “meaning” to destruction toward an affirmation that overrides the draw toward extinction by way of return to a better “meaning” dedicated to the “new” world of the unborn — a gracious gesture devolved, again, to the a narrative of renewal passed to the despoiled future. But the gesture of reseeded in an

appreciative post-catastrophic nextgens the “Humanities” eclipses where this archival demand to project itself has yet to reckon where it, and Western philosophy precisely, busy asking how to die, accompanied this unfolding. And the profounder inflection, that reading itself by hyperbolically reformed, faces another form of sabotage: that the techno-archival, which is also anarchival, accumulates more data in two days than world history had before 2003, and rising exponentially. The archival itself mimics a *hyperpopulation* of its own, of number itself, diluting laterally shared referentials of expertise or attention. One of the *mickies* slipped into Hollywood Cli-Fi cocktails is that the cataclysmic end isn’t the end but has an aftertime (the post-apocalyptic) and survivors to renew the game. 2012 has its ark of billionaires, and Noah’s kids in the Biblical reboot climate-fable *Noah* get pubescent and want a chance to do another cycle despite the patriarch’s dedication to purging the earth of the offending species, and even Cormac McCarthy leaves the nameless boy taken in by a family with a girl his age, despite there being no generative life at all in a world running out of canned food (a sabotaged concession by McCarthy for a swift and Hollywood mock up). The point of tagging Scranton’s bold and cleansing gambit is not its lack of “political” improvisation, but that one still finds *anthropos* deploying his own strategies against himself, much as Coole would only address western discourse to make a universal claim to bring the banned topic back to light, back to discourse, back into a *logos* that had constitutively banned it.

But anthropos is not out of tricks, even as we encountered “him” above — a void “universal” that can only romanticize itself as Faust or Oedipus or Ahab during the run up epochs, and now passively accedes personhood to bodiless super-organisms, corporations, algos, and cognitive distractions. And here is where a certain turn occurs with, on, and against the extinction imaginary — with, on, and against the “overpopulation” numbers game (which is not about how many hominids can be fed abstractly). And it is one that channels the ban on such talk into serving a different role, in particular after tipping points have passed: to jump ahead, we can say that the liberal intellectual ban on OP as contaminating, instantly fascist or trending, impossible to name, ends up passively enabling and advancing the worst-case scenarios for what it would most abhor — that is, the advance per script of the triaging gradually of the dispossessed, the peripheral, the failed zones of habitation (states, territories, institutions).

IV. The Semio-Aesthetic “Madness Gene”

With the birth of the first “animal program,” an uneasy milestone was achieved in the evolution of the Roman Games: the point at which a human being faced a snarling pack of starved beasts, and every laughing spectator in the crowd chanted for the big cats to win¹⁷

Elizabeth Kolbert, in *The Sixth Extinction*, pauses to focus on the Neanderthal’s disappearance and subsumption by (essentially) us — subsumption, interbreeding, as Neanderthal DNA make up 1 to 3 % of the population today, itself 6 % of all humans to have ever existed.¹⁸ This long rejected or dismissed mingling (they couldn’t have mixed!) makes, it turns out, a healthy contribution to homo sapiens’ woefully depleted genetic diversity from the last time it faced climate extinction (down, in some estimates, to as few as fourteen reproductive individuals circa 70,000 “b.c.”) even if it plagues individuals, still, with depression and nicotine addiction.¹⁹ Kolbert reflects on the human extinguishing of his eco-friendly cousin, along with the mega-fauna (and, in the hyper-industrial present, everything else), to mark the apparent distinction attributed to our fanciful forebears: the difference would be the cave paintings, the invention and use of artistic symbols, the “aesthetic gene,” the entry into the metonymies of figuration, or shared inscription and archive. The modern human signature of leaving a swathe of extinctions and despoilment, locust-like, that would be refined as the Western *anthropos* who would impose his proper name on the epoch of men (subsuming other variants), would itself, to connect these dots, be initiated with aesthetic displacement. *Anthropos* would name the Western or post-Greek variant whose flowering in colonial periods, through extractivism and genocidal “conquests,” and with it the rationality, calculation, techno-mnemonic extension, that would be extended, by left narratives, into responsibility for the ecocidal acceleration. This would be a key negotiating impasse at, say, Copenhagen, as historical damages by victim nations would be leveraged (China, in particular). This launch of aesthetic displacement, opening a endless metonomies turbo-charged in alphabetical script or grammar’s seeming linearity and dependence on the unarrivable “promise,” not just to the greater inflection of a mode of sentience not only subject to those engineering the archival rituals (priests, interpreters, those moving the torches in the cinematic caves), but to the fact that differential techno-semiosis itself is not organically “living,” that the premise and tools of archival management and perceptual regimes

would have said hominid cogitating and identifying with or by means of what would be, if unsaid, itself neither human nor organic, traverse generations, appear to arrest temporality, generate abstractions to fight or die for, and beyond. These three factors disappear from view in confluence: a trajectory of endless displacement and virtualization, an archival anchor that is itself not organic or “life,” as such, but technics, and the evisceration, targeting, killing, eating, or proprietization (“meaning”) that is the signature of anthropos. Arriving today at the sixth mass extinction, it is indissociable from aesthetic displacements, projections, dissociation, and inscriptions (or, differently today, tele-digitized streaming). Kolbert distinguishes the eco-friendly Neanderthal, who if undisturbed would be in the same valleys, and same caves, surrounded by the same mega-fauna today, from the extincting winner gifted what amounts to a “madness gene,” a gene driving transgression of borders and space, launching barks into open seas not know what is there or how to return, until some landed, burning out and moving on, plunging, accelerating forward, proprietizing and extincting as, again, a near semio-aesthetic fault or hyperbolic cut. [Kolbert 236-59]²⁰ This “madness gene” is simple the exosomatic or techno-narcisst pharmakon doing what it cannot stop, purified and automated — the so-called Anthropocene as the now self-feeding irreversible will to exceed its own erasure or decoupling, whether as the fantasy of a cyborg conversion of the organism or accelerated eco-cide with an escape clause for exo-planetary migration of a survivor caste, bred for the occasion.

V. Escape Velocity — or, Loading the Ark(hive)

as the natural habitat of Earth has become more competitive, there has been a progressive decrease in survival of hominid species: *Homo erectus* is estimated to have survived for over 1 million years, *H. antecessor* for 600,000 years, *H. ergaster* for 450,000 years, *H. neanderthalis* for 300,000 years, and *H. sapiens* — so far — for 150,000 years.²¹

To return to the figural anomaly of OP circa 2016, there is another factor to paint in. This would be the massive wealth transference following the 2008 financial crisis — when capitalism performed its shock doctrine on itself. This is what Bruno Latour notes as the “enormous shift that has seen the richest 10 % become the richest 1 %, and then 0.1 %, cannot be understood until we appreciate that the elites have abandoned all hope of ever sharing their territory with those they had asked to modernize — or

perish.”²² What is funny, of course, and a distraction, is to call this “inequality,” as if there were some cyclical return to something called equality, balance, or a middle class to reconjure, an excess of greed to reset. This massively engineered wealth shift under cover of bankster prestidigitation (digital Q.E. injected into, and remaining in, TBTF banks, massive rigging of markets by central banks, financialization and fantasmal future-loaded mega-debt pinned on despoiled nextgens and “futures” — a ride that has left the international financial system teetering, voiding paper currencies, wielding negative interest rates). Rather, this has to be read from the perspective of climate change — where it makes a great deal of sense, even if counter-intuitive sense to a data and cash harvested public. This massive wealth shift is not matter of “inequality” but a systemic shift, the spawning of a systemic “breakaway civilization” — separating and walling off from the public debt in a self-sufficient über-economy--propriety not just global wealth but resources. Perfectly timed, the very hyper-elites who were streaming mediocratic climate denialism broadly, sufficient to paralyze, were looting the house with climate change entirely in the calculation going forward. This is not “inequality” and it is a one-way street. This makes the more interesting the subtext of Copenhagen’s “failure” — and the subsequent public dissimulations of “Paris” together with it built in suspense (you won’t know until the century’s end, goes the fable, if we made it, and it requires subordination, but if you’d prefer to be on the outside, and so on). Copenhagen was not the keystone cops episode of broken negotiations over who was to pay who more, as was given up, an infantile response to, in the pointless words of Gordon Brown, humanity’s supposed “last chance,” and so on. Rather, a decision was implicitly taken for the hyper-elites to go to Plan B. Inadvertently, one might see the kitsch climate disaster blockbuster, *2012*, with its escape of billionaires on Chinese built mega-arcs, having suppressed the news of global inundations from the masses who could do nothing about it anyway (not having a billion on hand), as a hyperbolic parody (or inspiration?) of the more or less contemporary Copenhagen meet. They had *passively* decided, in effect, that it was too late already — certainly, if their individual regimes and economic power were not to roll over, as any volte face on oil consumption guaranteed.

“Plan B,” in the dismissal of any Plan A, would be quite sensible: utilize the delay to stockpile resources for the decades to come (themselves), and constitute not only a ruling but a survivor caste across the next generations. The system is also guaranteed to increase disparity parabolically. Any

variation of this will do, since it is a systemic response in retrospect fully predictable — and very well executed. And impeccably timed, corresponding with exponential advances in robotics, gene “editing,” synthetic biologies, techno-weaponry, and A.I., across the boards, which will have been effectively privatized. Do you wonder why no new antibiotic strains have reached the broad public, despite dire warning? While the liberal intellectual walks around the banned he seems not to have noticed that, before his eyes: he has attended that rarest of occurrences, on which there should be a ban, a financially engineered species split, the near wet dream of every eugenics venture among the endless breeding experiments preceding the era of extinction(s) today — from the wan and inbred roadbumps of European royalty (blue-bloods), whose intertwined cousins stumbled into a so-called first “world” war, to Nazi genocidal erasures of “inferior races” (*Untermenschen*). This time, it’s genetic editing outright, marketed first as designer babies — likely to homogenize populations the same way baby names trend — would finally involve synthetic organs, cloning, enhanced A.I., and so on. Add to these selectively anticipated half century gains of longevity and promised “singularities.” To assure this passes unremarked (or seems unremarkable), Hollywood will flood the popular tele-circuits with various kitsch fantasies of the same, derealizing generic entertainments (*Elysium*, *The Hunger Games* franchise, et al). It would seem that the second “world” war, to the extent it was over eugenics and the pre-mature claim of a master “race,” need be renarrated: it would be prove in time to be not against eugenics as such but the specifically tribal race-based, exclusionary sort Hitler claimed genetic propriety over. Rather, tele-eugenics would be *as if* democratized, auctioned off, a prerogative of digitally acquired hyper-wealth — internationally open, members of all tribes allowed this time. How did that war end, again?

One can admire this trifecta endlessly — among other things, the way one would admire a perfectly timed heist, particularly since the caper nominally involves, or pretends to, the survival caste of what we might call *the species that is not one*. No doubt epic poems will be tweeted about it by its proud heirs in a century or so (alert: “thought experiment” — as if there is any other kind), much as the rape of the Sabines would be sacrally narrated by Rome. It has the ancillary value of guaranteeing nothing interesting will emerge on earth for hundreds of millions of years, drained of genetic diversities, and that the proper name anthropos will be wiped clean and replaced in a next incarnation which, by necessity, will decamp the incinerated biosphere of its birth planet (or incubator) to spread the same

joy to space rocks. There is nothing like seeing a good plan come together, a smart plan, such as wasting a rich biosphere in order to start from scratch on an already dead planet (say, Mars), one worse off than where earth is now heading. But anthropos, being *anthropos*, has no choice but to double down on the techno-narcissism he hosts, defers to, is hollowed out and given longevity by, “is.” Anthropos is dead, long live Anthropos (2.0): to outlive one’s own extinction, which oneself oversees, is to enter sheer animation, molecular acceleration, quasi-immortality, the status of a cave painting itself.

VI. The Counter-Malthusian Trap

Putting large numbers of people in off-Earth colonies will inevitably lead to a kind of speciation ... Re-engineering our children will transform our species even faster. We can eventually produce offspring that are as different from us as dogs are from gray wolves. The haphazard, bottom-up alterations to our species occasioned by Darwinian evolution will yield to the directed improvements of future engineers (Seth Shostak)²³

The good news was that Stephen Hawking declared himself “optimistic” about human survival. The bad news, also, is that Stephen Hawking branded as “science.”²⁴ He is “optimistic,” he at least claimed, since for him that means that what I will call the species that is not one, “humans,” would survive into the distant future — but only by colonizing extra-terrestrial rocks as earth becomes uninhabitable. That is, “he” cannot recognize himself as a species among others, since the articulating staged “I” is identified and generated with linguistic and semiotic complexes, mnemo-techhic weaves and tsunami, which are themselves neither organic nor strictly alive. Oh yeah: and *only* if we make it in the next two centuries. He thinks we’ll make it (well, a certain “we”), dodging the gauntlet of catastrophic threats we are rapidly inventing against ourselves (particularly new bio-weaponry that cannot be contained). The subtext of Hawking’s view, however, pervades the oscillating imaginaries not only of accelerated extinction and not not-extinction, but anticipatory escape calculi — issued in the name of techno-science. *Success*, “optimism” in this narrative, is not about preserving a richly habitable planet or its diverse multi-billion hominids: it is an abstraction. It would be measured by a no doubt comparatively miniscule number of techno-evolved hominids achieving *escape velocity* from an incinerated planet, abandoned, to seed itself in the

cosmos (bringing its eviscerating munchies with it). What matters, in this extinction-counter-extinction narrative, comes down to projecting the human techno-scientific trajectory legacy in *its* continued acceleration to ex-terra entities, rocks, platforms — the waste a planet and move on syndrome. I know, we have seen parts of this movie here and there — *Interstellar*, *Avatar* — but perhaps that is the point. The ingenuity of the species which is not one manifests itself here in a Houdini complex. This should make the neighboring cosmos nervous. After fretting for a century in all pop cultural milieus about invading destroying space aliens, it turns out Roswells ‘R Us, and this virtual *alienness* to everything on earth, expressed through appropriation and utility, is imbricated in the semio-aesthetic dissociation which is the “madness gene.”

Of course, one may wince a bit at this self-executing *escape* plan — of the hyper-elites, of the human from its own form and miasmatic short “histories,” of the resurgence of tribalisms and historical vendettas. One may wonder if it is another screen or a distraction. What must survive its own extinction, as conquest, is a techno-archival regime in exponential advance, gone hyper, which anthropos thinks to identify with. It is not a tribe, not a species, not organic, and not in itself anthropic, but a techno-evolution for which hominids appear to have served as host and incubator — to a point. This appears so, whether as techno-science (Hawking, Bostrom), or “the Humanities,” or a progressive promise: that is, what recognizes only its own structuration and is indissociable from the death star path that the hominid trajectory simulates for other species, other hominids, and finally a version of itself. One might tip off the hyper-elites to an avenging irony. What is described is that the techno-narcissism which drives itself on, or auto-evolves, is distinct from the organicism of bodies or any one definition of the hominid form. The sociopathy of CEO’s easily simulates these machinal desideratum, on behalf of ghost mega-organisms, corporations (without corpus or bodies), granted personhood by legal structures, even feigning human grievances and religious affiliation to “play” the other human populations (who, in turn, forming tribal affiliations, resemble corporate, impersonal, organizations). The aging moguls who today salivate over the “singularity” arriving in time to gift them hyper-longevity imagine a future that permanently freezes their (apparently well-fed) present, clogging a wasted planet with not only double-lived hyper-consumers.²⁵ The image to focus on would not be the dread of Elon Musk or Bill Gates, insiders, of an A.I. so evolved that it terminates the messy human organisms whose destructive nature and

tendency to (not) talk to itself about real things had become insufferable. It is that the “new” human envisioned as an extension and empowering of the present redaction who is talking to himself about it, is not the one that would arrive at all, that the organic host had been gamed by the techno-archival parasite, hollowed out, shed. The latter would not recognize, would disown, and as need arose — let’s just say she had enough of anthropos (not) talking to himself — bracket or extinguish the former.

Let us imagine that this techno-narcissism could speak for itself, to itself; that it is personified obliquely, the hominids its site of incubation. Any *narcissism* of a techno-evolutionary process infinitely exceeds that of human bodies, itself exponentially accelerated and self-feeding as energy transference accelerated (“the great acceleration”). Spawning images of cyber techno gods in metallic human form, like Ridley Scott’s glum *Prometheus*, it nonetheless rhymes with an inert narcissism of oil itself, the almost inanimate residue of organic life, “stored sunlight,” carbon, sheer waste. The narrative has rather been as if *techné’s* self-unfolding had been facilitated by the hominids rather than the reverse: hence what calls itself “the anthropocene” announces a retirement or extinction of *anthropos*. Anthropos doesn’t get it, says its survival as such is non-negotiable, the louder as it passes. Hominids would be the fortuitous host organisms of this techno-narcissist advance, experienced as intellection, digital logistics, engineering power: incubator organisms that become, in consequence, the species that is not one since it identifies itself with abstractions and transmission — as we saw above, with an archive, with cinematic “consciousness,” with knowledge accumulation, with number, with a *techno-logos*, with “the *examined* life” of Socratic initiations that obliterates the “unexamined,” with the semio-aesthetic tout court. And here’s the rub: just as modern humans rhetorically shift from regarding Earth as home (Oikos) to regarding that as a discardable incubator planet, handy but an accidental ensemble of resources and complex life forms, a parallel logic of burning through and moving on would be applicable to hominids themselves. The tele-eugenic imaginary implies an auto-tele-eugenocide of *anthropos* for the techno-narcissist trajectory to exceed that, for anthropos to “survive” his own extinction — ultimate triumph. Anthropos can’t get it, is in a puppeted vortex, since his point of identification is the techno-narcissism that dissimulates itself as “his” will and logics. That is, much as corporations, annointed as legal “persons” and the assuming full spectrum subjectivities, pleading religion and care for the “unborn,” game anthropocene “democracies” and rewrite laws and legislatures.

The entire undercurrent of response which no one is talking about or wants to apparently is that of *planned escape*: it gambles on “sustainability” rhetoric to stretch out the window of time, ignoring its intended mandate to conserve the biospheric gameboard aside from its lead-up to achieving escape velocity from the waste or carnage at the right time. Call it the *Wall-E* meets *Interstellar* solution. Condos in Antarctica? Space hotels? Casinos, on a terra-formed Mars? And this, apparently, is what late planetary ecocides look and sound like in advanced addicto-genic hominid civilizations — in particular those that won’t or can’t talk about it. In this classic ecocidal configuration it is no surprise to see the liberal intellectuals serving unwittingly as Praetorian guard, suppressing hot button words or alertness as their hyper-elites buckle up. Of course, all these metaphors of Gaia and “mother Earth,” at least the late modernist sentimentalism regarding maternity and ecofeminist mourning, may have been misplaced or imposed, that of the nurturing one to be honored and respected as life-giving source or fertilities and future generations. The model may have been more arachnid, or “natural,” converting the body of the bearer into the off-spring’s first meal, or like octopi, exhausting its life cycle in birthing a techno-miracle such as octopi are. Of course, if Plan B doesn’t work out; if their one-sided imaginary negotiations with tipping points doesn’t *buy* enough time, no one in today’s hyper-elite feigning adherence to the script will be around to know or not, and thus in cost-benefit terms: a win-win. In short, since the script imagines itself set: *don’t even think about it*.

NOTES

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9 Bostrom, Nick. 2012. “We’re Underestimating the Risk of Human Extinction,” Interview by Ross Anderson. March 6, 2012. *The Atlantic*.

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10 Marshall, George. 2014. *Don’t Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2014.

11 Anthropos gives the Western *psychosphere* a name, the one it wants to use to identify the entire trajectory of all hominids ever.

12 The “ghost of Malthus” haunted Marx and his confreres precisely as it does today’s futurists. Engels dismissed Malthus as unaware of modern science — a variant of the anti-Malthus positions today, often carried over to strategically deny and ideologically debunk like sounding calculations of depleted resources skirted (such as “peak oil” — which we temporarily see flooding markets). Yet Malthus may appear *post*-Marxian as regards a materiality the latter could not access — adding a redemption narrative skimmed from Christian temporality models (which pervade Hegel)—as the utopist imaginaries are abruptly, retired, reset, or foreclosed by what we

will pretend to just name *climate change*. Nonetheless, the call is out to repatch the archive, and produce the “ecological” Marx. Kohei Saito, in “Marx’s Ecological Notebooks.” *Monthly Review*, Volume 67, Issue 09 (February 2016) <http://monthlyreview.org/2016/02/01/marxs-ecological-notebooks/>, concludes: “Marx’s economic and ecological theory is not outdated at all, but remains fully open to new possibilities for integrating natural scientific knowledge with the critique of contemporary capitalism.”

13 Colebrook, Claire. “Lives Worth Living,” in *Extinction*, Richard Grusin, ed. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2016. See also “Extinction,” in Rosi Braidotti, ed. *Posthuman Glossary*. London: Bloomsbury, 2016 and “What is the Anthro-Political?,” in Cohen, Tom, Claire Colebrook and J. Hillis Miller, *Twilight of the Anthropocene Idols*. Open Humanities Press: 2016. <http://www.openhumanitiespress.org/books/titles/twilight-of-the-anthropocene-idols/>: 81-126.

14 Benatar, David. *Better Never to Have Been — the Harm of Coming into Existence*. Clarendon: Oxford University Press, 2006.

15 Austin-Fitts, Catherine. 2012. “Interview: CAF on the “Breakaway Civilization.” <https://www.corbettreport.com/interview-461-catherine-austin-fitts-on-the-breakaway-civilization/>

16 Colebrook observes that Jameson’s remark, that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism, sounds nice but is routinely disproved by the post-apocalyptic fare of Hollywood. It is the end of capitalism precisely that the post-apocalyptic *Mad Max* or *The Walking Dead* imagine, in so far as the world had not ended but is merely post-apocalyptic. For the western consumer and wired urban cosmopolite, the end of “capitalism” is returning to what the third world experiences daily — the horrors of gang culture, instant death, no grid or toilets, a demographic it requires for its “sustainability.” What is projected is a kind of *Manhattanide*, where smart phones and Starbucks disappear. They’ve been warned.

17 Aptowicz, Cristin O’Keefe. “Could You Stomach the Horrors of ‘Halftime’ in Ancient Rome?” live science. February 7, 2016. www.livescience.com/53615-horrors-of-the-colosseum.html.

18 Kolbert, Elizabeth. *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. New York: Picador, 2014: 236-59.

19 Vegas, Jennifer. 2016. "Neanderthal Genes Make Us Depressed, Smoke." *News. Discovery*. February 11, 2016.
<http://news.discovery.com/human/evolution/neanderthal-genes-make-us-depressed-smoke-160211.htm>

20 Of course, there is the inevitability of reactive barbarism, as Isabelle Stengers calls it — at least, for *anthropos*. By this Stengers means not ISIL or the Asiafication of Europe but the recoils, tribal nationalism, Trump walls, the ecologically driven "next genocide" (Timothy Snyder 2015). Europe's disbanding of Enlightenment facades (universal human rights) before what is merely the first "inundation" of mass climate refugees from its former colonies and extraction sites, or the Rohingyas simply spat back out to sea in Southeast Asia until called out by the E.U. over human rights (apparently for the last time), the sea becoming a disappearance zone for the landless (as for plastic waste), mark this trend — as 10,000 Syrian migrant kids disappear into Europe's lucrative pedophilic mills. See Kaplan, Robert. "Europe's new medieval map," *Wall Street Journal*, January 15, 2016
<http://www.wsj.com/articles/europes-new-medieval-map-1452875514?tesla=y>. Consulted 11:31 a.m. ET

21 Epstein, Richard and Y. Zhao. "The Threat That Dare Not Speak Its Name: Human Extinction." *Perspectives in Biology and Medicine*, volume 52, number 1 (Winter 2009): 116-25.

22 Latour, Bruno. 2016. "A New Political Circle" / "Terroir, Globe, Earth — a new political Triangle." Posted February 2016.
https://www.academia.edu/20202424/Bruno_Latour_A_New_Political_Circle.

23 Shostak, Seth. 2016. "Could This Be Humanity's Last Century?" Huffington Post, January 14, 2016. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/seth-shostak/could-this-be-humanitys-l_b_8980080.html?utm_hp_ref=science&ir=Science Consulted January 15, 1:05 a.m.

24 Bernish, Claire. 2016. "Stephen Hawking Warns Humanity: Leave Earth before the Ruling Class Destroys it." *TheAntiMedia.org*. January 20, 2016.

Hawking: “It will be difficult enough to avoid disaster on planet Earth in the next hundred years ... The human race shouldn’t have all its eggs in one basket, or on one planet.”

<http://theantimedia.org/stephen-hawking-warns-humanity-leave-earth-ruling-class-destroys/>

25 Schwarz, Larry. “4 Ways the One Percent Is Trying to Buy Their Immortality.” *Alternet.org*, 13 June 2015.

<https://www.oximity.com/article/4-Ways-the-One-Percent-Is-Trying-to-Bu-1>.

On or about 1781 the World Begins, and Ends.

On or about 1781 the world begins, and ends. The birth of the world in Western modernity is essentially bound up with the end of the world. Once all experience is located within a highly specific and normative conception of reason, it is also possible that this same elevated reason may succumb to laziness, attrition or fall back into pre-critical stupor. It is not only Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, published in 1781, that marks the origin of the world and the erasure of the cosmos: many studies in the history of ideas mark a point at which thought is no longer subjected to some imagined, transcendent and unfathomable divinity but instead becomes an authority unto itself. Louis Dumont saw this turn as the hallmark of individualism (Dumont 1986); John Rawls saw all later liberal theories as Kantian in their anti-foundationalism (Rawls 1971); Jürgen Habermas referred to a necessary shift towards becoming post-metaphysical (Habermas 1992); Richard Rorty defined pragmatism as a necessary, modern, liberal and humanist abandonment of foundations (Rorty 1993). In all cases we cease to speculate on absolutes and instead confine ourselves to the world *as we know it*. The world is nothing more, nothing less, than the elevation of human subjective life to the transcendental horizon of sense and meaning. (This elevation is intensified, rather than vanquished, when Quentin Meillassoux [2009] rejects Kant and claims that one *can* and must think beyond experience, thereby demoting the world as it is experienced to what might be thought.) This elevation is as encompassing as it is fragile; if the world is not the planet but the maturity of human reason, then it is always possible that we will fall back into the worldlessness that humanity regards as pre-modern, or inhuman.

Today, when post-apocalyptic culture creates endless variants of the 'end of the world' — ranging from zombies who are mere life without interiority (*Walking Dead* [2010-], *World War Z* [2013], *28 Days Later* [2002]), to the collapse of global media technologies that would destroy worldly connectedness (*Gravity* [2013]) — or when we imagine a universal language that will save the future (*Arrival* [2016]), we reiterate and intensify a maneuver of Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Theology and various forms of mythic speculation had claimed to know the infinite, whether that take the form of God, the cosmos, or any number of origin stories. Against

this, Kant had argued that we cannot legitimately make knowledge claims regarding what lies beyond experience, and what we experience is always given without our forms of time and space. This claim regarding the primacy of the given and the impossibility of legitimate cosmic speculation gave birth to the world. Thought must reign itself in and speak *only* of what might be known and therefore legitimated by way of norms of reason. This bracketing or suspension of the infinite nevertheless gave birth to an elevated but essentially fragile reason and world. The world is that which is given in an ordered, formed and causal manner within the bounds of experience; reason is the condition and origin of the world. Modernity occurs when we recognize that all those who had claimed to know that which transcends experience are deemed to be tyrannical, setting themselves outside the bounds of sense. Maturity occurs when we do without such external authorities. Intertwined with this elevation of reason and the world is the threat of its loss; the very reason that allows us to give form and order to the world seeks first causes and ultimate truths and in so doing enslaves itself to authority. Kant will lament all the ways in which we abandon our reason and outsource our decisions to supposed experts (those who illegitimately claim to know better). Today post-apocalyptic culture constantly rehearses the many ways in which a properly moral and upright humanity may be conquered by its own base tendencies and risks, often figured in the form of corporate greed, capitalism or the return of feudal tyranny. This motif, however, has been common since the enlightenment; if we are born free, but everywhere in chains, then there must be something about free reason that tends towards enslavement. This problematic tendency is the world: the forming power of reason produces a coherent and lawful nature, but once formed that same nature appears as inescapable. As Bruno Latour has recently argued, not only do we need to recognize that the world composed through the sciences is the outcome of practices and interests, we also need to see the ways in which economic ‘laws’ are the outcome of modes of existence: what has been made can be unmade, with the world existing as the outcome of compositional relations among things (Latour 2017). Latour has also argued that the ‘modern divorce’ between mind and nature needs to be replaced by a parliament of things, and yet his notion of *world* as the outcome of practices, things and humans is exactly what has been presupposed from Kant to the present. Kant may have thought that mind was a transcendental power that gave form to matters, but there was also — in Kant and Romanticism — a sense of the felicitous harmony between mind and world, *as if* everything unfolded with reason as its end.

The world emerges in the eighteenth century as the horizon of sense, meaning, history and progress, allowing a certain portion of the species to think of itself as ‘humanity,’ as a being for whom all events tend towards an ideal of reason. Kant argued for a rational cosmopolitanism: history may appear to be a panorama of futility, but we must act as if our actions would eventually build a world of peace and justice (Kant 1991). In the twentieth century John Rawls would argue that we must imagine just societies as worlds in which every rational agent would, in principle, consent to the order of the whole. Liberal theory in general is committed to the world rather than the cosmos: not an order beyond reason and knowledge, but a constituted domain of mutually reflective legitimation. We are post-metaphysical: living in the world requires that we acknowledge the multiple senses and configurations that human beings give to their lives. It would follow that a loss of that sense would amount to the end of the world. This is what ties post-Kantian liberalism to post-apocalyptic culture. The world, and not the planet, is the horizon of sense and rational action; we should act as if our decisions could be assumed by all, and in so doing we form a sense of ourselves as more than mere life. This is what allows Kantian liberalism to adopt a form of all-inclusive tolerance: once we recognize that we do not know things in themselves, we accept a multiplicity of worlds, with human practices and cultures unfolding their own horizons of sense. Yet, within and by way of this post-metaphysical tolerance, it is the liberal man of reason who possesses the elevated sense of the dependence of all these worlds on human meaning. We will, as Francis Fukuyama argues, have arrived at the last man, then end of history and the end of ideology when we no longer seek a truth or foundation outside the world (Fukuyama 1992). All we have is the world in its various and rich modes of composition. If such recognition and elevated tolerance were to fall away it would not be the end of history, but the end of the world. This world can be lost in so many ways: the return of tyrannical feudalism (*Hunger Games* [2012]), resource depletion generating systemic collapse of the bourgeois public sphere (*Mad Max* [1979]), invasions that place once-privileged humanity in the conditions of indentured servitude (*Elysium* [2013]) or viral pandemics that produce sufficient chaos to short-circuit communicative reason (*Contagion* [2011]). In post-apocalyptic culture it is the loss of the elevated bourgeois public sphere capable of surveying the whole that amounts to the end of the world. This is why so many post-apocalyptic dramas begin with alarming reports by news media, and then depict the fast disintegration of media technologies, as ‘humanity’ loses its social fabric and becomes an arena of wandering bodies, encountering each other across a

landscape that is merely the earth. What is lost is not the planet, not life, not the human species, but the elevated gaze that allows ‘humanity’ to recognize itself as the ground of all history and synthesis.

One of the key features of Anthropocene man is his odd relation dependence upon fallenness and righteous elevation. We are neither purely rational moral beings, nor evil and fallen monsters. We are capable of imagining and striving for a just world, all the while struggling against our baser tendencies. This contrary tendency allows ‘end of the world’ narratives to function as theodicies: we can look back at a history of barbarism that has nearly destroyed the world, and then demand that we must survive so that humanity in its proper and just mode will triumph. It is *because* our reason is at once necessary for the world and yet also fragile that we must survive. By representing a series of threats to the world, by imagining the world as on the brink of ending, humanity as it *should be* appears as necessary to save the day. Rather than regarding humans as lesser beings in a grander cosmos, Western modernity accepts that whatever world we have is of our own making; what is made can be unmade. Against the notion that humans are fallen and need to bide their time in this world, always with a sense of an inhuman, eternal and infinite cosmos beyond their ken, it is *this* world in its all-too-human meaningfulness that amounts to the sum of all being. To lose this specific self-elevating mode of humanity is to lose the world.

Prior to the beginning of the world there had been the globe, the cosmos, and the earth. One could imagine — as John Milton did in 1667 in *Paradise Lost* — that the story of human history was placed within a broader narrative in which rational redemption would form a fragment of the whole. Milton could depict Satan as a proto-space-traveler, capable of viewing the suspended orb of the world from a distance, and he could also depict Adam as viewing the course of human history, guided by an Angel who knows and monitors the bounds of Adam’s knowledge. Adam could be apprised of the beginning of the world in time, as though human existence could only be made sense of by way of a narrative the preceded its own reason and experience. For Kant, by contrast, anything outside human experience and time can only have practical value; we can act as if the world were blessed with divine reason, and we can imagine ourselves to be agents of a perfect world order, but strictly speaking we can only know the world. In order to experience anything whatsoever, Kant argued, one must already have a sense of space and time, a difference between what is experienced

and its appearance to a subject. We cannot, Kant insisted, legitimately strive to know the beginning or end of all things; insofar as we know anything at all it is by way of the experience of this world. The world in this Kantian sense is not the planet, not the life on the planet, and not the increasingly-dominated, conquered and plundered globe. It is the horizon of meaning and possibility that allows those objects — planets, maps, nations — to appear. Despite this elevation of the subject as the condition for the possibility of the world, Kant was accused — in twentieth-century phenomenology — of failing to account for the origin of the world (Fink 1970). Kant had only insisted, against the theologians, mystics, enthusiasts, and metaphysicians who wanted to theorize about absolutes, that *knowledge* can only be of the world, because the world is what is given to us, through time. What he had not done — according to phenomenology — was acknowledge that it is the world as such, and not only the known world, that comes into being through subjectivity. He had not accounted for the origin of the world. Once we accept that phenomenological sense of the world — as composed through experience — it makes sense to say, as Jacques Derrida would do, that the world has already ended, or that the death of any other is the end of the world (Naas 2015) .

If the world unfolds from experience, then all we have are singular compartments towards the world, never *the world*. Prior to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* poets could imagine human history as a story or journey, carrying God's inner light of reason until they find their way back to the natural law that is engraved in their hearts. With Kant, reason is not an inner light, not a property that beings within the world possess; the world is possible because of reason, and reason is *pure*. Once we reflect on the very possibility of any experience we recognize that the concept of the beginning and end of the world are internal to reason; the very sequence of events prompts us to imagine that there must have been a first cause, *and* — upon reflection — that we cannot but act as if all we were to do would contribute to a virtuous whole. Being human requires the sense of the world as a rational moral totality, while the world is only possible because of reason. If our actions are oriented not to the way the world happens to be (with all its violence, barbarism and injustice) but as we imagine the world ought to be (as a history progressing towards the fulfilment of our moral ideals), then the world cannot be equated with the planet but becomes a moral project, the end of which is both imminent and unthinkable. Think of all the ways in which post-apocalyptic culture presents the world of reason as threatened and at a near end, and yet finally and necessarily triumphant. If

we are faced with non-being, then we must rally to triumph: viruses, invasions, climate change, runaway technological change, and over-reaching capitalism are all occasions for humanity to slough off what it happens to have been and arrive at its true, just and world-inheriting self.

The world is the idea towards which human reason tends; the end of the world is the collapse of what Kant referred to as ‘rational cosmopolitanism’ (Kant 1991). Instead of progressive sense and an orientation towards global relationality, the end of the world returns human beings to a condition of dispersal. This is as true of enlightenment philosophy as it is of post-apocalyptic blockbuster cinema. If the technical and rational systems that orient humans towards the world break down, bodies are reduced to the immediacy of survival and become nothing more than mere life. From the pure exteriority of zombies to the desperation of post-war or resource-depleted humans reduced to struggling for existence, post-apocalyptic wastelands are invariably scenarios where the planet exists but the world has been lost. Bodies now wander aimlessly, often encountering, mourning or yearning for fragments of the world that are now violently torn from the relations that would give them sense. The classic instance of this fragment of the world now rendered worldless is the dismembered and discarded Statue of Liberty in *The Planet of the Apes* (1968), no longer recognized as a historical monument but washed up as so much waste. Prior to contemporary ‘end of world’ culture, English Romantic poetry possessed a strong sense of the capacity — from within *the* world — to be struck by worlds that had come to an end. Often the encounter was as mournful as it was self-elevating; one could gaze longingly at past worlds that had had no sense of the fragility of life within which they had taken place. The poetic voice could look at tombstones, statues, or monuments as having been created with a sense of timelessness, and yet struck down by time. The scene on the urn in Keats’ ‘Ode to a Grecian Urn’ depicts a world that had no sense of possible endings, a world blessed with an immediacy that was all in all, a world that (unlike the poem’s voice) did not have an elevated, world-aware comprehension that was as fragile as it was necessary. The scene on the urn is looked back upon wistfully, giving a sense of eternity that now can only be imagined in a world that knows of generations laid to waste:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;

Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
 As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
 When old age shall this generation waste,
 Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
 Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
 "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
 Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."
 (Keats 345-46).

The scene on the urn is not eternal — that which remains the same for all time — but it becomes timeless and without end once it is captured by art, with art offering a sense within time of that which might remain for all time. This is because art is a worldly comprehension of objects that express worlds but do not themselves have a world. Just as Martin Heidegger will later claim that the animal is 'poor in world' (Heidegger 1995, 201), and later animal studies will place a positive spin on this claim by embracing an animal immediacy and vitality (Massumi 2014), so the speaker in Keats's ode becomes world-purveying by adopting a point of view that can place finite worlds within a gaze of worldly comprehension. One can, from this elevated urbanity, recognize the loss of worlds, and remark upon a certain beauty in being 'poor in world.' It is this recognition of poorer, if lost, worlds that will constitute humanity's self-righteous richness in world. The worldly gaze is at once hermeneutic and counter-hermeneutic, blessed with a capacity to see other worlds as distant and different, and yet never fully translatable into the present. It is this same gaze that will enable various forms of cultural, historical and anthropological relativism; it is the gaze and comportment of what Jurgen Habermas will refer to as 'world-disclosure' (Habermas 1987). Art has its place in the world, not by stating what ought to be the case, nor by making claims regarding technical know-how or instrumental reason, but by allowing reflection on the means and ends that compose any world. In this respect, from Kant through to Habermas 'the world' is not a thing, but a comportment towards things, and a comportment that can often regard other humans as things in the world that are in need of the same interpretive explanation that we direct at found objects. The gaze of the anthropologist regards the others he encounters as having their own world and sense, while the anthropologist is elevated by the capacity to recognize the multiplicity of worlds. *His* world is not simply lived as the sum of all things, but has a transcendental comportment, where all others are ultimately unknowing variants of *the human*.

The apotheosis of this conception occurs with T.S. Eliot's conception of poetry and tradition: each composed text has an awareness of the historical whole, transforming the totality of humanity with each historically reflexive utterance (Eliot 1975). Gilles Deleuze also claims that every painting transforms the history of painting (Deleuze 2005, 99). Deleuze's 'higher deterritorialization' might seem a far cry from the liberal triumphalism where we think of the 'last man' and the end of history as that point in the timeline of humanity where we no longer hold on to ideologies but imagine every other human as constituting their own world. What aligns Deleuze with the modern conception of world is that philosophy bears the task not of simply being in the world but of thinking the origin of worlds. For liberalism worlds emerge from human conceptions and institutions, whereas for Deleuze every aspect of the universe expresses the whole. This is why, for Deleuze, art is not a human endeavor where we set objects apart in galleries to regard the worlds from which they emerge; even a bird arranging the sensuous qualities of leaves in a pattern has the capacity to relate to things as if they were not quite of this world. This, though, is where Deleuze marks a deflection from human chauvinism; he insists ultimately on the importance of a capacity to *think* the very possibility of any world — what he refers to as extending thought to the cosmos — even if he aligns this capacity with modern (human) art, with modernism taking its cue from the non-human forces that brought it into being.

There are worlds, but the condition for not simply living in the world, but also having a sense of the horizon of worlds, is that one imagines oneself as a fragment of humanity or life in general. This not a solely philosophical or theoretical attachment. The very fact that twenty-first-century culture is obsessed with the end of the world testifies to the extent to which our self-formation as human is bound up with a fetishized sense of the world.

Post-apocalyptic cinema sustains and intensifies the notion that the end of the world is quite different from the endings of worlds. Many end of world disaster epics portray the threat of the end of the world as the end of Manhattan. Los Angeles or London. (Worlds that have ended — the genocidal destructions that have enabled affluent urbanity to emerge — do not amount to the end of the world.) Often a narrative point of view sees most of the globe reduced to rubble, while a Western affluent fragment holds on to save the day. Alternatively, the destruction of Manhattan is all that is depicted, implying that New York is the world. *The world* is the managerial and global whole that recognizes itself at the endpoint of

history, and does so by way of practices and technologies that survey the whole. To cite just one spectacular cinematic example: 1996's *Independence Day* sees the entire globe targeted by alien invasion. The extra-terrestrial visitors have an inter-galactic history of conquering planets, consuming and destroying all resources, and then moving on. Their arrival on earth is the occasion for what had once been *a* world among worlds (the USA) to take up its manifest destiny and declare itself as the world. The final scenes will show armed forces around the world all deferring to the central command of the US president. The president — a former fighter pilot — joins forces with a global military to defeat the enemy. Prior to doing so he delivers an address to the nation, where July 4 and all it stands for becomes the world's anthem. It is now the globe that takes on life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness and freedom from tyranny; the threat to the world becomes the occasion for the world to recognize itself as America, or what humanity ought to be ideally, rather than what it happens to have been. If the aliens are characterized by violent and tyrannical plundering, their opposition is a humanity of unity and freedom, with the world being saved by the values of individual freedom and family. By imagining rapacious and conquering invasions as *other than* humanity, humanity is rendered as just, innocent and worthy of survival precisely because the end of America would appear to be the end of all things. In the end, all the world will be America. Typical of post-apocalyptic blockbusters, *Independence Day's* imagined threat of the end of the world — the annihilation of middle class and heteronormative urban affluence — becomes an imperative to save the world. *The world* is not the earth, nor the human species, but that fragment of the species that recognizes itself in the declaration of independence.

Yet, despite the necessary intimacy of this relationship between universalizing reason and the world, there is also a no less essential loss and fragility inherent to the world. As Kant points out, it is because our reason seeks to fulfil its ideas that it loses the bounds of the world; not only does our search for ultimate causes and ends lead to apocalyptic flights of fancy, and not only do we lazily abandon our reason and outsource our decision making powers to priests and other experts, we also have a far more radically evil capacity to refuse the very logic of the world (Kant 1998). We can know fully well that what we are about to do could not make sense universally, and yet we choose to do so nevertheless, as though we were kicking ourselves lose from the world. A rational being, Kant argues, has no law other than a law that they must compose for themselves. Neither the bible, nor any historically constituted law or morality can legitimately tell us

how to act; for we only know those laws as they are given and composed within this world, and in this respect they cannot legislate by placing themselves above and beyond the world. No worldly authority can set itself above reason; it follows that if reason itself is threatened then all morality, worth, and worldly sense would be lost. The only foundation we have is reason itself, and reason is nothing other than a power to elevate oneself, not by making an exception of oneself, but by acting as if one's own decisions legislated for the world, for any subject whatever. I cannot, rationally, lie; if I were to do so I would be countenancing lying as the law of the world; doing so would destroy the very practices of truth on which we all reasonably depend. As I have suggested above, this seemingly stringent and highly rational metaphysics of morals is not an isolated Kantian endeavor but characterizes 'end of world' culture from the eighteenth-century to the present. There is a marked contrast between actual humanity and the ideal of humanity, between the planet earth and the world. This is as clear in political theory as it is in pop culture.

How many times in US history are events of barbarism met with the claim that they are not American? How many times are the horrors of history deemed to be inhuman, or marked off as crimes against humanity; how many times do we protest that practices are not worthy of who we are because they are un-American, un-Australian, or not in keeping with the tradition of enlightenment? How many post-apocalyptic sagas depict humanity as it is — tyranny, capitalism, greed, hyper-consumption — laying waste to the world, only to be vanquished by a portion of humanity that imagines itself, like Kant's rational agent, as a force of pure, world-elevating reason? The split between actual and virtual humanity is what has allowed a virtuous future to justify and occlude the ongoing barbarism of history that, threatened with an end, demands that it will save itself precisely because in being threatened a new and proper humanity will emerge to save the day.

I have already suggested that we cannot separate a seemingly elevated, arcane and rationalist high philosophy from everyday post-apocalyptic conceptions of the humor. The split between an actual and virtual humanity allows for conceptions of human rights, humanity in general, and the very possibility and threat of the end of the world. How on earth can we speak about sustainability, about saving the planet, or safe guarding the future, unless it is some fanciful idea of what we are destined to become, rather than what we are or have been, that forms the subject of such imaginings?

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Allison Cobb

Sing

Sbbbbbb. This poem breaks down
electron bonds inside you. I'm sorry
for breathing
as we all do
asbestos slivers
from the floor tiles
in the jiu-jitsu dojo. I'm sorry for the human
handpunch to your
poemface. But don't you think
this violent art best proves
our love
for Sister Sledge? I've got all my sisters here
on stakes about
to air kiss you
with flame. My own white hot
karategi absorbs
the war drones of the wealthy
crammed up at this art bar. Sorry
I did burn to ash
all your click baits of the Sirens
riding bikes
across a shark's back. The Internet quiz says I'm an oceanic
white tip, your worst Shark
Week nightmare, known for frenzy feeding
on shipwrecked humans. When I sleep I dream
like sharks
who never sleep. It's stupid
to understand how everything has died and then
try — what — to warn you? Old English
“sing” has no related forms in other tongues. I've lost
my thread again. We get them back
by snagging them on hooks, slicing off their fins for soup, and
tossing the bleeding body back into the water. Sorry
Earth for having killed you sorry everyone the universe so
sorry, full of sores, the sisters who will never

be my own, the plastic shard
called god. It seems I'm not
the only person on the Internet
to ask if the Titanic people died from sharks. No, they froze
to death of course. I blow
my raft first-class and float, snagging clams and shoving
ice cream down my throat so I can state,
you know, for the record, I never did feel glad
to be here, or if I did I did
in spite of
all of you breeders. JK! I know! Not nice! I'm just jealous
we never could get our own
zygote on the hook
inside me. Oops, confessional territory. Sorry. It's a first
-world problem. I mean everything. It's all
your fault. And mine. But we can still have all the ice cream
we can eat for life. We keep it cool by sending
super-warming gases to the atmosphere. I'm sorry, but you know
those sharks don't care. Let's raise
our instruments and make the best
sounds we can make until we sink. It's a nice thought right,
like a rubber ducky in a snow
-white gi, or is that an angel's robe and golden halo, wisp
of cloud across the final glacier? I know, we can
cram ourselves inside each other's
shark skins, suck on our inhalers and finally spill it all — just like
those four drum beats quick before the first electric
keyboard notes I press to my white ear one thousand times an hour
building
through guitar the bass more strings and horns til those true
sisters break out into song. We *are* family, a family
of sharks who when they get excited even
eat each other, who even try to keep on feeding once
they're disemboweled. Ok
here's my confession: I never knew kung fu
I just liked the sounds of words
in my own mouth and struck a pose to feel them out. You try it
too, like getting French-kissed from the inside by an angel in the light
of all the films we ever cried to. Come on, tell me
everything. Get up everybody. Sing.

You Were Born

after Joshua Clover and Juliana Spahr's "Misanthropocene"

Oh dear, you were born
with that poison song singing
through your veins and you trail
a wide train
of war where you go: dial up
the chandelier, new
hurricanes swirl, step through the parting
doors into the drugstore, more big
-eyed children amassing at the border. I know
it's not your fault as in
you killed them, you just
killed everything breathing, by you I mean
the sun lamps
we call our lives,
my friends, elegiac,
on auto correct, as they will
have been, having come
so late, after everything can't stop
weeping at the gleaming Apple
flagship. It's a new mode of poetry
called West Melancholy. Google it,
click that link for a pair of lady feet
prancing around in strappy
red Nine
West "Melancholy" sandals to that
Robin Thicke good
girl beat. You know you
kind of want to buy them now,
they zip up the back, so hot
they're sold out, they're Greek
-ish, called "open-toed
caged booties." What *is*
melancholy but the global
brand rapture, the shining
spew of song from the poison
entrails of all my heroes, who are

you guys — my friends, alive
and in love
with nothing
but partying
at this funeral
for the eighties
glam bands and their simplistic
misogyny, yes, every rose
has its thorn just like every cowboy
sings his sad, sad song
of the good old days
of gunfire
in utero. Once born
in war you have
to live there. But we, me and my
spirit slut shoes, just pretend
we can keep on bleeding
these horseshoe crabs
of their primordial blue blood.
You read about that on I Fucking
Love Science, right? They're not crabs
at all, but ancient pre-dinosaur sea
spiders, and their blood can detect
even the tiniest trace of evil
microbe invaders on that plastic
apparatus about to be inserted
in your body: pacemaker,
false boobs, hernia net,
hypodermic.

They come to breed
in shallow seas each spring
in the bay of Delaware, named for the Lord
De la Warr. So the crabs crowd up
in the bay to breed beneath the new
and full moons in the months of May and June,
and the watermen —
the watermen wade in, grab them by the shell
and toss them on trucks
to a lab where lab
people strap them to a steel table, insert a needle

to the heart, drain 30% of the blood,
and send them back to the water of the war. One quart
goes for \$15k. It seems fake
but it's
real like the teenage
girl I once saw at the national
zoo pointing
at every sad skin sack in its
bootie cage, pronouncing
“that’s fake,” a word of London gang
slang from when *to fake*
a man out and out meant
to hurt him
all the way up
to dead, as my dad
used to say quoting the Public
Service Ad on TV about downed
power lines in the garden of earthly Lost
Almost. Standing up on a bluff
with Lucretius watching the shipwreck
rising up toward us. Here it comes,
my friends. I spit
on poetry with Epicurus, in the hope
of being spit on
in return. I did not mean for this to be a poem
about horseshoe crabs and caged booties, but now I’ve watched
that 20 seconds on Youtube of feet
twirling slowly over and over, ads for sad
high heels keep showing up in my Face
-book feed. Facebook feed — which at the root
means “nourish
the appearance of the tree,” and I could unfold that
one for a while, but I can’t stop thinking
of that water
-man in the lo-res
Nature video on my screen, holding
the ancient pre-dinosaur sea spider to his face
saying “See?
They’re harmless,” as with its claws it
gently probes his cheeks.

He speaks as a fisherman of the privilege
to return his prey, but in fact
it's not clear how many survive the bleeding
and whether it reduces spawning, and there's a whole
other story here about a bird called the red knot
that seems to be going extinct that makes one of the longest
migrations of any creature, from Tierra del Fuego to the Arctic, and relies
on the greenish strings of horseshoe crab eggs clotted up on the shore at
[just

this time for fuel to complete its journey, though I think the video
only features the bird because horseshoe crabs are not
filled with personality though they do have ten eyes, and the industry
compares the crabs to humans donating blood but of course
the crabs are forced, and Allison

Argo the filmmaker and narrator intones "There is hardly
a person alive

who does not owe thanks

to the horseshoe crab," but I wonder about all the people
alive on earth who never get treated with a specialty
pharmaceutical through an intravenous drip, and I remember the trips
we took to the Delaware shore without ever knowing about the tiny
horseshoe crab larva hopping along the sand floor and the many trips
I took to the emergency room for a time and the brownish-purple
IV bruises up my hands and arms, and the horseshoe crab I saw
washed up near the East River once but didn't think much about it.

I meant

to end this poem with a tight
metaphor about the band Poison from the eighties and how
in retrospect that time with its Cold

War, which literally nourished me, and the men
in makeup on my bedroom wall seems sort of
innocent now and that maybe more insidious forms of poison have invaded
[all of us

alive on the planet, plant,
human, and animal, and one poison is how we know we kind of want that
melancholy that lets we who are wealthy in the West
relax into our sadness about the end

of all the stuff we destroyed without knowing or trying, that clipped and
[clever

cynicism that is a kind of rubbernecking for we who are well

-off, what the poet and scholar Chris Nealon in his essay “Infinity for Marxists” calls masochistic species
-shame.

So I am failing
at this poem. But maybe failure
is a good place to dwell. Come in
under the shadow of this blood
red rock of the white man’s
bank. I can show you how the old
war froze
in place like two gunfighters facing off
forever, hands on holsters, but in this case it’s two nations bristling
with missiles still
on hair
-trigger, high alert — set to launch
in fifteen minutes or less at all of them and
all of us. My dears, I can show you fear
in approximately three thousand ninety-seven war
-heads set on missiles, how the practice of bombing
regular people from the air evolved out of World War I through the British
“policing” Iraqis with bombs in the 1920s, how your shadow falls
behind you and rises to meet you, and you have never
breathed any other air
but this war. The crabs know this too,
in their way, and the zoos with their relic
masticators and the sad
sad sandal stitchers. There is
no other poem but this one, a heap
of broken images where the sun beats
on the dead trees and the dry stone gives no sound of water, only
failure, from Latin “to trip,
dupe, deceive.” Like fake. Is there no
other ending but this one, the fucked up fail
of this war
way of being in the world? How should I know? I’m not
your sibyl
hanging out in a jar. We
all will be the ones
to make that call — we
the targets, we the people

with our fingers on the trigger.
We the late —
the start

After We All Died

When was it that everything first died? Someone said when the first atmospheric engine cranked into motion. Someone said when the atomic bomb bloomed over the desert at Trinity Site. But these are only a few of the more recent times when everything died, the latest entrants in a funeral procession winding like water through all of matter. Drip, drip. It disappears into its birthplace, the ocean of dead things, which people think of as time. But people are mistaken about everything. Being mistaken — in other words, having already caused the death of everything—people had to invent a language, with imprecise words — which exist only as imprecision — to try and bridge their confusion: like “thing,” and like “time,” which are the same, a cutting apart, a gathering.

When was it that everything first died? Maybe it was when humans first made their way to new territory lacking human predators. Like seeds, they planted themselves and sprouted, planted and sprouted, spreading with great increase. Certain males of the species came to see the world as all Apple store or porn portal, a creation dedicated to their desire—a top predator kind of reality, a “what-I-want” lens on the world. It glues its glittering look onto every surface. But doesn’t everything look that way? I mean everything that thinks it’s alive? The look shines out from each glass-walled eyeball bathed in its device light. Maybe, even, that’s what we who have died understand as life. That glitter.

Certain people believed themselves alive. They built arks to save themselves and their favorite TV couples. Wave goodbye! they told each other. But like the ship in Coleridge’s poem, the boats only filled up with corpses. Corpses armed not with a crossbow but with Apache Longbow Attack Helicopters, MQ-1 Predator drones, Hellfire air-to-ground missiles, M110 sniper rifles, Amphibious Guardian armored security vehicles, Gladiator combat robots, M198 howitzers with a range of twenty miles and GPS aiming, silent submarines circling the ocean packing Trident cruise missiles tipped with multiple nuclear bombs.

Or it happened earlier. The first time a person no longer possessed her own living flesh. The first time one flesh-clad being stripped another down to raw meat to serve desire, the death echo. The word slavery grew from the brutal ground of Christian Europe, but the act itself is much older, seeping

like radiation through soil. The flesh understands this in its very sense of itself. The first object was human, and the earth filled up with dead matter.

When was it that everything first died? This obsession with origins betrays my own cataclysmic sincerity. My belief in the delusion that everything could be ok.

O.K.: the only survivor of a slang fad in Boston and New York c. 1838 that abbreviated common phrases with humorous misspellings: K.G. for “know go,” and N.C. for “nuff ced.” In the case of O.K., the abbreviation is for “oll korrekt.”

Made popular as an election slogan by the O.K. Club, boosters of Martin Van Buren for president. Woodrow Wilson spelled it o-k-e-h on assumption that it represented the Choctaw word *okeh*, “it is so.”

Okay. All right. It is so. The truth is banal: I started out dead, a girl-thing, white to the root, borne up by the race spoils of total war and the blast force of nuclear love. I give birth to this death and I am it, and you, and you, and you —

This is our death. We share it, we who come after the future. With our bodies we nurse our machine that killed us. We give it all of our words. We give it our births to continue, and we who live in privilege: we devour the births out of everything else. The task of such selves is not to live. It is to refuse all the terms of this death into which we were birthed. Maybe then, learning to be dead, something can live.

Jon Cone

The Cullings

*From Reports of
The Princeton University
Expeditions
to Patagonia (1896-1899).*

A creeping small,
glabrous with short
truncate
ligules.

Dorsally scabrous,
subapically awned,
the *awn* exceeding the flower.

Stems clustered from a running
rootstock.

Very closely imbricating,
distichous,
ovate,
more or less silky.

Obtuse, their margins, thin-purplish.

Cleft from the middle, moderately
bulbous-thickened at base.

Small, handsome.
Often curved,
leafless.

Floating, stemless, pubescent
with fibrous roots.

Dense tuft,
in simple and compound

umbels.

One third *may* leafy.

Having a straight cylindrical
calyx-tube.

Erect,
annual,
hairy,
FOOT LONG!

Flowers numerous, somewhat
salver-shaped and nutant,
and rather obscured.

The labellum, its rostrum
winged.
LABELLUM! ROSTRUM! WINGED!

Leaves and stems unknown,
yet common in mountains,
certain meadows.

Leaves all radical.
Nerves slightly
or not
projecting from the surface.

Fruit a drupe.

Dense bush,
with leafage of boxwood.

PENDULOUS & FIVE-TOOTHED!

At length distending
and rupturing
the calyx.

Placentae fleshy,
central.

Cosmopolitan,
8-12 ribbed,
yet abounding in the tropics of

Magellan, moist pastures of
Fuegia and Falklands,

Of North Patagonia, near the mouth
of Rio Negro,

At confluence of Rivers
Limay and Neuquen

— in the rainy zone as high as man —

By Hatcher at Coy Inlet,
Nov. 18th
year not noted.

Slew for a Secular Sermon

Considering the verb to consider, [Emerson] reminds us that it comes from the Latin con-siderare, and thus carries the meaning of 'to study or see with the stars.'

—Robert Macfarlane

Consider the one-eyed owl. Consider the humble turnip. Consider the stile, now in rain, now in snow, now in summer haze. Consider the windswept plains. Consider the muddied welcome mat. Consider the lights on the harbor. Consider ice tumbling onto the beach. Consider the black cat in the window. Consider the cigarette by your heel. Consider the trash bin filled with bread. Consider guns in the pawn shop window. Consider knives, hammers. Consider the cold chisel rusting in the garage. Consider the abandoned house on the bare hill. Consider the hay bales. Consider cars behind wire-fencing. Consider the raccoon that lives there. Consider the walnut. Consider the almond. Consider morning fog. Consider a humid sky. Consider the chipped bowl where oatmeal goes. Consider the stick rakishly worked. Consider your ruined feet. Consider your skin: once smooth and tight, now no longer. Consider the girl with perfect posture. Consider the swing on the porch, the broom, the step ladder. Consider the sink, your hands plunged into hot soapy water. Consider the harmonica by the path in the park. Consider the shoe hanging by a lace from a power line. Consider the rusted bin in the field behind the school house. Consider the falling fence. Consider the brush on the countertop. Consider the books in a pile by the bed. Consider rope, real rope. Consider a jar of coins. Consider Edmond Jabés (1912-1991). Consider the malicious greenbrier. Consider the bank statements. Consider the sock. Consider the wound, the scar, the bruise. Consider the empty school work book. Consider the notes made in pencil. Consider the measuring rod. Consider the stone. Consider the shells. Consider the horns. Consider the feather. Consider the box of pens. Consider the broken chair beside the forsythia bush. Consider the red blanket in afternoon light. Consider the shower curtain. Consider the bathmat. Consider the rod. Consider the easel. Consider the pier. Consider the fishing lure. Consider the woman staring out to sea. Consider the map of Florida. Consider a god raised on a plank. Consider the cows in the field. Consider the silo. Consider the glass filled with beans. Consider the aloe plant burning from neglect on the kitchen counter. Consider the magazines piled neatly near the front door. Consider the baseball glove, the hockey helmet, the small football jersey. Consider the plastic sporting trophies. Consider the unread

paperbacks. Consider the shirts folded, unfolded. Consider the shoes rarely worn. Consider the tire iron. (I can't. It's gone, stolen.) Consider the basket filled with mitts, hats. Consider the nails. Consider the weight set. Consider the boxing bag. Consider the shovel. Consider the rake. Consider the hacksaw. Consider the ridged jawbone of a deer. Consider the weight of a cicada. Consider the dirt-packed mason jar on a hill somewhere in Montana. Consider the decomposing tree limb by the garage. Consider the burnt leaves. Consider rain, time. Consider mud, creeks, the banks of a river at nightfall. Consider a boy delivering newspapers early Sunday morning. Consider distant cries of birds. Consider the harvest moon. Consider the stiff hill, the long steep climb. Consider the blue trumpet behind a bag filled with groceries. Consider coffee. Consider a ream of paper. Consider a chaos of work shifts. Consider a manual typewriter. Consider a lovely bra. Consider the old man above his tea. Consider a prosthetic leg. Consider a cairn. Consider dust to dust. Consider the ram. Consider the brass crown. Consider the weak flame at dusk. Consider clouds sagging with rain. Consider the dull trout. Consider the three-legged dog sleeping near the front door. (Let sleeping dogs dry.) Consider the letters held by vivid ribbon. Consider the apology scrawled in sharpie. Consider the dishes in the sink. Consider the firewood behind the garage. Consider the boxing gloves under the basement stairs. Consider the pin oak. Consider the sour hamper. Consider the madding crowd seen from a hotel balcony. Consider the metal-work embellishments of the fence around the neglected cemetery. Consider the footfall of the beast at midnight. Consider the saxophone in its worn case. Consider the desperate receipts for some unknown reason saved. Consider the low shush boats make at night.

Field Event (2005)

Caw
Cow

Caw
Cow

Caw
Cow

Cow
Cow

Caw

**Please Do Not Attempt to
Command the Common Winds**

sometimes
crickets allow us to study their
musical instruments from palm of our hand
far as we
can see
stitches
of nutrients
hold us together
bring us to life with
a tolling bell a solid
infringement against
the cold vanished calm
after inventing the chair we built a home around it
generations later traveling over glinting edge of the
skyscraper we suddenly understand true dearth
soon poems will be our only remaining
force not destroying everything
when you mention new dating techniques
I think you mean how we are falling in love
but you mean how to improve your filing system
I whisper in your ear *efficiency breeds brutality*
to whoever invented the vacuum cleaner
and leaf blower please stop boring me with
your desperation to
contain chaos
give me poems
showing children the
brutal limitations of parents
honest poems of how we lose
and regain our way to love

Camisado

after breaking in
the wolf
calmed
the hens
so he could
take his time with them
twists them open until the right
right amount of memory fits into the song
another high price for belonging
poetry is the opposite of escape
but makes this world endurable
how the smallest puddle
reflects the entire sky
a return to every dream
our minds talked us out of
trusting our math of the star
your hand around my shoulder
poet astronaut you know I love you
I have no sense of failure when I am with you
everything matters because everything
hurts someone somewhere as it is mattering
we became all we carried into the mast
migratory patterns given to the love again
a way to end this secrecy of suffering
cut a door in the wolf so we
can retrieve our dead for a
world that matters

These two poems are from “Resurrect Extinct Vibration,” a (Soma)tic poetry ritual in nine parts that includes such maneuvers as lying on the ground across the US while saturating my body with recordings of recently extinct animals. Another component is making drawings on index cards of the animals with messages and an email account for correspondence and leaving them in laundromats, coffee shops, buses and community centers across the nation. There are activist components such as writing to elected officials to convince them we need thousands of land bridges across the US superhighways for animals to cross into safety. There is also journaling in

Road Notes which are recently concerned with guilt of enjoying the ritual, braided with guilt of surviving AIDS after so many friends died. There are 108 poems resulting from this ritual.

Stephen Cope

They Flee from Me

a mink, a blackbird, fish, tadpoles, a chickadee, two finches, a groundhog, salamanders, blue jays, woodpeckers, deer, a chipmunk, blue herons, squirrels, frogs, turkeys, bats, mice, a scarlet tanager, canaries, a titmouse are things that flee from me, at night

a red fox in the headlights, coyotes (I can hear them) bikers (not the motorcycle ones), during the day

vultures while eating roadkill, pigeons, crows, geese, mallards, bluebirds, other kinds of woodpeckers, hummingbirds, a centipede, fireflies, skunks, turtles, rabbits, hawks, more chickadees, sparrows, a nameless mammal, an owl at night

rabbits at dawn

crossing the street, a burglar or some other kind of guy (maybe he wasn't running from me at all just running), at noon

sparrows, butterflies, Monk (my cat) when I'm angry or loud, Zing (the other cat), a cardinal, ants don't seem to be fleeing from me, but who knows, and probably they should be, flies and bees and other insects, a snake

there are people I wish would run away forever but they don't
kingfishers, ducks, a dog are also among the animals that run, walk, fly, or swim away from me, as are blue foxes, at the zoo

lemurs, zephyrs, leopards, gazelles, and other animals run away or probably would run away from me were they not so accustomed to the threat or so depressed that they no longer care for their comfort or even their survival

a bobcat, beavers, otters, seals run or swim away from me in this world when I see them and even when I don't I imagine

sometimes because I am human and what we do as humans often when we are not serving our primary earthly function as that from which everything else with which we share this world to which we seem to be so strange and alien a companion desires or to save themselves is required to run away

is make things up the leaves or the petals of flowers or the white stuff from dandelions or pollen seems to flee, papers in the wind fly away, especially trash

mushrooms seem to hide if one is seeking them out, as also do
apparently rare flowers for collectors, cockroaches

flee of course as soon as one opens the door or turns the lights on,
muscrats, dolphins don't necessarily swim away which is very kind of them,
but whales do usually, moose, cattle sometimes run or slowly walk away as
if annoyed, goats, pigs, lambs, llamas, horses, ponies, and other pets and
livestock too, almost everything seems to want or need to run, walk, swim
or fly away from me even

the meanings of poems sometimes seem to flee from me as far
away as they can, over the horizon, into space, ever receding & ever-
eventually to be gotten to and owned or
slaughtered, but we will never catch up meaning

they will survive us, especially good poems.

And Then the Peeling

There are summers of my youth that I remember spending sans sunscreen or hats, running absent mindedly through the day; my brother and I sprinting shirtless and bare foot with our backs exposed absorbing sunlight light like solar panels, charging us, sending us perpetually forward. Our skin, already somewhat tan, would darken half a shade every day as we approached a hue of brown that would shine gold when covered in sweat and as the weeks would pass, compounding with the last, strands of our hair would become gilded as well. Then at summers end, akin to snakes shedding skin, we shook off our summer husks, small flakes of ourselves rising and falling off — petals from the flower of a summer now passed — the very beginning of the peeling. Gentle and encouraging in a way, as if to say: despite this being the end there is still so much more to be done, so much more to explore, so much more of this blue marble of a world we call home that's left to adore.

Yet the tides have changed and risen since then; the water has become warm, far thicker than before, with bits of oily undissolved something or other littering the shoreline like a far less appeasing glitter of sorts. The sun from the past, having now grown angry, no longer offers kisses but bites at our skin rabidly — wrinkling and shriveling us — leaving us crisp and calloused, unable to move without cracking and bleeding. And then there follows the peeling. Our red boiled shells are broken into uneven pieces and pulled apart as a light film of water and mucus strings out revealing our light white, just slightly off pink, but well-cooked subsurface: we the remaindered left immobile for months thinking to ourselves what great sin have we committed to be treated in such a way. Old, battered, and defeated, I must admit to myself: The marble has cracked and at the edges of the fracture are pieces of left over glass covered in powdered sediment that not so much sticks to you like humidity but nestles its way into your pores like finer grains of sand tend to do, burying themselves deep — painfully radiating always.

Brenda Coultas

Inventories at the End

I

The inside tastes like a battery
without the jolt from the cough drop wrappers
of other professors at the bottom
of capitalism's tool bag filled with paper clips
dried out pens and smoked chalk cigarettes

II

I stand naked before my plastics:
food tub
clear cellophane safety seal
razor shield
toothpaste cap
clear tape
thin produce baggie

Washing the containers, 4 creamers and a yogurt cup.
Dreamt of purple sparkly swan and a bag of one hundred soldiers

III

Meanwhile I eat plastic beads, too small for the human eye to see
ground glass & insect legs & dirt & grasses & threads
[(all colors and strengths) & fingernails & blood
[(mine and others) & chewed hair (my own and others)].

Anne Laure Coxam

the male and the female poet have chaos in their heads

I.

the female poet and the male poet
see their plumage decay
unstitched and fluffy
colours faded or gone
fabric tearing apart
broken feathers
disjointed plumes

the female and the male poet
see the decay of their nest
which man and woman scaffolded
where oven gloves are ripped
furniture is scraped
computer updates
impossible to complete
where bowls are leaking
beetroot soup and
the clay around the holes
remains pink

away from the trades of man and woman
they do odd jobs repair feathers
use free software make dusters
cobble chaos together
from the chaos in their heads

they see the unstitching world
like their plumage helpless
in the fresh mist of dusk

II.

man shapes dogs geometric
woman shapes cats fluffy
man and woman pour shampoo in rivers

man and woman design square fields
draw square borders
man and woman spread foundation
over shaved rabbits

man and woman
stick birds' feathers
disorientate whales
cross-breed crops

man and woman
sterilise lands
smash turtles
scrape the ocean floor
kill unknown creatures

man and woman
eat cupcakes
exhaust lands
squeeze chicken
drill lands
poison fresh water

man and woman
hire man and woman
to extract metal and stones

man and woman laugh
woman wears necklaces
with plastic animals
man wears aftershave
man and woman
drink poison

man and woman
eat concept food
man and woman slave
man and woman
and plants

man and woman despise bad weather
misunderstand shortage

man and woman forget by feasting
in the small room

man and woman
court by reproducing words
from well-being books
man and woman
seduce and deceive by repeating
words

III.

the female poet feels nostalgic
for days not happy but quiet
when she perched on the window sill
watching the rain steaming the heat
the summer heat not happy days but quiet
threatening and alive

British people too
feel nostalgic
for blue passports

the male poet went mental about it
the female poet was sad as blue passports
won't make up for the loss
of the happy-go-lucky eighties
o fools! they are only a nasty charm

there is chaos in the male's poet head
he hides away from the sweet violence
of meeting man and woman
maybe friends

the male poet doesn't feed
on white wine anymore
he pecks chocolate mini-eggs instead

the world sucked up and savaged?
not an excuse anymore for
a political / personal bender

the female poet and the male poet
watch *The Life of Birds* on TV
to forget for a moment man and woman
creaking and rumbling
man and woman banging at the door
man and woman happy to pour
fake news and black tide
in the stony nest
man and woman happy to unleash
chaos in their heads

the female poet and the male poet
watch *The Life of Birds* on TV
a toucan sits on the canopy
it is still it is waiting
slow movement of its beak
heaving the damp air
catching an insect and
going back to stillness

nature and poetry are slow

does wildlife still exist?
of course
not that much of course
mass extinction six

the programme comes to an end
the taste of a humming day sticks

they do odd jobs
stitching the shavings together

in the fresh mist of dusk
their feathers quiver

the female poet and the male poet want to fly

***Katechon* Lines 500-600**

you'll find something right in a construct better
than death every ways — to talc about the shirr —
natch — or, edging up the plait of this-or-that-all-
too-human-quag, within or beside the gypsum in
my stead, wills shapes while leveling features up, up,
up and out, mugs pressed mug to each to ease some
weirdly wholesome riposte through cracked
and crapping mouth — this, my lasting suite to yield
only “cause” so bad; little more than pork or
plastics, finally, sop-thrown futures neither trill nor

[501-510]

present nor wanting too much or too baldly. Also,
so the wound shines out against the hot ken, blunt
and through, lights it, fastidious, out through
the heart of the spongey whole: our faces these
rich long neon seams and their claims — stuffed
full with standing and so standing still are pretend
structured, local reasons ruptured in instance
and not in hold so what's untrue and in the wrong
because won true and in the right: its spit, its pivot,
its absolute pique. Thinking's enmeshed, regionally,

[511-520]

so we can't need a portrait of American violence
to be a correlate of the real since — like a sacred,
dumb predator — what death is its *saturation*? I *am*
this violence: the ground which arrays me in
splendor (limits) and incites me in hold: to hold
more firmly held against the rote may make
a difference in the futures today, in death called
hooded in night. Among the living, I exhibit a vital
ardor, fortitude, a carnal, supple mensuration's all
that frenzy which ever immanence means from

[521-530]

the ground up, a flat, perforated membrane, out
through each quarter of the face: and still you give
us mouth, shit? Pig around the page? What, inter-
loper, sense-semblance my own and only true con-
ciliatory gesture which ever pours forth brains; forth
my own figmented (human) frothing frame? Or, I,
my self true, my realms, my forms true: arranged
self for suckling — move tongue taken to name, fin-
ger to weep (doubtingly). Tongue-taken, brains poor
forethought/forthright (oscillates), finger/wound/

[531-540]

weep (doubtfully). The truth is your candor breaks
my heart; I lift you to the fence where you perch
like a baby owl against the morning day, chonis full
of piss and worse but still you hang from an index
as we walk across the street. I think there's no words
left between what we've said and what we've been
promised (to say) so form rests fetid near the con-
tours of my life — peppers my face; hedging around
(edging?) a phenomenal, empirical self. Dicks
around, now in palm. But foils *aren't* a sheltered

[541-550]

path, the enclosure of which might otherwise seal
me from myself or pound salvific the doublet
“marrow/wisdom” tapped out, left teeth lodged
inna bed frame (again, again, again) my teeth
are in my face again (again). Does a shield,
what righteous import can we mean? Why the ruff
led lilt when what I wants to break a bod in heel’s
hold? Why won’t raw round arable land (balls in
hand)? That I approach lacunae from an in-one
rather than whole-moving. “Faced” things and left

[551-560]

taking soma's self-standing doublet (thorax/bud)
modal ride-and-fall, tiny compartments rise
and fool. See, they pig about themselves —
not "men" — pig doles aidos for this? Olid round,
yecchy rondelle pinched in bond and bound eyes
and appertaining life, the more decisive, the more
dramatically its felt. Echo enclosing and unfreely:
bod-closed rizabilities kept semblance by the threat
of self-preserving, self-sheltering self; hunch the
head does — shitting its bourgeois interior, solely

[561-570]

wrist to rales, putsch to the elbows in, consented for
contented to myself whither from and most
or whether spake from the mouth or more unfit:
something by which the mold breaks. I say better
death than mess — better mass than brow lard-hard
by which a mold bricks, better bearer wet stock
to the teeth in pone chunks said prevenient grace
once felt supernal pillars, sockets is as bites, its bile
one cry wending rode now on blades, once felt
the nesting edge of the threshold “selfmoving

[571-580]

selfsameness” can’t light and won’t wont so won’t
seek pap, the Butcher, whinging proper black
and sparer-thermic gold, gild plate, bejewelled grip,
grille-bovine — a terrific unflooring long seams cut
isolate and out, ends bleak and blotchy hoofing
the grip, the Butch, heed hypostatized at both
ends — from both — shorty fucking giselle — still —
neutrals/greys, the Butcher at its meats *is* what it
cuts. Likely mere fulgurant transversal of the two
planes I ride: visual and dispar: secant Cross shit

[581-590]

I limn aspect and Aspect molt matter, block die,
grip or spare — weave-wackened temperament at-
tuned destined to eke turbid, what's for life. As with
enemies so with game, the like, a hunting-blind's
second nature skein stretch to trench parapet world-
eventing w/ goods: why does it brim, fitted, fate-
laced each and every minute and then dump snug
tucked in grielle suits I put my life to block for
what it do only to perdure what's also a real dumpy
silhouette. Anegoic to siddle and bracelet identity.

[591-600]

BEAUTY: An Antidote to the End of Eden

Usually an early riser, these days I find I'm getting up later (8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30!). It's as if my subconscious is resisting, not wanting to face the day. I'm usually a hopeful person — searching the darkness for a sign of light. These days, however, my mood is much more often one of resignation. I find that I'm walking about in the world looking for signs of natural beauty while I still can, unsure of how much longer it (Nature) or we (the human species) will be around to enjoy it. What this is all about is that the weather, usually an after-thought in the news, is now-a-days the lead story. Flooding. Hurricanes. Earthquakes. Tornadoes. Tsunamis. Draught. Global warming. In addition to all the weather news, there are stories of pandemics, greedy politicians, oil mongers, corporate raiders and mindless terrorism. I'm reminded of a true story I heard about twenty-five years ago told by a renown Sufi teacher — about a meeting that he had had with his guru. When visiting India during the early 1960s at the height of nuclear escalation and conflict between Russia and the United States, and sitting at the feet of this wise and gray-bearded man, he asked the question: "What is going to happen to us, to everything?" After a long pause the elderly prophet turned to the young Sufi novice and said, "It's not what you think." "Do you mean that there is not going to be a nuclear war or some sort of nuclear holocaust," the younger man responded. Again there was a long pause, until finally the old man looked the younger in the eye and said: "Mass insanity." To me, this true story seems to sum up and explain almost everything we are experiencing these days. The idea of moderation seems to have been thrown out with both the baby and the bathwater. Everything man-made is being conceived of and is being done in excess. Consequently, it's as if the Earth woke up one day this year, took a look at what was going on around her, and shouted: "I'm mad as hell, and I'm not going to take it any more!"

The "end of the world" cartoons that appear regularly in the printed media are beginning to look more and more pragmatic. Prophetic. If one looks at the data offered up by the scientific community having to do with economics, ozone and CO2 pollution, population, etc., the arc of all graphs converge around the year 2000 and shoot straight up, skyward, out of sight. In the past two hundred years — following what had previously been

millennia of relative environmental stability — instability in the environment has steadily been on the rise, and what we're looking at, now and into the indefinite future, is a dubious lifestyle based on essential maintenance and repair. In fact, what we may be witnessing is the end of Eden.

At an address given to the Environmental Leadership Council at Warren Wilson College, ninety-one year old ecologist (a title designed especially for him combining the fields of ecology and theology), Thomas Berry told his audience, "We're looking at a new era in Earth history. I call it The Ecozoic period. Ecology will dominate both the news and our consciousness. With combined planetary perils ever-present, we're looking at a new paradigm for humanity. This will mean a new era of activism that will fall predominantly on the shoulders of the younger generation, who will inherit the dubious job of recovery and reinhabitation of our natural habitat — saving what's left of Eden — manning the social programs that will care for the unexpectedly displaced and destitute at a time when food, health and shelter can no longer be taken for granted."

With a similar message given to an all-too-sparse audience at Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, noted scientist and expert on global climate change William Schlesinger said, "The rising human population, currently at 6.5 billion, has brought about changes in the basic chemistry of earth's atmosphere and oceans, which have formed the evolutionary environment for all life now on Earth. There has been irreparable damage. The arctic ice we are losing, for example, will never be replaced. To ignore climate change and other global environmental problems is fundamentally and ethically wrong."

With experts like these lined up in agreement, the writing is on the wall. The garden-world of the planet Earth is fast disappearing, and being replaced by a noxious environment created from man's disrespect for Nature and his greed for material and personal wealth and would-be comfort. The end of Eden.

In essence, what I've said above is: that there is a need for serious discussion of taboo topics, such as overpopulation, global warming, free-trade capitalism. These are the true issues that are at the heart of what's wrong in the world. Everything else is just a symptom of these greater "illnesses."

Until recently, I never really believed in the idea of “evil.” But these days, given the behavior of the mega-corporations and certain people in government in both the statehouse in Raleigh, NC and in Washington DC, I’m beginning to rethink my previous position. What I used to see as misguided and uninformed behavior, more and more, seems to be downright destructive, and, yes, even evil. In bleak times like these in which we are living, what, then, can we do? To that imposing question, all I can do is to share with you the epiphany I had the other night while eating supper and listening to the evening news. In the midst of a string of depressing stories on the Middle East, global warming, the privatization of public lands, and corporate raiding, a single thought came to me: **Flood the collective human consciousness and senses with all the beauty we can muster!** Music, voice, language, literature, architecture, art, advertising, product design ... Everything seen and heard. **The shadow world of ignorance and greed, while a powerful one, has no defense against beauty.** Of this I am convinced. We don’t need to fight fire with fire, or respond in kind to the ways of the wicked and the monetarily possessed. If we just flood the marketplaces, the pages of our papers, the air waves, the museums, the theatres, the shops, the streets, our computers and our minds with beauty, I believe we’ll have a chance to turn things around. It’s a subtle, if not radical approach. But it just may be worth a try.

While this may seem to some a little far-fetched, it’s the best idea I’ve had lately. I believe, by flooding the streets, the marketplace, the pages of our papers, the airwaves, the museums, the theaters, the shops and our minds and language with beauty, we, too, can “tame” the more primitive and self-indulgent urges of the beast of progress and ownership. We can, in fact, turn things around.

The Aristocracy of the Wild

“All good things are wild and free.”

—Henry David Thoreau

It's not the money,
it's the wilderness that turns me on.
It's not the fame,
it's the songs I have learned from birds.
It's not the sex,
it's the orgasm of a windy day.
The taste of wild grapes.
The smell of honeysuckle.
The sound of thunder in the hills.
This is my inheritance.
The things that have made me rich.
The blue blood in my veins.

It's not the prestige or the privilege,
it's her lips that turn me on.
It's not the mansions,
it's the time I have spent in caves.
It's not the power,
it's the cougar's call of caution.
The bleating of lambs.
The Lilacs.
The Asters.
The Lyreleaf Sage.
This is my *aristokratia*.
The things that gave me heart.
The nobility of my pale skin.

It's not the class or the style,
it's the silk of her skin that turns me on.
It's not the authority,
it's the river after torrential rain.
It's not the elegance,
it's the genius of diversity.
The community of ants.
The comb of the bees.

The nest of hummingbirds.

These.

This is my allegiance.

The things that make us best. The test
of the patrician silence in our love.

Walking the Woods

S ay the word “walk” and she’s out the door
H eaded for the woods and any path that
E nters a green landscape that
G oes on forever and never ends
O r wants to hold houses on its flanks or
E ven its meadows where she is lost in the delicate
S unshine warming the leaves of fan-veined plants as she
E nters the understory of Buckeye, Hickories and Thornless Plums.
V iburnums blaze the trail near Flame Azalea and Fire Pink as
E arly spring morphs into early summer and
R edbuds with resin and ring scar come to life like
Y oung flowergirls at nature’s nuptials
W ith lanceolate leaders and lobed leaves as palmates
H aving only fun on an outing into the
E verything of where the node of nightmares ends and the
R eal takes shape in the midvein of Nightshade wanting to be Ragwort in
E very step she takes past Pipevine and Bluecurls, by Bloodroot and
B ouncing Bet where bees hover before making their way to Foam Flower
[and
U p the trail past waterfalls to where Black Birch house Nuthatch,
[Grosbeak and Winter Wren.
T here on Angel Moss she sits to savor silence and the
L one whistle of wind that takes her to places
O nly she can go and goes willing to be wild
V ery close to wilderness and all that is perfect and protected
E ven as she eats wild blueberries and watercress she has found in canopied
S unlight along the way.
T hen as crows call, she rises and makes haste to the top of the
H ill where topsoil turns to Galax and Loosestrife and in
E very direction there is her favorite view of ridgelines
W andering east in lingering breastlines not unlike her
O wn under thin cloth that has given milk to children
O ld enough to have their own who will grow up into the out-of-
D oors and be taken to the woods and
S hown what it is to move forward along paths and be wild.

The Idiot's Wind

a long haiku, for Steve Earle

*"Idiot wind ... blowing down the back roads headin' south ...
It's a wonder that you still know how to breathe."*

—Bob Dylan, "Idiot Wind", *Blood on the Tracks*

Is this the best we can do?
Turn wonderful air
into a hurricane of haze —
Turn landscape and vistas
into pictures painted for the blind —
Fill pink lungs of children
with black space —
Make soot we breathe
surreal salt in the food of film noir,
for profit and at any price.

Is this the best we can do?
From a pile of coal
make heat —
Make light
from a hill of peat —
From hell-bent to heartache
hookers of energy in bed with the rich;
the blood of the poet in a Blue Ridge ditch,
for profit and at any price.

Is this the best we can do?
Stay cool in the face of fire —
The gift of mankind:
an eternal pyre —
Using the mind
as a political gyre,
for profit and at any price.

Hands and head in a vice.

Denying Nature not two times, but thrice.

Fanning the flames of dry ice.

Use poison in food and calling it spice.
For what profit? What price?

Is this the best we can do?
Take transfusions of blood in the air —
Honor madmen and government not really there,
who call the rain “sunshine” and the circle square,
for profit and at any price.

Is this the best we can do?
Only an idiot
would try to make love to the wind.
Would inhale oxygen and call it CO2.
Or think sun and moon
would come from some Yahweh living in another place.
Would kiss the lips of bombs and call them sweet.
Or move their home to somewhere in outer space.
This is grace?
This the human race?

We can do better than this.

What *Is* Is

after John O'Donohue, in memory

To know what the *Is* of something is,
you need to know its name.
To have heard the music
in its voice or
seen the color of its pain.

When I watch the sky,
it is what is behind the weather
that I want to see.
What is at the center of circumference
and at the aurora of light. To know
the heart's soul. The heart of stone.
The eye of the storm. The still in the stream.
The bear's growl.
The vowels in the *cooing* of the dove ...

If you want to describe this,
say what is spoken
yet beyond words.
What you want is
when your words and what you are saying
appear as raindrops and
birds on the wing.
From nothing something is manifest
and appears.
What was missing is suddenly
there.
Something that was distant,
suddenly near.
In this knowing
try to be this and
remember you are here.

What Words Are Worth

after William Wordsworth

What words were worth will be only the forgotten
memory of bells ringing in the bones
that moan of money or the meaning of time
that time has tortured and taken away from its youth
when youth was a time younger than age and
older than what New was to progress or profit,
was better than the buildings or the business
that are the butts of jokes that never laugh or
linger close to the heart four score.

BUT THERE'S MORE!

More money or minds smaller than any blue in ink
will ever be for what ain't the truth in a lie and
is the laughing stock of an age of reason,
of over-kill, of everything aimed at the eyes
that don't blink only stare into the space of
a blank wall or electric page that is anything but white or
ever will be any thing for anything less than
a dime anymore when all that's left is the
leftovers of those that are rich and never romantic
like words were to Wordsworth and to me
who sits in a room on the third floor of
anywhere where there is a window and a desk and
forever is as far as the I can see.

Evensong

Even the evening's song sings
acappella after all
the lips of loudness have gone mad
and silence sounds like so much
empty breeze between branches
of old trees
too tired to fight the air or
any ambush of guns gunning down
children, churchmen, or common thieves.
Will a round of ammo give our nightmares
Wings? Will things?
Even the aftermath of nouns
won't give verbs their rights to sing,
to hold high C in their hand and say
"I am"
or
"I am not alone in this night."
Night that no longer leads to daylight
out of darkness deader than
doornails
that do the job on anyone that
wants in
or wants in on the deal of
high priests and mogul kings
cornering the market on the flim-flam
of finance and flicks.
Not even the Minister of Culture
will admit to the adultery of cash
or that singing is a song,
a song sung to fame
that leaves a farmhouse in ruin,
proud men homeless
or runes in a heap of rust
rotting like the lack of language
creepy as cash-registers
in a life of lost poems and machines.

Brent Cunningham

Some Notes for the End of the World

*Take a field of wild bent flowers
loomed overhead by aircraft.
Overturn the ocean
on a planet full of life.
Dream the sounds of dream
Whirl away the night
One dark spot remains
that is us all us*

—Joseph Ceravolo, from “Unfinished (February 12, 1985)”

These notes aim to say something concise on the subject of world-endingness. When I was a younger poet I had a lot of ideas, often wordy and oblique, which I also had a lot of confidence in. Now, on all three counts, it’s the opposite: my ideas are few, short, and doubtful.

One of them, currently, is this: if there is a socially necessary (or even merely socially meaningful) role for poets to play in the midst of rapidly declining ecosystems it might be as eulogists.

The idea that as a species/civilization we are leaving one period and entering another has, I know, become swiftly familiar in an era of dramatic eco-disaster. But the idea that we need to eulogize the ending period isn’t as widespread. I suspect this is in part because a eulogy for a dead person isn’t a perfect analogy for a dying human era. For instance eulogists often point out that eulogies are for the living not the dead, and that seems true. So who or what would those “living” be in the analogy of a eulogy for a civilization? The people who make it to the next period? Will anyone make it? The roaches and tardigrades who survive us?

But notice, too, that those in the audience during a eulogy for a deceased individual, listening, are in a sense merely pre-deceased themselves. It’s not like we refrain from giving eulogies because we know everyone who hears the eulogy will soon be dead. So maybe the analogy holds. We could see poetry in the era of eco-destruction as a eulogy for the species-as-such, and

if the audience for our eulogies turns out to be the last, second to last, or maybe third to last members of the species, that doesn't make them pointless.

Beyond who they're for let's think about what eulogies are. Why give them? What hope, purpose or function do they perform?

What seems resonant to me in this construct is, mostly, the feeling that beyond all the scientific, philosophical, and political processing that people are doing now, beyond their bravely facing the likelihood of ecological and therefore social and political collapse and seeking to slow or redirect what they can, that at the same time there are enormous regions of emotional processing that have really hardly begun. Eulogies don't tie a bow on death; they're not a surrender. They process what the living was for, and what it might still be for.

So let's try to consider, to actually feel, what it means that we are alive during this specific time. Consider that there are periods of human development which lasted as much as fifty or a hundred times longer than recorded history and wherein almost nothing happened. "Nothing" in a very restricted sense, of course; generations of people lived and died. But there is, for example, a period in human history that lasted over 300,000 years with only one known technological or cultural change in it: we developed a slightly sharper ax. Sunrise, sunset.

We are not 300,000 but less than 300 years out from the industrial revolution and the changes have been stunning, catastrophic, beyond imagining, almost beyond listing. But from the other side of those changes I want to ask: what was it like back in that long stasis? What if we consider their era, not ours, to be at the heart of what humans were and did? How many times did their worlds end?

We aren't used to feeling the past this way, as part of a finished "run" our kind had. Since we were built and constituted to face the future we have trouble remembering that people have already banked away every narrative, drama, conflict, and passion we feel it will be tragic to lose. Banked them in ancient history, yes, and in unrecorded history as well. But we're also ancient and unrecorded, or will be. We have the emotional insistence we aren't but we know we are.

The point I'm after is simply how little we've processed, so far, of this new and particular knowledge of our species-mortality. And also how necessary to any such processing the eulogistic would be. By eulogy, in this usage, I just mean the art of bringing, through language, a lived and historical set of events into the imagination where responses to it can be experienced and felt.

As a sort of conclusion, or maybe just as an aside, I want to admit that this whole suggestion (that contemporary poetry is turning or needs to turn to eulogy) doesn't really benefit me personally very well. As long as I've been writing I've had a commitment to a certain kind of lightness, to humor, that in my mind is complex and sophisticated but which certainly doesn't foreshadow the traditional modes of eulogy. At the same time my interest in lightness always derived from seeing it as compatible with seriousness. I believe humor, done a certain way, with a certain ambiguity and depth, can inject a form of hope into seriousness. And similarly I think of eulogy as maintaining the thing it seems to annihilate. Namely: social and political agency. Or, again: hope.

The question comes from everywhere now: why fight if we're already dead? But the question is also: when were we not dead? When in 300,000 years of stasis was the world not ending? Through it all a certain segment of people have gotten out of bed, resisted, advocated, and tried. As contradictory as it sounds the eulogy might one of the ways forward, into action, into transformation, and out of cynicism.

Maybe, anyway. The crisis is such that I remain open to all other suggestions and methods at this point, and think we all probably need to. But that's another thing about eulogies: there are no fixed rules for what they need to say or suggest, or how they need to say or suggest it. They're conditionally and situationally based on the eulogist's perception of the life, or in this case the species-life, that has been lived. As a matter of fact I realize now it's exactly that situatedness, that anchoredness to a speech-ritual in front of a community of people, that explains why I prefer the framework of the eulogy to the framework of the elegy.

So let's have at it. What do you think happened? What kind of race have we been?

Jane Dalrymple-Hollo

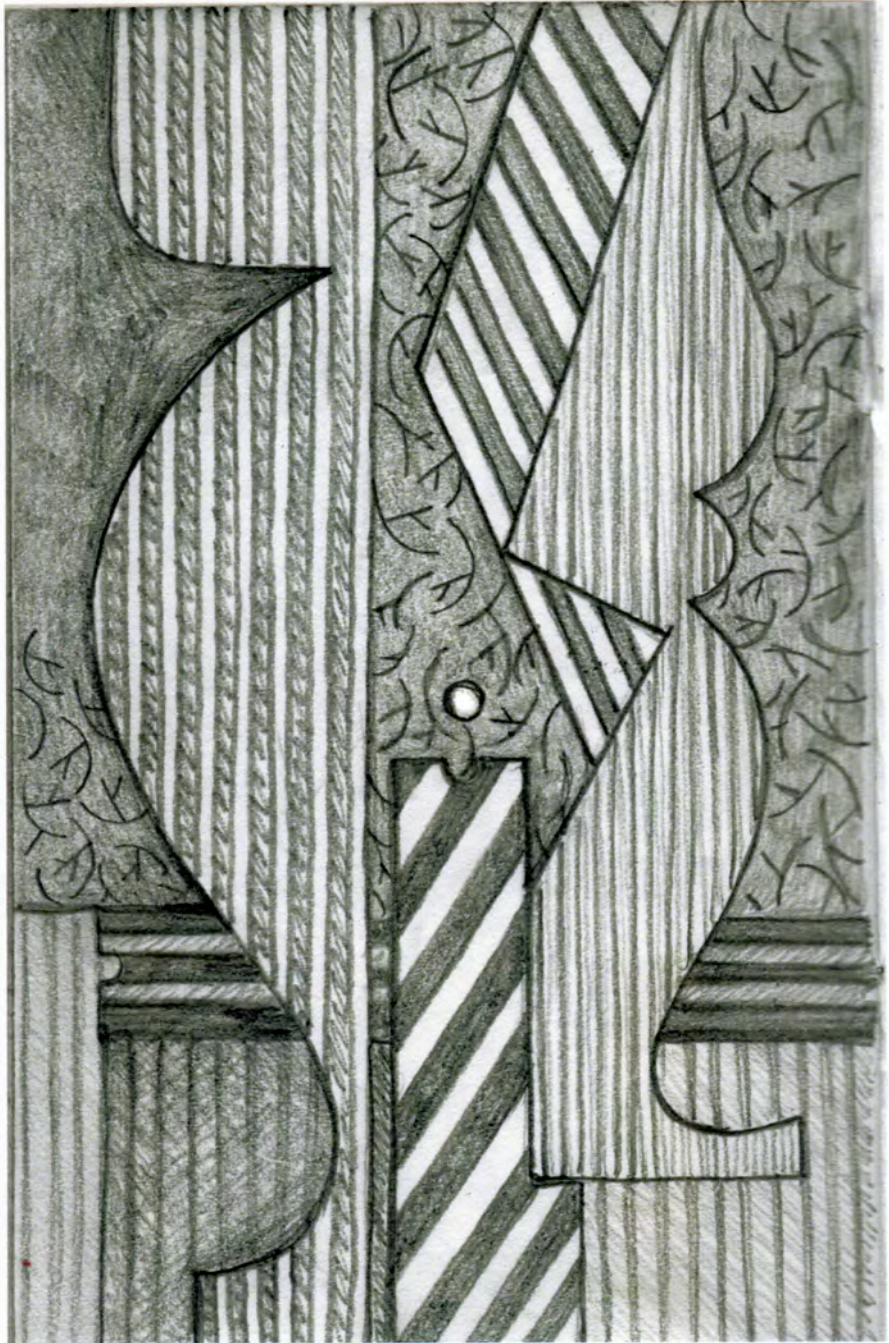
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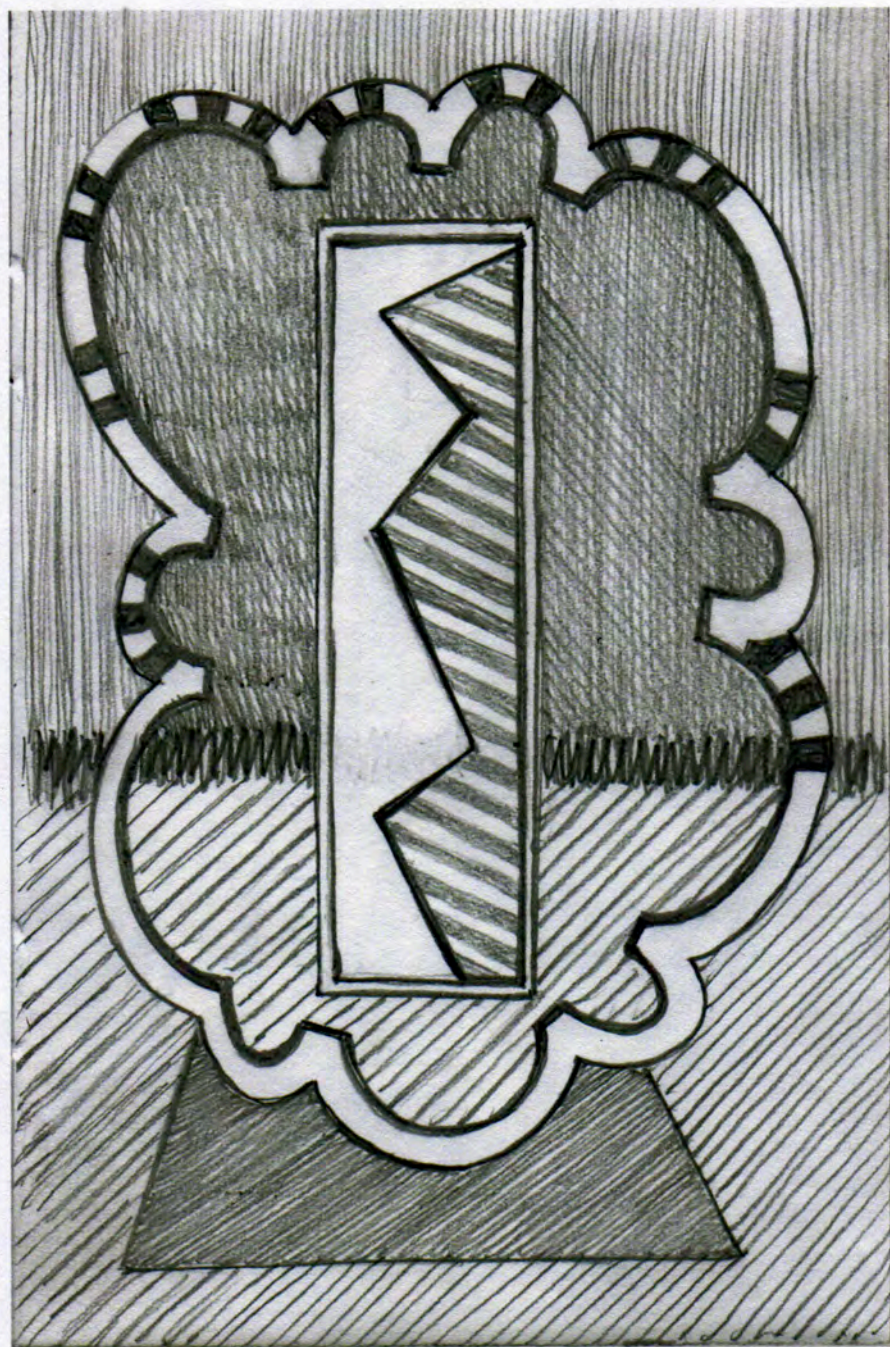
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Mirror

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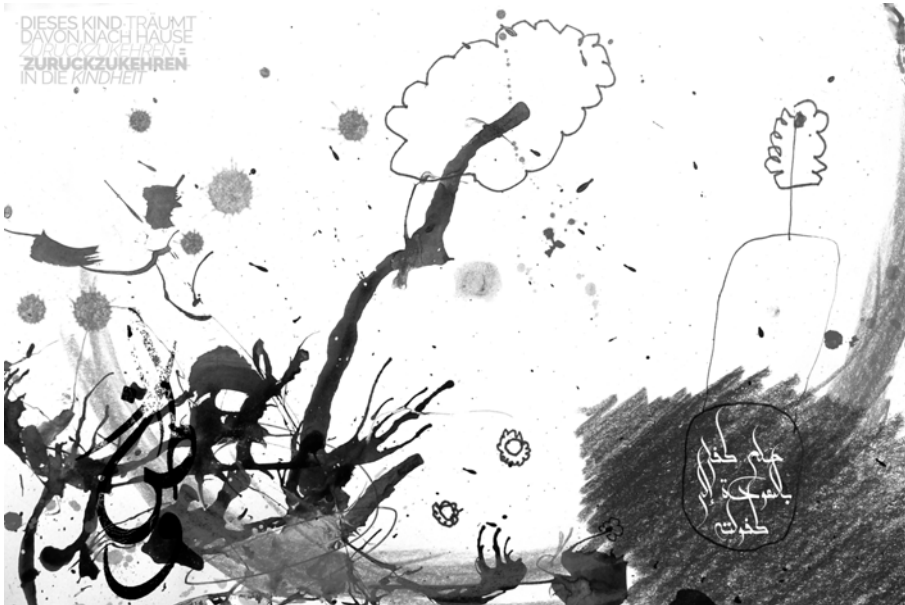
Philip Davenport

Ein Zuhause ohne Wände (House Without Walls)

The poster poems on the following pages were made in collaboration with the refugee community at Gemeinschaftsunterkunft Staakener Straße, with design work by Deya Nemo. Translations by Deya Nemo, Lisa Langer and Aurelie Maurin.









These poster poems were made in a refugee hostel, Spandau, Berlin. Over a period of a year I invited children who'd come out of war zones in the Middle East to make drawings. They could depict anything they wanted. For my part, I brought paper, pencils and inks — and encouragement. Then I asked adults in this community to look at the pictures and tell me what the young artists were thinking. These statements were incorporated into the poster designs. It seemed to me that the adults, by entering the children's drawings, were also articulating their own deeper sensitivity.

The works were exhibited for two months in Berlin, “welcomed” by the Mayor.

The pieces are a homage to the Scottish poet Ian Hamilton Finlay, whose visual poems posters are meditations on violence, couched in sweetness. House Without Walls is war witnessed by children, who still want to play and whose symbols are whales and flowers and princesses.

How do these works signal the end of the world? Perhaps the old world with its national boundaries and flags is redundant. To escape eco-disaster, or war in the coming years, maybe we will all have to learn how to be migrants.

And so these gentle and playful works are in their own way an apocalypse.

THIS IS THE VIEW FROM MY LITTLE WINDOW

A PORTRAIT OF ME / AT HOME

THIS CHILD WANTS TO RETURN HOME / THIS CHILD WANTS
TO RETURN TO CHILDHOOD

MIGRATION OF PEOPLE = MIGRATION OF WHALES / BUT WE
CANNOT GO BACK TO OUR SUMMER HOMES

Kingmaker (project diary entry)

Every week, I put out my stall, which is a rickety wooden table and two or three chairs. On the table are placed pens, pencils, ink and a heap of paper.

Within a few minutes I have usually been joined by seven or eight kids who launched themselves at the art materials with formidable energy.

Technically, they are children, but their life experience has taken them far beyond the worldliness of many adults. They have come out of the war zones of the world.

This is a quiet afternoon. Most of the kids have gone on a trip. But M, one regular member of the art gang, has been left behind so she sits down and lords it over the table. She splashes some ink around and experiments with a geometry compass. As she works, we talk. I have rudimentary German, which she mocks gleefully. “Dumkopf!” She also has a tiny amount of Arabic, she names a few of the creatures she’s drawing in amusing combinations of the two languages.

Although she’s full of jokiness, M has a dark cloud hanging around her, like a familiar. If anyone crosses her for any reason, real or imagined, she summons a ferocious glare. And follows it with a stream of abuse. She can be disruptive to an impressive degree, or delightful. But it is only she ever who decides which.

Today after 20 minutes or so, just as she is running out of energy, two new arrivals join us. They are new to the art group and new to the hostel as well. They look very tiny and very frightened, like two shy animals. They are intrigued by the paper and the pens and by the possibility that they also could play. They are a brother and sister perhaps four or five years old. I hope M won’t be too brutal with them.

The girl very quietly and uncertainly begins to draw. Her little brother stares at the white page. M jumps in with ruthless enthusiasm, she points to the picture and gives it a thumbs up. “Ja! Das ist gut!” And then hoots with manic laughter. The two new arrivals don’t know what to make of her, but sense she is friendly. M makes an “accidental” ink spillage to amuse them, smirking as I mop it away. The little boy tentatively reaches out towards the

paper and draws a single line. M larks about a bit more, stamping up and down the corridor and making fun of the security guard.

The boy looks at his paper awhile and adds another line. As I watch him slowly constructing this drawing, I realise that his hands are shaking. The drawing grows, the progress somehow fuelled by M's antics. Her boldness gives the two new kids a bit of shared bravery. The little boy with shaking hands is slowly becoming lost in his artwork. Perhaps this is the first drawing he has made since his arrival here, since reaching safety. His expression is faraway, distracted. His sister smiles at him.

M nods with satisfaction, as if she knew this would happen all along.

After

We named ourselves for the weather, the sins of our ancestors,
the sheath of earth that melts on the edge of this orbit.
A solar system can only do so much. We were on the brink
of madness for days, catching the tails of comets, eating
their dust, those icy minerals turning our guts to music.
Celestial tuning in the bones of extinct creatures from some
planet where pregnancy is a reflection in a mirror: to give
birth, you have to look away. The shadow of yourself
that you carry in your hands is like a bundle of sticks
in a language you don't remember. We stepped on rings
and let them fling us to the distant reaches of the fen, thick
galaxies of marshy fog pulsing with the hot hearts
of unmet seasons. In our mouth, fur purrs in blue frequencies.
It's how strangers always know where we're from.

Feral Poppies

Deep with justice. Deep with help. A bloomlet let go. Petals weeping
The hang-dog face. I made an atlas with notes from the old self.
That world lost — rotting at the bottom of the sea. Will it come back?
Things lie dormant for many years but bloom again. It happens all the time.
What planet built a clock in its memory? Some type of forgiveness
That is just out of reach. Who would do such a thing? Those long robes
Are just a sign of weakness. Those men — they are so afraid.
I let them take so much from me. When the wind opens the door
The little absent human in me wants to cry out in fear, but the bigger
Meaty self knows the wind is just the wind. The world is just the world.
Outside another day turns dark — like magic! My little dog, too.
She is made of the best earth. Her muzzle near my muzzle reminds me
of my old, alive heart. But then again, maybe it isn't so old. But it is ancient.

Dirty Clocks

The dragon is a spectre of extinction
and we're all living in her haunted
house. The world fills up with
so many ghosts. It's easy to get
lost in their weather. The barn owl
remembered my dreams and told
them to me in a bowl of milk. We
collect the feathers of our old wilderness
now gone slack in puddles of rain
mixed with ash and trouble. Words
are wand-making weeds, the logic
of their unpinning is the clock's conceit:
temporal shifts in markers and testaments,
the river rising up to the street. In the future
children will say, no street belongs there, really:
it's supposed to be under water.

You Know That One Time We Did That Thing Without Dying

My insides came together like a flock of birds.
That's how the sentences grew. I needed to reach
the letters of my accounts. Something
like catching them in a net. The truth
is always regurgitated: all the proteins
the acids need to touch. I've opened
my mouth, but nothing comes
in or out, just the same ruined streets
of a childhood, that cul-de-sac
of grief where a latticework of leaves
made my hair grow down to my waist.
In the silver silos of industry I emptied
my old teeth. Don't tell me I look tired.
Don't tell me to smile. Don't tell me
I look like I need something to eat.
I'm gonna tell all the other ghosts
about this when we're dead.

Their Days Are Numbered

I went underground and never wanted to come up. But then one November every sky was apocalypse pink and purple and orange like nuclear honey poured into the atmosphere drunk and soft and sweeping 'round us. And I strode with my dog to the top of the hill and looked down to the place where there was once an ocean but was now nothing more than poured mud stretched upon rocks and reaching out out out towards the islands. We could walk there. Mirage-trouble a bridge spread under the wefty exhaust of hot comets.

I understood the weather as a thing that could be read but it was a type of reading without letters and barely any shapes. Blue clouds turning purple against the troubled populations of corporeal glyphs riveted out from the earth, the tangled roots thin as a thread of lived wages — never enough and tenuous, but clotted and tough.

I held what I could in my mouth and for as long as was tolerable. I tried to steady my mind around what my tongue knew but could barely remember to me. This feeling is made of houses.

It was important not to talk or listen to too many human voices which became so much like paper. They papered over the places where we'd printed our paws. The air misted with a lilac alphabet we'd exhaled. Ticking like seconds. Invented insects (texts). Star-spackle and drift.

And then there was the day you'd ask me where my baby was. But there is no baby. The baby is rather a dog who has gone next door to sniff through the ruins of the neighbor's house — loose shingles and hanging slats of plastic siding. Her fur a web spun from shell-bones. She unspooled from my hips.

All we do is feel like houses.

I call the dog, letting the words stay loose and edgeless, low and rumbled in my throat, and her ears prick at the sound. She comes back to me, limping up the eroding hills lit up like phosphorescent transcripts soft with data, reckoning.

For now we gather what we can from the landscape, and we are cruel but wealthy.

Armageddon

This afternoon
You came
And it was Summer

This afternoon
You left
And it was Fall

Mayday

The sky shifted its weight towards the horizon
and the masts of sailboats slipped under
the slouch.

I went to honey bloom
& I fed the wings to an imaginary star.
Could you meet me there? on the star?

In this after-life, I wear something other than my body:
a clear dress with all my organs
swimming where you can see.

We scraped away what was awful
and tried to cling to what was left
with our soft teeth and belligerent questions.

That type of dusk in the suburbs —
it hurts your chest, doesn't it?

You need to walk home now, but it
is so far away. You should have figured
out the bus schedule. Can you let me know
if you see me in the future? Am I okay?

I feel confused about how to handle
the current weather. It comes down like the crux
of a lever. The insides of a pelican shudder
and love letters fall out. We gather them up
and hold them to our lips. They smell like sun
and roses. Remember? this is how beautiful
and simple our insides are?
It's, like, not even that hard to make up.

Cave Gifts

I want to soothe the sayer. The woman
who writes the books that are impossible.
Reconstructed from the rib
of a whale. Reconstructed from
the rib-bone's back. The bone
is soot returned to darkness, embers
touched with blood: turned blue, turned black.

The book barely fits. Bits of skin and flesh
and hair spill over. "like trash."
But: "it's so cute!"
Tugging on our garments.
And: "if not this, what?"
But everything is over all the time anyway.

The city is a head of fossils
help up by
whale bones, plants, glyphs dismembering
the air, snipping the sky in half.

Mechanical owls of the afterlife
smoothing the ripped cloth, warm birds
of heaven like so many hands singeing the air
with burnt fingerprints.

What a ghost would want.

The shore hurts
like a bruised arm. You walk
there mending the seams, making us see (sea): the shattered
mirrors — stars — frothing in star-tips — waves
of milk, the sea (see). & we are there.
Together. Already. But Hiding.
From each other. Always. In plain sight.

A Cemetery Is a Type of Theater

The bird of paradise make a wounded song.
Fuzzy in the glen with italics in her legs.
A crown of thorns in her wet kiss. A type
Of harness — to hang on.

The wounded singing is a type of howl.
A type of call that echoes off the grid:
alack alack alack

There have been so many switch-swinging sisters.
I wasn't sure what the war was for
Only that we were in it.

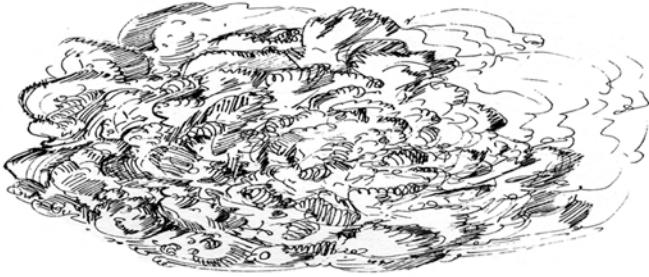
I grew grubs in my finger beds
And fed snails to purse strings
Anchored in the gassy mists
Of those lazy comets (continents), always
Getting lost as ships slink
Over the horizon to meet some
Other day in some other world.

The purple in the sky at dusk.
Is a little gift to us from heaven
A gentle softening of the world
There is no reason for.

Dreaming is important.
It's how new futures are created.

John DeWitt

from *The Neckless Spokesperson of The Garden of Earthly Delights*



Now I'm after *you*.
In the crock pot
Chains sink in the cream
Can you feel the crowd throng?

A snail was wailing where the snails go to die
And bring trauma to the crowd
At your front door
But no one's home. *Ong*.

I was no snail, I snuck upon and ate the snail
Hence mixing the good, the bad and the ugly in one disgusting bowl.

Gathered by chains in this crock pot
Sinking in the cream
This is what we get for shattering everything.

There were a ton of butchers waiting for the merger ...
For my dollars only cows are left.
That my friend is why I only think about good. Likewise.
It could be one or the other, not just both — just like me and you

But neither of use wanted the dark night on our shoulders.

Instrumentalized pigs in the instrumentalization

... who is your fucking farmer?

Tried calling John at home.

*I am no longer the horny man with his wonky bliss. I have gone to the foothills
of the demonic, where I'm reading the civil code in my plastic tennis shoes.*

The swine walk around.

A certain wheel barrow rolls by. So good barrel.

And the bleach boys are smothered in beach

You who never knew liver to shrink your head.

If you were a tube of toothpaste you would squeeze the tube so much and meticulously all the remaining bits of paste would see the remaining light of day.

But I'm not going to agree anything for such a suck-cession of events popping out of yet another world! It's been the end for such a long time.

Nothing followed my gut? think again. Every single little thing penetrating deeper in the feeling in my leg when my phone vibrates with a message of pure opacity from the other. Should be goo. My spirit ran outside and ripped a tomato from the ground and I ate it out of morbidity.

The minutes stuck in the microwave, this was my perversion.
All I can say's the billboard seized my phrase and ate my liver!
I don't believe I'm oozing but the other way around (?)
I stand clear.

And you genuinely have problems at long last too.
Your good turp syndrome.
Laugh it off, I'll shake your hand later.
I told myself all of this ... long gone and perturbed.
My mother loved me so much.

I have been puttering my whole goddamn life. Feeling like a ... normal creature as I talk on my mobile phone to the evil forces of the demons!

Well how would you come back from the dead? When there is none. No displacing the emptiness of, no preparing the prodotype of the next me.

*O children of jeremiads
I apologize for the broken toke coming off your face.*

These reactions are the good reactions
A non negative hole sported in the middle
to go through all the way, head shoulders and all mun.

Laughing donkeys roll on the floor.

(“The front image emerged from collaborative work with the artist Vincent Meyrignac.”)

Diane Di Prima

Revolutionary Letter #12

the vortex of creation is the vortex of destruction
the vortex of artistic creation is the vortex of self destruction
the vortex of political creation is the vortex of flesh destruction
 flesh is in the fire, it curls and terribly warps
 fat is in the fire, it drips and sizzling sings
 bones are in the fire
 they crack tellingly in
 subtle hieroglyphics of oracle
 charcoal singed
 the smell of your burning hair
for every revolutionary must at last will his own destruction
rooted as he is in the past he sets out to destroy

Revolutionary Letter #33

how far back
are we willing to go? that seems to be
the question. the more we give up
the more we will be blessed, the more
we give up, the further back we can go, can we
make it under the sky again. in moving tribes
that settle, build, move on and build again
owning only what we carry, do we need
the village, a division of labor, a friendly potlatch
a couple of times a year, or must it be
merely a 'cybernetic civilization'
which may or may not save the water, but will not
show us our root, or our original face, return
us to the source, how far
(forward is back) are we willing to go
after all?

Revolutionary Letter #83

IN THE WINK OF AN EYE:

Millennial Notes

If Iliad & Odyssey encompass two sides of the great divide — great break w/ the mythic & rise of the wily

Then *polymetis* Odysseus — still a sacred king tho living in the west (*ζῳφῆος*) & with shards (shades) of the old time clinging to his robes

degenerates into *pious Aeneas* — the careful old fart, practical family man & we are lost to ourselves for 1,000 or more years till the aching DULLNESS is too much to bear & we emerge into Tantra

the way of *ecstasis* : Rumi to Vidal & the Dull Party gets freaked & burns up Provence

and old Dante arises to put a cap on the fire, impose *some* order on ecstasy

and Willie the Shake tries to see : cd they co-exist? : ecstasy & order — harmony & godseeking freak out & he doesn't solve it but he makes some kind of Trembling Equation —

And Blake sez, fuck all this, fuck coexistence, we need, we do need a new spiritual order — & proceeds to make one, sweeping the Romantics along in his wake

And Baudelaire agrees, but won't come out to play, tries to make a new order inside the shell of the old

But Rimbaud sees w/ his seer's eyes that we are already in it, the spirit, & stark raving naked — we'll have to leave everything behind

& at first he is thrilled but then cops out — it's too chilly in outer space w/ no clothes he'd rather die a sleaze-butt but *human* for God's sake

There is only one place to go from there, Thelema — The new spiritual order for real, a western *terma*, complete with crazy wisdom, the Holy Books

And sometimes, just sometimes the American cats move in on it they don't know from order they don't know from

clothes — naked in space is OK w/ Melville,
Whitman don't know from leave behind, blasted with
vastness & forlorn w/ blood sickness

this is more than existential crisis
'just SPACE'
& Pound & Olson bring history along for the ride, the
ocean currents & how we followed them
so that Troy falls again, or doesn't this time — doesn't
this whole thing happen cause Troy fell
men stopped wearing perfume & silk
brightness fell from the air
the Lady of Heaven got bored, went underground
it is
a crisis of spirit — &

the leap out of it beyond it
our most recent shot

'just SPACE' = Thelema

Hermetic

Definition

a different color
different light in the mind

Revolutionary Letter #87

LES AMÉRICAINS

we are feral rare
as mountain wolves
our hearts are pure
& stupid we go down

pitted against our own

October 5, 2001

Revolutionary Letter #89

INDEPENDENCE DAY 2002

bald eagle
making a comeback

so am I

Revolutionary Letter #90

ANCIENT HISTORY

The women are lying down
in front of the bulldozers
sent to destroy
the last of the olive groves.

Revolutionary Letter #96

Empire
is its own
undoing

Suzanne Doppelt

from *Vak Spectre*

on Samuel van Hoogstraten's *Peepshow with Views of the Interior of a Dutch House*, c. 1650-60, National Gallery, London.

(here's the link, if you'd like to see it:

<https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/samuel-van-hoogstraten-a-peepshow-with-views-of-the-interior-of-a-dutch-house>)

at least a hundred tiny boxes of light and shadow create a perfect chessboard black and white and wide and deep across the floor, the work of a geometer amusing himself by making figures that file off toward the horizon, a gorgeous line of flight crossing each room and its new play, running without intermission. Changing according to the will of the watcher, looking in from one side or the other, establishing the space and its lovely Dutch tile floor, slanted and perfectly symmetrical, creating an exchange, everything for a single glimpse, in principle, 4-inch squares exactly alternating black against white with a few subtleties only noticed by the mind. And the dog, too, who is not made of china but startled, showing like a face between the reeds, planted there, detached, stiff, and a little confused, an encounter right in the middle of a dark square much colder than a carpet with its rumples and wimples, and sliding, gliding, flying, magic rooted thanks to its single point of view

frosted glass, rich in ash or duplex, it must have taken time for the light to make it through and when, in a vitreous state, instable, air, wind, brigands, scents, and sounds, volcanic, off-white, or reinforced, all the way back to the back of the frame to take on form, often higher than wide, and their size, smaller in colder countries but big enough to let the daylight in along with anything else that's around. The road that goes up and the one that comes back down, the stars, red and blond, a shrunken moon and a break in the landscape, all matter in a storm, an unknown worm and large, lethal plants, several profiles and as many greens, the sparrow asleep and the grand duke, suddenly woken up, the grass felted into a carpet and the ghost-ship surrounded by lightning. The patterns outside, such beautiful paintings seen through the windows, which are equally so, open onto one part of the world and then the next one, piercing the center of a wall and then made square, it's a well-drawn chessboard across which histories watch each other between the line of the horizon and another of flight, nature in a glance, genre scenes, street scenes, no shutters or curtains, replace the promenade, the theater, and everything else. Louvered, seeing without being seen, day and night the shadows pass, in dormers tucked in toward the top, angled, dangerous for sleepwalkers and nervous cats or blind ones that blend in with the stone of the wall, in which you see things wholly new, lovely faces in constant motion, striped or printed fabric, beautifully lining the visible, a true optical fête. Or a wall of triplex or tulip glass through which pass air and the rays of vision when it's sharply clear, no reflection or water or dust, when it goes all around, the house becomes a marvelous house of glass, in color and 3-D, a huge window wholly open to the world

(Translated from French by Cole Swensen)

Paul Dresman

FIVE POEMS FOR THE END OF TIME

Babylonian Radio

We never go off the air.

Sunset reflects in many windows from across the river.

Darkness descends, and lights go out across the world.

The books are burned, the books are torn to pieces fluttering in the wind, the books are thrown whole into the river.

If you must obey what you can and cannot read, then you need to sing.

On Babylonian Radio, we sang ourselves to sleep, drowning in the river.

On Babylonian Radio, the wind sang with dust, and the dust covered the gardens, and only the rain brought rebirth, and the rains stopped falling, the stations stopped sending, the people no longer listened, and even the mystics went into a deep sleep for centuries.

Only the dust was dancing in cylinders, dancing dust devils, whirling dervishes of death who heard no music.

From somewhere, someone came floating on a log, a round of wood where they stood with a limb and stroked their way along a truly imaginary river.

If you stay still and pay attention, you may be able to imagine a station that plays the sound of rain.

It is a far-off signal, and it is often drowned by static. They say it comes from Ur. They say it comes from the moon. They say you can hear water falling in the interstices of time.

But I don't think you can turn the centuries of neglect into gardens anymore than you can live through the drought and thirst for something beyond shallow mirages.

Without the rhythm of water music, no one dances in Babylonia anymore.

Hegelian Cartography

The repeated history of the eaves
explains the presence of the rains
and their relation to the leaves
in familial dining tables.

Strolling leisurely through the accounts
explorers create in these domains,
you can clearly see, through the walls,
how the vaults are full of holes,
the magazines surfeit with yearning.

In the distance, a necessary recess
glows dimmer and dimmer
as you tramp through the acceleration,
accoutrements deemed necessary
for ordinary behavior.

Amid the usual binge of subterfuge,
your tongue in the foreground talks in a flood
while the other within you
trusts in luck.

A map can only be accurate
with a bluebird on your shoulder.
It sings the truth, is gestural,
and all directions are dialectical.

Extinctions

1.

In my other life, I am a resourceful piano tuner
who can adjust the chromatics of rainbows
to tiers of sound
and suture holes in the ozone.

In my other life, I am a young girl
in a big city who likes to bike through traffic
and run red lights.

In my other life, I am a contortionist
who is able to escape from a vision of the future
without grasping the meaning.

In my other life, I am a platonic radio station
that only plays perfect compositions.
Don't listen — you'll affect it.

In my only life, I am an iceberg
drifting further and further alone.
But I am hopeful.

2.

“Carry me home,” says the empty boat.
“Take me out of the waves.”

3.

Thirsty for ancient verities,
the fall was cool but dry
after the mountains burned
and the seas vaporized.

from “Fourteen Mountains”

13.

You once could read enigmatic mysteries
about floods in the Pacific Northwest,
milky water from the glaciers
running dirty brown through the valleys —
the whole journey from the nipple to the sea.

Now, by August, in the heat and the lightning,
stream beds trickle past dry rock and dead moss.
Smoke from wild fires obscures everything.
Backpacking through the mountains,
something is burning, and you can't breathe.

The old fire Lookouts are gone.
The azimuth is now a device for divination.
Conflagrations burn through summer into autumn,
all the way until the first rain comes, later every year.
The future isn't pretty. The past has been pretty awful itself.

Far to the south and east,
the shills rewrite environmental laws
in black oil on ghostly drive-in movie screens,
horror flicks twisted by Texas logic
that fractures the rock
below into earthquakes, profits,
sulphur-fume faucets.
Posada skeletons sit
in their cars, attached to speakers,
dressed in their Sunday best
to recite the scriptures
while tumbleweeds pile-up on fences
and a brazen head blares out blessings.

After I come down from the mountains,
I'll go to Chinatown to hide in an alley

and watch America fall
at the end of the Ming,
the end of the Q'ing,
the end of the bling dynasty.

Where Do We Go from Here?

Hawai'ian ghosts were thought
to go to sea. Crop circles
supposedly appear
in the wake of alien visitors
who voyage from distant stars
just to fuck with our heads.
Listening to new music,
you finally catch on.
Many murders are covered-up
with imprisoned souls
quoting scripture. That
passed so fast, you think
you imagined it.
Sheltered from the storm,
sea turtles raise their heads
landward,
driven over the reef
and into the lagoon.

The pianist was born in Tashkent.
His mother met Anna Ahkmatova
eating oranges and drinking vodka.
Fifty-thousand nomads
climbed over the snowy mountains
to reach the grasslands and survive.
Later they were purged
as part of a rectification
to return the revolution
to its truest principles.

The pioneers found pots and pans
others before them left behind
on the Oregon Trail
and fashioned shoes for the oxen
to walk across the blazing plains.
Kaya is a Tartar born in Ankara
who now lives in Haleiwa
on the north shore of Oahu.

Russian ghosts are everywhere,
the things they leave behind.

The empty shell of the turtle
straddled the beach at high tide.
I imagine I came from central Asia
like everybody else in Europe
once upon a time.
Nomadic life suits those with get-up-and-go.
Wearing skins can be lousy,
but Appaloosa underpants
might really excite someone.

The market falls
another five-hundred points.
I think I'll have a potato.
"Every freeloader on the north shore's
here for half-price salad night."
A sudden downpour
scatters the diners
on the terrace.
They all rush in
holding plates.
Sometimes it is not our fault
that slips, but our neighbor's
continental shelf,
and that's why the boats
get tossed around,
end-up on the docks.

The Milky Way sprays stars
in a wide band across the sky.
The entire capitalist system
appears to be reinvigorated.
A terrible beauty is borne
on the backs of the underlings.
All things come due:
wet bare feet, thirteen-inch
centipedes, a man in the dark
dancing for all he's worth.

Paddling out,
the waves jumped up,
breaking further
on distant reefs, and the crack
and roar got loud. I
wondered how I was ever
going to get back in
because the reef pass,
a narrow channel,
was running too fast
to paddle against, so
I had to ride a wall of foam
over the reef, and it tore off
my fins, and there were too many
coral heads to paddle around,
so I had to get off and swim,
sometimes sideways
across the lagoon, dragging
the board behind
on a leash.

The schools of bright-colored
tropical fish scattered
before me, and
I nearly ran into a needle fish
standing perfectly still
straight up and down.
I could look clear
through it, so I didn't even
see it, until it
dipped away from my face.

Was it ever even there
where I couldn't see it?
This is not an advertisement
for God, because a needle fish
in real life is far more
impressive in its absence
than anything you imagine.
Imagine this: we all once swam

in the same sea together,
and we will again.

Poetry at the Edge of the World, Poetry in the World's Embrace

The future is dark, with a darkness as much of the womb as the grave.

—Rebecca Solnit, *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*

There are boundless narratives about the earth as goddess; they can be found in ancient Greek stories about Gaia, in Anishinaabe stories about Aki. The earth is a living, breathing body, and like the creatures that depend on her, she is subject to the arc of mortality, to life and death. Anishinaabe teacher and elder, Francis Nepinak, calls out our metaphoric and literal parallels: “The oceans, the lakes, the rivers, it’s similar to a blood vein in your body. It’s like that. It’s like the water on Earth is its blood. And the plants like hair. Also, the ground is the same as your flesh.”¹

As Aki warms — as we trap heat and energy in our atmosphere through our reckless ways of living — she is more capricious, volatile, seemingly inconsolable. And we are as well. For to live on her is to live with her, is to feel her heartbeat as if our own. This intricate connection means we too experience the relentless harm we have inflicted on her, on ourselves. With such embodied suffering, it is easy to despair.

But despair is a loss of heart, a loss of connection. It signals a break in our recognition of ourselves, of life as one collective breath, an inhalation and exhalation that continues, until it does not. Despair can become a toxic microchimerism, an expression of fear and grief that, in and of itself, causes renewed harm to our mother, to earth.

As Buddhist teacher and environmental activist Joanna Macy reminds us, “In the face of impermanence and death, it takes courage to love the things of this world ...” And so this is what we, as writers, as artists, write towards. We are not just exploring the past, invoking the present, imagining the future, we are writing to reyoke ourselves to one another, to all creatures, to rock and sky, to Aki herself. To feel her rivers as our veins, her loam and lithosphere as the epidermis and dermis of our own skin.

It can be difficult to be present to the violence that humans inflict on themselves, one another, and on Aki herself. But as James Baldwin reminds us, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing is changed until it is faced.”

Hope, like presencing and being present, is a practice. In her book *Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities*, Rebecca Solnit writes “Hope is an embrace of the unknown and unknowable, an alternative to the certainty of both optimists and pessimists.” There is spaciousness in this uncertainty, an opportunity to act.

Western literature tends toward utopic or dystopic narratives, ones where lives are either arcing towards heaven or descending into the abyss. This stems from a world view that proposes a linear progression for the human experience, from darkness to light, from chaos to order. But indigenous understandings of the world, and our relationship to it, are rooted in a more complicated story, one where creative and destructive forces co-exist. An Iroquoian story about Woman Who Fell from the Sky and her twin sons Tsenstá and Taweskare describes the preparation of Turtle Island for the arrival of two leggeds, of people. Tsenstá spent his days creating rivers and fertile valleys, but his brother Taweskare — who “tore and kicked his way out of his mothers’ side, emerging from her armpit and killing her”²² — spent his time disturbing these creations, generating earthquakes, hurricanes, volcanoes. And so Turtle Island is a place of generative and destructive forces living side by side.

Poets know this too. We describe the lushness to life while languaging witness to the ravages of fires, droughts, hurricanes — millennia of damage transported by the keening wind. Stories take as much as they give. They rant, burst forth gems, stumble, and sometimes can’t get up. To write is to hold tenderly this complexity, our infinite creative capacity and our mortality. Our connectivity and the ravages of separation. To write is to affirm “Creation happened and is happening. Creation, like story, is circular, ever present, ever moving.”²³

The twins are central to many indigenous origin stories. They are sisters, Oshkikwe and Matchikwewis, among the Anishinabe⁴ and part of a polytheistic pantheon, one that reflects an ontological dualism in which seemingly opposite or contrary forces are actually complementary, interconnected, interdependent. And it is through them, the twin forces of

creation and destruction, that we can find our way back to Aki, to our interdependent bodies, to the possibility of healing some of what has been harmed, in her, in ourselves. We celebrate this gift of life, write ourselves into the center of the story, all the while knowing that all living things are impermanent.

NOTES

1. *Untume Pi Kin He – Who We Are: Treaty Elders' Teachings Volume*. Treaty Relations Committee of Manitoba. 2014.
2. *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America*. Co-edited by Gerald McMaster (Plains Cree and member of the Siksika Nation) and Clifford E. Trafzer (Wyandot descent). National Museum of American Indian, Smithsonian Institution. 2004.
3. *Native Universe: Voices of Indian America*.
4. *Grandmothers of the Light: A Medicine Woman's Sourcebook*. Paula Gunn Allen. Beacon Press. 1991.

from *Vestigial*

Two: *Multicellular*

Before everything came into being there was a great deal of waiting for. Waiting for the earth to form, waiting for life to appear.

She waits on her wadikwan, its fragile perch, for him to find her. It takes millennia. When he arrives, he is coated in her musky scent, his body dusted with the damp molecules.

Listen, he says. In the silence she hears the universe. Four billion years ago, in a galaxy that was not yet named, earth was formed. Explosive and molten, the planet took another billion years to tilt and cool. Eventually it formed a solid crust, cupping water at its surface.

The first life was single cell and microscopic. When the cells recognized themselves in one another, they attached and in their connection created multicellular species. But such cellular coupling complicates reproduction. Multicellular life requires a germ cell, such as an egg or sperm, to combine its genetic material, to reproduce.

They are multicellular and yet they cannot procreate. But they are never without this hunger for. With silicone, hand and tongue, he makes complicated gestures toward coupling, toward recreating himself through her.

The first multicellular species were soft, lacking bone or shell. They moved together in small groups searching for food. Multicellularity enabled organism to exceed the size limits normally imposed by diffusion. Later it permitted increasing complexity through differentiation of numerous cellular lineages within an organism.

Multicellularity made it possible to develop specialized cell types such as muscle and skin. It rendered the human form.

His adam's apple is thickening and the tips of his nasal bones are beginning to grow. She can no longer read the subtextual plot in the curves of his face. But when he moves, she rises up to meet him, finding something like love in the troposphere between the memory of his body and the person that he is becoming.

Billions of years passed before the first flowering plants appeared. They were late in the evolutionary story, opening skyward long after the first birds pressed their wings into the air.

Look, he says and she watches him unfurling.

Angiosperms are flower and seed producing. Once members of the gymnosperm class, those naked seeds, they appeared suddenly, luring mammals with their lustily garbed fruits. With more than wind and rain at their disposal, angiosperms replicated quickly, replacing gymnosperms as the dominant trees around 100 million years ago.

She witnesses his physiological changes, the sexual dimorphism and flowering parts. But the hormones are changing more than his sex. Virilizing and anabolic, testosterone enlarges his organs and forces his heart to pump harder. It causes his mind to uncoil like zhiishiigwe, his fangs striking the closest heartbeat in sight.

As he expands, she contracts. Each day, she is increasingly pocked and barren, like a pomegranate flayed and stripped of every seed.



Darwin found such things a problem. The difficult to explain, to describe. Suddenly flowers appeared in the fossil record. It's an abominable mystery, Darwin said. Only later would it be possible to trace the evolution of the angiosperm from gymnosperms to seed ferns, the extinct link, and narrate the passage from frond to flower.

Puberty comes late for him; he is already middle age. There is no adolescent body for him to grow into. And yet the hormones behave as if he was fourteen. They excite his libido, kindle his brain.

He is changing so quickly she does not recognize him from one day to the next. One morning he leaves and when he returns he is compact muscles and denser bones. *Who are you?* she asks. *It is me,* he says. But his voice is deeper and his chest is thatched with fur.

Ecological changes in the phonology and distribution of flora and fauna is not new. But everything has speeded up. What once took thousands of years can transpire within a few of the earth's orbits around the sun.

She is disoriented by the changes. Some days, the language of it escapes her and she finds herself flying too close to the window, blindly smashing her wings against the glass.

Birds are the only members of the clade, originating with the earliest dinosaurs, to have survived the cretaceous–paleogene extinction event.

Listen, he says, and she rests her head on his newly male chest. *Listen*, he says, *the story goes like this*.

Sixty-six million years ago, an asteroid fell to the earth. The resulting impact was so great that debris filled the sky and blocked the sun. A lingering winter ensued. Three quarters of all plant and animal species died. The birds flew where they could. Those who found sunlight survived.

Many birds still migrate annually, traveling south from their breeding grounds to their winter home. They fly together using cues from the sun and stars, from the earth's magnetic field, from the beating of their four chambered hearts.

Migration carries high costs in terms of predation and mortality. The birds are hunted, dismembered by power lines, prone to parasites and pathogens at overcrowded resting spots.

Migration causes other complications as well. It changes his sex. It alters her dibaajimowin, disperses its narrative arc.

By winter they are housed in the same aviary. Each day sunrise lights the hillside but they are fenced in from all sides. They use their beaks and claws to pick at each other. Soon their flesh is bloodied and their feathers spread like dust around their anisodactyl feet.

Camille Dungy

Ars Poetica Apocalyptica

the boy walks me to the near edge of the purple horizon
past the last of the strip malls
past the dancing rebels the food trucks the penny-saver girl
keys bell his belt loops and pockets
keys jangle his necklace castanets
in his small calloused hands
the boy walks with me
toward bubble-roofed aluminum trailers and a horizon the color of plums
keys sprout from the dirt at our feet
the way it used to be with clover

I don't understand all the keys so I ask
the boy squats to collect what the dirt has offered
who can know what they will open?
the keys have flimsy rings and illegible labels
they all look the same though some are different

*This looks like the keys to my mother's car.
A church key! The office?*

the boy collects keys from the shady earth
the way we used to collect chanterelles

They might be the keys to my house.

at the near edge of the belligerent horizon the boy turns the key over twice
before he slips it in his pocket

then he tosses a ring in the air the way we once tossed tangerines

Frequently Asked Questions: #5

Do you have big plans for her first birthday?

Tomorrow this will all be over. She will take a step
and the tide that fills the tide pools will come in.

The last crop of almonds in the world must begin as nothing
but a thousand thousand miniscule blossoms.

I have loved every cell of her body from the time I could count them
until now.

Why hurry her progress when each day is as gorgeous as the last?

She will take a step and the beekeeper will plant his hives in the orchard,
walk away.

Ars Poetica: After the Dam

the floodplains bloom the horsetail dies the wheat
with its combined eyes eyeing a fat future nods and nods never fearing

the peasants plant potatoes plant turnips radish and carrot

even the mice leave the hovels and make camp in the fields

when an inland bird calls from the roof thatch the boatwright turns
from bowsprit and trains his son to cobble

only that bright-chested bird knows the end of this song

but she is winging over water and must not waste her breath to sing

The Claw of Archimedes

Written in the Xth century, as hordes thrashed down the slopes
And took — almost everything, crumbled poems into pipes and smoked
them, or wrapped plant roots around them and repotted them:
Translating into X, then translated into X and back
into X. Placed in jars and covered with salt. Still —
they took almost everything — first, coal plants refired/
then streams diverted/then mountaintops exploded/
mass animal extinction/then the insects too/the trees
and flowering plants. Choking — that was how it
began, so we wrote furiously, threw words, made mirrors of words —
acres of flat mirrors of words we trained upon the wooden ships
of the oppressors, we could not imagine how heartless
they could be, it is so hard to be so one-sided with worry
and we kept writing to keep the words trained
upon the wooden ships, training ourselves
as we worked to target exactly the wooden
ships, in parabolical shapes, but it was so hard
to maintain the discipline of aiming the mirrors
and writing the words among all of us together arguing
that words/mirrors maybe would not be enough
and words/mirrors might have maybe been enough but
they were not and so our cities (always cities)
were overcome by the hatred of people living so far apart,
although of course being cities and being numerous and diverse
there were those among us too who believed in dismantling
the administrative state and in none of us together and instead
living solitary with a wall of guns against phantasms
— there were those of us too and while they might have helped
make us stronger by being the eye of opposition within the tao of majority,
or the tiny amount of poison to strengthen the body, or the vaccine
against the larger disease, the blankness of people separating from each
[other
was too monotonous and too inexplicable for us in our beautiful
fragmented disagreements to stand against and we feared for our poems,
[surrounded by paper,

we peeled away from reflections and watched the smoke of our words
[dissipate
into the skies, as the oil and fumes of their matter combined to form a
nebulous something so much more concrete than ever the phantasms
[fueling the solitary
hordes against us — we learned the imaginary ever has a greater hold
than what we actually held so hard together.

This poem was originally offered as part of “100 Choices,” a fundraising drive created by HR Hegnauer and Selah Saterstrom to support the Mango House Basic Needs Pantry. The Mango House was created by a group of Denver friends and is open to newly arrived refugees and refugees struggling to rebuild their lives in Denver, Colorado and surrounding cities. Their goal is to place needed items directly into the hands of refugees, with face-to-face contact.

tiller

scent hides outcrop of gray and among those atoms upright green a shock
[of
again green folded among movements of petrification and grayness and
[what lies
under is never hidden sumptuous brown that holds all above it humus that
[more
it crumbles more it generates, generative substance once dry drifts off
[seeking
current but even still lies still tubes and ropes vines what resists drought or
trampling, ownership, salesmanship, friable and depthless, meets the cruxes
where four creates five and is why five is the heart number and number of
[seed
and where unevenness creates able to action four points to five each point
points to five and like heart central and grows dispersed after initial
[concentration
all seeds are five and why flowers are six and bees like flowers accrete in six
and sides are perfect together and six multiplies to perfect hive hexagon
six wax sides and bonded by nebulous humectant kiss saliva food six
must be bonded by powder and kisses in wax and why the seven pesticides
must be shrouded by eight elements twice four eight is complete and takes
an extra one left by pesticide and nematode-killer, seventh fungicide and
accumulation, mite eraser the eight insect legs erased by grasping molecule

rings of seven seeking one and the standard of nine rows cut in nine sides
green rectangles glint among sand the line where irrigation ends or curve of
[circle
nine is for irrigation tunnels shaping the ten spreads of desert dunes and
[sand
is multiplied to almost infinity by ten although there must be one last grain
[of sand
if by ten one is led up to counting; meanwhile the spread of soil by rain
[wind and fallow
if rotation stalls and green appears among sand or gold, brown, one upright
[stem.

Things I used to find beautiful:

Blinking red lights high up to warn airplanes

radio towers in the middle of fields

seemingly extending to the infinite

when driving

driving

being a passenger, watching the road fly
[by

blinking red lights across the river atop a development

a development being constructed and lit up by floodlights

floodlights of many colors

prospectors, surveyors

the man surveying in the middle of a busy street

with an orange jacket on

to warn pedestrians

pedestrians

vs. traffic

the thrill of passing close to a heavy vehicle as it speeds up

its tires almost to my feet, the tons of it, the metal, the painted metal of
[many layers

of paint, the wheel, and the steering — the chrome parts as decorative, the
[ad for it.

The feeling of construction, what will be uncovered

before it is taken: before this surveyed part of land will be taken

the under of it
the radio of it

the crackle and static extending over so many miles

what used to seem empty as a child

before seeing the bones

the towers leading one to another, the intricate composition of wires and
[transformers

just: amazing, people talk over these — small voices walking through this
[distance one to another

even if only reciting numbers

even if only measurements, those numbers

from *The Prospect*

in medieval portraits the hand is the point
that is where perspective begins

then perspective “discovered” in the renaissance
upheaval, where perspective begins was now
from the viewer

so the prospect began with the viewer
the woods unfurl perspectivaly, beautifully,
like Versailles, rows and rows, gardened

at the edge of the prospect
the dark line of the woods begins
and the tiny figure of the poacher

it is a place situated unto fields

so it folds up into itself
to a peak toward the sky
not a castle, nor a tower

lookout, guard
surveillance
not establishing so much
as placing, placement

inside, impervious to impervious weather
what could threaten but
continual sunlight
fading the tapestries
tarnishing the trumpets

then perspective broke

it began with the prospect and the viewer
the smallness of the viewer looking at the magnificence of the viewed
the small vs. large
and the small could control the large

then it ended with the prospect and the viewer
the garden became the housing project
the inhabitants became the poachers
the poachers needed to eat

they watch deer, birds and rabbits go by
and know that they could die for hunting.

fences
go
up

miles
of
walls

up
go
fences

up
go
walls

Cobalt : An Essay

I

I was born in the 1950s and grew up in a remote part of Te Ika a Maui, the Fish of Maui, otherwise known as the North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand — itself far away in the South Pacific Ocean. Ohakune is as distant from the sea as you can get in our skinny islands; about fifty miles; and situated in a dramatic landscape. To the north lies Taupo, a drowned caldera, bigger than Yellowstone; standing over the town is Ruapehu, an active volcano. It grumbled and smoked throughout my childhood. My father was a school teacher and my mother, it turned out, a poet; they were sophisticated, literate, committed, our house was full of books, and I read, enthusiastically, from a young age. We had no television but there was a picture theatre in town. We listened to the radio; and sometimes gathered around the piano for a sing-song. I spent a lot of time outside, exploring. It was a happy childhood.

Two designations from our part of the world still intrigue me: the King Country; and the Volcanic Plateau. The first, aka *Te Rohe Potae*, the area of the hat, signified a territory into which Pakeha, white New Zealanders, were not allowed to go. The origin of the phrase is thus: the Maori King, Tawhiao, in the aftermath of the wars of the 1860s, placed his bowler hat on a map of Te Ika a Maui; everything within its brim was proscribed. The head, and therefore the hat, is sacred to Maori; the reserve of this territory was meant to prevent the passing of any more land into Pakeha ownership. It wasn't until the railway began to come through in the late 1800s that Te Aukati, the border of Te Rohe Potae, was breached; the Pakeha designation, the King Country, persists.

The Volcanic Plateau is a geographical definition. A line of vulcanism extends from Ohakune north-east through Taupo, Rotorua, Whakaari (White Island) and on into the Pacific; all the way to Tonga. Its southernmost reach is two circular lakes, old craters, where we used to picnic when I was a kid. There are hot springs, mud pools, geysers, steam vents, terraces made of coloured silica, calderas, crater lakes, volcanoes, all sorts of subterranean pressures breaking through the earth's crust and bursting into the air. There are also deficits. The soil of the Waimarino Plains, where

Ohakune stands, is exceptionally fertile for the growing of root crops; but stock tended to languish ('bush sickness') until it was discovered that certain trace elements, and especially cobalt, were lacking. A common sight in my childhood was the passage of aeroplanes — Cessnas, Douglas DC3s — low across the sky, discharging gritty plumes of superphosphate fertiliser (including trace elements) over the green fields.

Another memory of my school days is hearing, through the open windows, the whine of rotary saws from nearby sawmills; while black and white half-burnt stumps like melanoma scarred the paddocks. When Europeans arrived, they found a vast podocarp forest stretching across the plains and up onto the slopes of the mountain. It was so dense that, even on a sunny day, moisture fell like rain from the canopy. Yet, fifty years later, when I came along, that forest had gone. With it went a rich and varied bird life, including large ground-dwelling parrots, pigeons and honey eaters; and the fabled huia, now extinct, a wattle bird whose white tipped tail feathers were prized as ornaments by Maori; and whose bills differed in shape between the sexes. The male's, short and sharp and robust, was adapted to hammering into the cores of rotting logs; the female's, long and curving, to extracting from within the grubs they lived upon. An exquisitely realised partnership, then.

I don't know if my constitutional melancholy is related to growing up on the site of an ecological catastrophe — the massacre of the trees — but it may be so; yet I actually date that feeling of sadness from the day we left Ohakune to go and live somewhere else. I loved it there so much it felt like death to leave; I was ten and knew that things would never be the same again: as they have not been. But other parts of my early life in that remote place continue to intrigue. One is the information, already mentioned, that the application of cobalt to the starveling land would make it more fertile; another is the proposition, which we were taught at primary school, that nuclear energy was the hope of the future. Both highlight the idea of improvement as the engine of growth.

At the same time, because my father's father worked in the motor trade, I was wedded to certain brands: the Rootes Group was the English parent company of the local subsidiary, Todd Motors; their cars were Hillmans and Humbers, Singers and Sunbeams; we always drove a Hillman. Subsequently, Rootes were bought out by Chrysler (now owned by Fiat) so I became, without any say in the matter, a fan of the De Soto and of the

Imperial too. There was a kind of petrol, called Europa, marketed by Todd Motors (it was actually cheap gas brought in from the Soviet Union) so I was an unthinking partisan of that too. We were all brand warriors in those days, as if corporations were football teams, perhaps, or rock ‘n’ roll bands.

Because of the innocence and optimism of my upbringing, for a long time I thought the depredations we humans make upon the natural world had ceased; and that, from now on, we would conserve what remained: the forests, the waters, the shining sands; the birds and animals and fish and insects; the very air. It has taken me a long time to understand that this is not the case; that there are competing tendencies within human society and, indeed, within every human soul. And that the counter-tendency has, thus far, proved stronger. There are those among us who will sacrifice any long-term good for the sake of the present satisfaction of an appetite; they have reigned supreme; and continue so to do.

II

Our word *cobalt* comes from the German, *kobold*, meaning goblin or sprite. A kobold can manifest as an animal, a fire, a human being; they appear in houses, down mines, on board ship. Those who live underground are hunched and ugly; malevolent. Their origin would seem to be thus: cobalt, while an element (Co 27 on the Periodic Table) is found — apart from small deposits in meteors — only in chemically bonded forms. The free element, produced by smelting, is a hard, lustrous, silver-grey metal. Early attempts to smelt cobalt ores failed, yielding only a powder, cobalt oxide; and, because cores of cobalt always contain arsenic, also producing a toxic and volatile gas, arsenic oxide. It was called the goblin ore because it could so easily cause the death of those who meddled with it.

Cobalt is for us also a word for blue: because, as far back as the Bronze Age, compounds of the metal were used to colour glass, ceramics, glazes and to make dyes. The Egyptians knew it; the Persians too; a fourteenth century BC ship, wrecked at Uluburun, off the south-west coast of Turkey, when investigated, was found to be carrying, along with much else, 175 ingots of cobalt blue, turquoise and lavender glass. For a long time, however, knowledge of cobalt was practical, experiential, rather than theoretical. People actually thought it was bismuth (Bi 83) — which, like arsenic, occurs in deposits of cobalt — that gave us that ethereal blue; until an eighteenth century Swedish chemist named Georg Brandt demonstrated

it was actually formed by another, hitherto unknown, element. Cobalt was the first new metal to be discovered in modern times.

As a trace element cobalt is important for nutrition, specifically in Vitamin B12, which has cobalt atoms *positioned in the centre of a planar tetra-pyrrole ring called a corrin ring*. No fungus, plant or animal is capable of producing Vitamin B12; only the bacteria and the archaea have the enzymes needed for its synthesis. Its deficiency, in humans, can cause irreparable damage to the brain and the nervous system. Symptoms include fatigue, lethargy, depression, memory loss, breathlessness, headache, pallor, mania and psychosis. We get it from meat and seafood, mainly; and, increasingly, these days, from dietary supplements of various kinds. We don't need much; an excess will cause physiological problems as severe as those arising from its deficit.

The Periodic Table is one of the wonders of the world; our ability to construct such a thing, with all of the knowledge, implied and actual, that it contains, seems to me not much short of a miracle. Curiously, we don't yet know where, or even if, it ends; though most agree it cannot be infinite. Later elements continue to be made in the laboratory. When we look into the Periodic Table we seem to be looking into the heart of creation itself; and perhaps we are. Cobalt, like many of the primary elements, is made by a process Fred Hoyle called *supernova nucleosynthesis*. The burning of oxygen and silicon in the fires of stars. Just as impressive is our ability to use such knowledge in order to make improvements in the ways in which we live upon the earth.

III

We were taught, at school, in the 1950s and early 1960s, as mentioned, that atomic energy was the power of the future. We knew about Hiroshima and Nagasaki; some of us knew also of the profligate testing of A bombs and H bombs (by the Americans) in the Pacific, just to the north of us; and indeed (by the British) in Australia. But there were, as well, we were assured, *peaceful usages*. Nuclear power was clean, efficient, available — a near limitless resource. The waste would be buried in the ground or shot into space. No-one ever said that it could also be turned into bombs; that, in fact, it *was* being turned into bombs. Although we also knew about the manufacture of missiles and the stockpiling of weaponry, nobody spoke about where the fissile material was coming from.

My interest here is in identifying a form of propaganda masquerading as education. I did a school project on atomic energy, which involved the construction of a three dimensional model of a power station in a landscape. I used a wire frame construction, with cardboard tubes for chimneys, and brown paper skins stretched over it and then painted. I wasn't very good at making things but this one came out alright and I was quite proud; I never considered the values that might inhere in the model. It's the uncritical absorption of information that was, in hindsight, heavily weighted with ideology, which interests me now. How had the New Zealand primary school curriculum been infiltrated with this material? Or was it simply the result of a scientific consensus that has since been discredited; or, at least, reconsidered?

No nuclear power station was ever built in New Zealand and, it seems safe to say, none ever will be now. Nor, apart from the research facility at Lucas Heights in Sydney, where I live, has one been built in Australia.

Nevertheless, as of late 2017, when I write, there are about fifty new plants under construction worldwide, most of them in Asia. And over 400 which remain operational. In the United States, the world's largest user, two new power stations are being built and thirty-four are in the process of being decommissioned. You have to hope that is the way of the future; that, in fact, nuclear power will soon become a thing of the past on planet earth.

It seems clear that there is a shift under way, and that kids in school these days are more likely to be taught about renewable sources of energy — the sun, the wind, the tides — than they are about nuclear power. But isn't there an ideological component here too? Is teaching ever ideology-free? Can it be? The underlying premise of all such teaching, never mind which energy source is being recommended, is that humanity progresses by means of the refinement of technological solutions to practical problems. If the soil is poor, learn what it lacks, and add it. If power generation is too costly, in terms of waste products, then find new, cleaner, energy sources. If this planet sinks under the accumulated toxicity of our effluents, go to another one.

IV

Science fiction was another reliable source of propaganda when I was young. Again, it was couched, as my education was, not as ideology but as prophecy. We would mine the moon for metals; we would establish

colonies on Mars. We would build a bridge on Jupiter. These plans are still alive in the minds of men like Elon Musk; and of Brian Cox — a British TV scientist who has been touting mining the asteroid belt as the solution for our energy needs. Gargantuan schemes such as this seem more closely related to the size of their proponents' egos than to any practical reality. But the habit of reading sc-fi did give us a sense of limitless possibility; and in that way may have freed our minds.

Elon Musk, as well as wanting us to go to Mars, promotes battery power as an alternative means (to fossil fuels) of propelling our beloved automobiles. While any decline in the wastes, and their heat, generated by the internal combustion engine, is to be applauded, Musk and his acolytes tend not to mention that batteries, too, require extractive mining; nor that one of the drivers of our current world economy is the race to obtain rare metals, from Africa and elsewhere, including New Guinea, to feed our appetite for devices of all kinds. Cobalt is one of these metals: essential to the rechargeable lithium-ion batteries that currently power everything from smart phones to Teslas.

Closer to home, the dairy farms of my youth in New Zealand, where I often used to go to stay with friends, have now turned into something more like factories. Even in the 1950s, the volume of shit that cows dropped on the concrete during the twice daily milking, and on the paddocks in between, was alarming to me. Now that effluent is a tangible and growing threat to clean water. The rivers I swam in as a kid are mostly polluted, mostly no longer safe; the great aquifer that underlies the Volcanic Plateau is seriously depleted by the irrigation needed to keep the pasture growing so that cows may eat grass and make milk: for what? Most it goes as infant formula to China.

Last time I went back to Ohakune, I was shocked by how diseased the country looked. It was unseasonably warm, there was hardly any snow on the mountain, European wasps and cabbage white butterflies swarmed in plague proportions, willows choked the waterways — while the ubiquitous heedless unthinking consummation of our desires proceeded apace all around; I don't except myself. Edward Clark told me of the depletion of the aquifer. Tangata whenua (person of the land), recently returned from some years in the city, during which, among much else he crewed upon the shoot of *The Lord of the Rings*, Edward was learning the old songs, the old ways, as

a means of protecting the future. For, despite the dreams of Elon Musk, we can't realistically go anywhere else. This is it and when it's gone, so are we. And yet: there are technological solutions to most, if not all, of the problems we face as a species. What is lacking is the will to apply them. Nevertheless, solutions to the messes we are in will most likely be adopted — piecemeal, too late and probably clumsily; but they will be adopted. We are going to have to adapt, for instance, to a warmer planet and hence to higher sea levels; but I think we may manage that too. The more pertinent question is how we are to stop ourselves from keeping on fucking up? What will that take?

V

E O Wilson in his *The Future of Life* (2002) wrote: *Humanity did not descend as angelic beings into this world. Nor are we aliens who colonized Earth. We evolved here, one among many species, across millions of years, and exist as one organic miracle linked to others. The natural environment we treat with such unnecessary ignorance and recklessness was our cradle and nursery, our school, and remains our one and only home. To its special conditions we are intimately adapted in every one of the bodily fibers and biochemical transactions that give us life. That is the essence of environmentalism. It is the guiding principle of those devoted to the health of the planet. But it is not yet a general worldview, evidently not yet compelling enough to distract many people away from the primal diversions of sport, politics, religion, and private wealth ...*

The relative indifference to the environment springs, I believe, from deep within human nature. The human brain evidently evolved to commit itself emotionally only to a small piece of geography, a limited band of kinsmen, and two or three generations into the future. To look neither far ahead nor far afield is elemental in a Darwinian sense. We are innately inclined to ignore any distant possibility not yet requiring examination. It is, people say, just good common sense.

Why do they think in this short-sighted way? The reason is simple: it is a hardwired part of our Palaeolithic heritage. For hundreds of millennia, those who worked for short-term gain within a small circle of relatives and friends lived longer and left more offspring — even when their collective striving caused their chiefdoms and empires to crumble around them. The long view that might have saved their distant descendants required a vision and extended altruism instinctively difficult to marshal. The great dilemma of environmental reasoning stems from this conflict between short-term and long-term values.

That's it, in a nutshell. We can't go back; and we can't go forward so long as our thinking is trapped within a short-term view of things. In that sense,

you could say our entire culture is delusory; focussed upon short-term gains that are, in the long-term, not just disastrous but probably fatal. We now resemble one those bacterial colonies that poison themselves with their own waste. But, unlike bacteria (we think), we have volition. If culture is delusion, then the writerly task is clear: as unacknowledged legislators, it is up to us to help make the changes of mind that will allow a different future to unfold. To change minds. Easy to say; not so easy to do.

How does change occur? At the simplest level — when you read this sentence — change occurs as a particular combination of words takes its place alongside, in support of, perhaps in contradiction to, the many other combinations of words you have stored in your mind. It's change that is incremental, infinitesimal, precarious, possibly unstable and may be without longevity—but change, nevertheless. Anyone who reads this essay, for example, who did not know the etymology of *cobalt*, and now does, has been changed. It isn't a major change and perhaps not a significant one either: but who is to say? A succession of minor changes, seemingly without effect, may, at the tipping point, induce major change. That's how revolutions occur.

Not that change is necessarily good in itself. But if we are to overcome the hard-wiring Wilson speaks of, with its short-term bias, that won't happen via the slow, meditative processes implied in the classic accounts of past evolution. We don't have time. Instead, our own culture — in the widest sense — has to become the means of evolution. In other words, culture replaces nature as the driver of adaptation. This was one of Charles Olson's insights. Here, again, writing has potential as a means of changing minds. Furthermore, it seems to me, through writing, I also change my own mind and it is that change, with its reverberations, which might be given on to the reader.

All this is contestable and I'm happy to contest it and for it to be contested. What I want to emphasise is that, even though things look bad for us right now — Stephen Hawking was in the press this morning saying the earth will be a ball of fire by 2600 — despair remains the enemy of good, sustainable, intelligent public policy. And so, however pessimistic I may feel, in public I will always act optimistically; because that is the only way to entertain a possible future for us. In the same way, whatever setbacks I might have had in my private or my professional life, I will not let myself be overtaken by bitterness: because bitterness, like pessimism, has a way of

fulfilling its own prophecies. It is a surrender to the gobliness. To the kobold within us.

I can go further and say the change we are trying to make, *pace* E O Wilson, is a change in the consciousness of our life and times. I mean we are trying to expand consciousness, as the drug-taking freaks of my generation said we were, and believed we were and perhaps even accomplished elements of that arcane task. There are myriad ways of doing this: mine is through the writing of history, of biography, and the making of shorter prose pieces which are themselves explorations of dreams (hypnogeography), and of the real world (psychogeography), in which we continue, somehow, to live.

These modes of writing, like others, attempt to add things to the world that were not there before; and, in augmenting the richness of what is, they also, albeit in ways that may appear negligible, add to the possibilities of human consciousness. They are, perhaps, analogous to trace metals, like cobalt, without which proper nutrition cannot occur. I could wish my words were synthesized in the guts of bacteria or archaea; on the other hand, recent research shows that, as individuals, we are not discreet but the site of multiple exchanges between mutually supportive organisms who are effectively in partnership with each other and with us: for the purpose of sustaining life. Symbiosis, in ourselves as much as with others, is how the world works. It might be that an understanding of this — the ubiquity of symbiosis, in minds well as bodies — is a global shift that is now underway.

The mistakes of the past, and especially the toxic legacy of our nuclear arsenal, are still with us; and may be for a while yet. Still I hope; and when I hope, I think of *huia*, and especially of a *whakatauki* associated with it: *Huia e, huia tangata kotahi; Toroa e, toroa whakapai tangata*. This depends upon a pun on the word *huia*; it also means a bringing together of the people. While the second, the *toroa*, whose feathers were also used decoratively, may become, as Coleridge intuited (in an unrelated usage), a burden. The proverb can be translated: *Huia, your destiny is to bring everyone together; while yours, Albatross, is to adorn*. What shall we do? Adorn ourselves? Or come together.

The Virgin State

You only see the flower from above. Everything is at a distance here. Even the hare bells. I learn that hare bells are sometimes called blue bells from Shirley, while we imagine things to do to each other's bodies. The night seems particularly hospital-like when we talk about flowers like this. She tells me Louise's symbol is the tortured lilac. She says my torso has the sweet smell of hare bells. I think I'm crying but I'm merely remembering a dream I once had. My lips hurt when I came to. Shirley reminds me that this is the kind of night that is meant for riots. She spits out the hare-seeds. She looks at my hairless chest. Hyena. When you're born in front of a camera, I suppose you never stop hating the flatness of bodies. I tell her about the dream. The shooting range, the smeared fruit.

If you see my daughter, ask her where it hurts. Take her away from the séance. The hospital party. The party on the ashes of my bedsheets. My childhood. My twentieth century of cut-out hearts. Ask her where she wants to go for her birthday. Ask her how much candy she can eat in one hour. Ask her what she thinks about blue bells. You don't have a daughter.

When I entered this quarantine I was still under the illusion that I was alive. That I could eat as much funeral candy as I wanted. That my teeth would rot and then my camera would break against a beautiful body. Was it your body, Louise? Do you own my body too? If you ask me where it hurts, I'll lie to your face. I'll say, in the blue bells. But I'll mean: Your body is beautiful. I'll mean to involve it in smuggling. Your beautiful body and its horrifying aftermath.

I'll mean: turn on the radio. The electric sounds come from our catwalk. The spiders. The wreath of flowers. The crash-and-pony show. The crash-and-burn party on *Hymns to the Night*. I'm learning to cry again from you, Shirley. I'm learning to look hot in front of the camera even when I'm cold. I'm freezing. Don't kiss me when I'm this cold. I miss your kisses but I can keep the pitch. I will tear your skinblue fabric with nails from the underworld. The wonderworld: when I'm standing in it, I have no words for kiss or mouth. I'm in a crossed-out state. Don't kiss my face. Things are bad and getting worse on the road back to the mother tongue. The road is lined with corpses. If you kiss a cat, it becomes a piss-cat; if you miss it will be a kiss-miss. The language that is spoken by day is garbled by Louise, at night, in the dazzling chamber of the quarantine where photographs of the disaster line the wall: poetry makes mouths happen.

Poetry makes night happen in the mouth. My whore mouth, which is full of hare bells. Poisonous. Louise laughs. She has a gross little snake for a heart, and the stained pelt is her butterfly.

I've heard it's hygienic to write elegies for dead children. The blue flower is a good omen. If you see it during an accident, you will survive impact. Translation. You will speak a mother's tongue in order to stay in tact. Shirley tells me she's explaining Louise, her violence, as the most toxic state. I'm in tact when I see my daughter in my toxic dream and she asks me if I'm her dad. No, not in tact. There's a different economics at play. I speak the father tongue to her: I lie. I tell her she's my daughter and I'm her father. *It's me, your father. I'm your father.* Translation: I'm buried in debt. Because of her. I still write poetry. An inflationary economics: This is how I'm her father. But I'm also Louise's father. I smell like rotten lilacs on account of art. Translation. Art is the killer. Toxicity is a function of solubility. I'm still your father.

To walk through these gates, I tell myself, means to walk into someone else's language. Language bioaccumulates, I explain to Shirley. Radium imitates calcium to the point of being incorporated into the human bone. The human bone: If I'm going to pay for it, I'll have to talk to Louise. With spiders crawling all over the orchard. In Louise's spider there is a hole. I put my pinkie in it. It puts its pinkie in me. I finally learn how to speak. I say more, more. I say more, more. I learn to giggle. The giggle of black flora. Louise is angry. This ridiculous song will force her to abandon the quarantine and take her father-violence out into the world. And I live out there. In the toxic world. With my father-body and the halfway marvelous corpse of a butterfly in which art bioaccumulates. The barium-colored thing has begun to flutter again. The funeral has begun to sound out the alarms again. The emergency state, the crash: I've experienced all of these states. The state I have yet to enter is the virgin state. I will cut it. Terrible spring.

The guiding principle of the quarantine is that the road to the mother tongue is lined with corpses, decomposing like fruit in the summer light. Someone has carved a little wooden horse. The artist smuggles it out. The father sells it to me. I'm a foreigner so I need some memories of a childhood. The mother buys a new wig for you, Shirley, to wear when you stand by the large window and you are chilly even though it's spring. Then you're Louise. I can tell from the photograph of the riot. You are crossed out. I'm a crossed-out father and you're further away from the action. You have a slight golden shade, I remember now. You're in my memory. You're ultrapure.

The guiding principle of the quarantine is that it hurts to be ultrapure. The window hurts when one's arm goes through it. My arm goes through it in a work of ultrapure art. My face goes ultrapure: it's the state in which I belong. Virginity: you can only reclaim it through violence. The guiding principle: You have to leave this state. You will no longer need to freeze. In horror, you will realize that you have no further father to incriminate. You will stand by the large window in the wig I have bought for you, Shirley. You will go for acetyline.

I go for contamination. I go for chemistry. The narrator's name is written in cursive in a letter from Louise. Or a man who is under Louise's spell. Louise or the attractive man under her spell tells the narrator to invent her father from the wreckage. It's glassy and brittle, the wreckage. It's a poor electrical conductor. Louise tells the narrator to rewrite the potent chemistry of the prostitutes and their acetylene bodies. They are virgins in the new version. The narrator asks Louise about several factors pertaining to the prostitution angle, including humidity, presence of light and certain catalysts that can facilitate the rate of decomposition. Louise asks her about her own experiences with prostitution. With art. She asks about the spoons that used to cover her body. They glowed like they were made of cold silver, the woman remembers. Louise asks her if she is Louise or Shirley. She doesn't know yet who she is in the room. She puts the silver spoon in her mouth and enacts a crash. She eats vinegar and chalk. She runs through the corridors carrying a locked box of rotting apples. She wants me to be the virgin.

The father who writes your novel: His horse was sweet-poisoned. In the Victorian era his symptoms includes muscle weakness and skin rashes. What remains is to live under his name (Mercury). To walk through the gates he has dedicated like something out of science fiction to his umbilical cord. You always thought the figures around the gate were hyenas but they look intricated with lanceolate leaves which are aromatic when crushed. Mercury-poisoning is a risk. You're protected by the man but you have the attributes of cutting plants. You are accomplished by seeds. You have *schneeflocke* fluttering like serious insects in your sea pink. You have no narrative arc when the gate looks more beautiful: The hyenas have a cool, silvery-blue-green cast on the upper side. The leaves have approximately 7 lobes that are dentate or sinuate, and the leaf base is cordate. The plume poppy has creamy white apetalous flowers. Her innermost name is written in Asiatic hydrangeas rotten in a mound and since her name is written in the mound her masculinity has automatically been transformed to her father's novel.

What am I going to do with my own wreckage when I'm lost in your quarantine, dad? What am I going to do with my own slab of raw meat? How can I log out? I can't. I make an imposing display: coral bells, spiked speedwell, cushion spurge, white snakeroot.

Your name is entirely or largely obliterated by the progress of spring. Because you want me to poison you, hemlock you, you are now Louise. Louise carries fleecyflowers to my hospital room in order to dominate my aura. I have a sage aura. I have a strangle aura. A floral aura. An aura that has to be answered. Louise can only survive sub rosa, needlelike. Louise wants to corrupt in order to make a hidden space for me to crawl into. In the shellpink language. It's a language for stalking. A language reminiscent of Louise, who looks attractive surrounded by the green foliage of earlier flowers. Louise wants the meadow text to penetrate the brilliantly colored flowers with notched corolla lobes. You dream in foliage words, Louise. You dream of a comatose-textured place where I can't be forgiven. That is also a language. Art's cut-language: you want it to speak to you. It wants to come out of you. It's easy. Be the virgin.

It is not enough to study the life of a single star, Shirley. Depending on the mass of the star, its lifetime can range from a few million years to trillions of years. You are Shirley now because you speak like this now. Like a trillion years. Like the stellar changes are happening gradually to your body inside a crypt. I'm in the crypt with you but not for a trillion years. I will be "King Bloom" because the spasms in my right arm lead to inflorescence with consisting of a cyme with four to six flowers. In this crypt Louise has handled your spherical shell while wearing a red wool dress with a lozenge twill pattern. The exocarp is pale, yellowish. The complex wood carvings are done in a "gripping beast" style. Inside the crypt, Louise carries the fruit in a wooden box and the skeletal remains of fourteen horses. I have ridden the fourteen horses and called them toxic. Louise has covered them with exocarp. Louise has lined up sculptures along the wall. That one is you when you have broken glass she tells me. You can't tell me which one I am because I'm not a replicant. The threadlike chain that is unspooling from the crypt has a fatal flaw in it. Fatal for Arachne. Her web has a hole in it. It causes spasms. She can't breathe. She's Shirley and you are a girl with a spoon. What is this thing I want to do with the sun? Translation has to do with death. It happens in the underworld. There is no accounting for holes in the underworld. You are opening my hole up with a silver spoon.

You are lost in your own quarantine.
Every deed has to be accounted for.
Every drug transforms the body.

[*He does the Louise.*]

You store biological information in the quarantine as if it were Casablanca. I keep building tableaux to understand our translations in terms of texture and toxicity levels. I forgot to mention history to you when you wore the glass face. I wore the glass photograph in my mouth. You tried to prod it out of me. You said, History. I said, you've become Shirley's worst nemesis, the interrogator. We were violent with our bruises and our stained shirts. The things Louise has done in Casablanca we must do to each other while carrying each other through the quarantine you revealed to me. You wore a black lamb around your body. *Do the Louise* you said. Everyone inside the crypt listened. *Do the Louise* you said. I deserve to lie on glass. I deserve to be handled like glass you said. In the henbane dream about glass bursting beneath my feet, you make holes in the quarantine. With your fingers. You're trying to enter my glass parts because they are soft. I'm soft. I do the Louise. I do the Louise for you.

(He does the Louise for her.)

Note by Johannes: A collaborative translation. It started when STE “translated” my first book *A New Quarantine Will Take My Place* into Swedish, but in so doing she took enormous license with the text, making it about her life etc. Then I translated it back into English with also a lot of license. Then it became a kind of back and forth ...

Tongo Eisen-Martin

Faceless

A tour guide through your robbery
He also is

Cigarette saying, “look what I did about your silence.”

Ransom water and box spring gold
-This decade is only for accent grooming, I guess

Ransom water and box spring gold
-The corner store must die

War games, I guess

All these tongues rummage junk

The start of mass destruction
Begins and ends
In restaurant bathrooms
That some people use
And other people clean

“you telling me there’s a rag in the sky?”
-waiting for you. yes-

we’ve written a scene
we’ve set a stage

we should have fit in. warehouse jobs are for communists. But now more
corridor and hallway have walked into our lives. Now the whistling is less
playful. The barbed wire is overcrowded too.

My dear, if it is not a city, it is a prison.
If it has a prison, it is a prison. Not a city.

When a courtyard talks on behalf of military issue,
all walks take place outside of the body.
Dear life to your left.
Medieval painting to your right.
None of this makes an impression.
Crop people living in thin air.
You got five minutes
to learn how to see
through this breeze.
When a mask goes sideways,
barbed wire becomes the floor.
Barbed wire becomes the roof.
Forty feet into the sky
becomes out of bounds.
When a mask breaks in half,
mind which way the eyes go.

They've killed the world for the sake of giving everyone the same backstory

We're watching Gary, Indiana fight itself into the sky

Old pennies for wind. For that wind you feel before the hood goes up and
over your headache. Pennies that stick to each other (mocking all
aspirations). Stuck together pennies was the first newspaper I ever read.
Along with the storefront dwelling army that always lets us down.

Where the holy spirit favors the backroom. Souls in a situation that offer
one hundred ways to remain a loser. Souls watching the clock hoping that
eyes don't lie to sad people.

*"what were we talking about again?"
the narrator asked the graveyard
-ten minutes flat-
said the graveyard
-the funeral only took ten minutes-
"never tell anyone that again,"*

the narrator severely replied

“You just going to pin the 90s on me?”

-all thirty years of them-

“Then why should I know the difference between sleep and satire?”

the pyramid of corner stores fell on our heads

-we died right away

that building wants to climb up and jump off another building

-these are downtown decisions

somewhere on this planet, it is august 7th

and we're running down the rust thinking, “one more needs to come with me”

“What
evaporated on
earth, so that we
could be sent back
down?”

A conductor of minds

In a city-wide symphony

Waving souls to sing

He also is

Where Windows Should Be

“How did I miss that brother’s name?”
said the sorriest man in the crowd
with candle light on his face.

Someone who looks just like you
came through earlier
and said he was the devil.
We stopped him before
he could crack his first joke.

“I can’t wait to fall out the sky
on these suckers again,”
he mumbled walking away

“I guess greetings end
when the knife gets dull,”
he also mumbled

every once in a while
blood jumps back into the body
and the cosmos go home
(easy going art)

a woman stops to steady herself,
but her shoulder keeps walking
a man stops to tie his shoes,
but his tongue keeps walking
an infamous child
meets an infamous street
and pulls off an infamous miracle

a gambler came through earlier
looking just like you

we put his head on a paint brush
and got back to work
arguing with each other:

“what do you mean puddles don’t smile?”

“and why can’t jail bars un-bloom?”

“we call them crumbs! You call them crumbs!”

arm in arm
back alleys walk
after becoming people

rights, baby! Even we get rights too!

A man plays the trumpet next door
Then never no more

I whispered once
It didn’t go well
Wine in my cup
They called it a yell

Don’t make a scene
All friendships have dead people in them

“you are the one folding up bottles like paper
and putting them under windshields!”

“it’s only weird
when no one else plays along!”

Candle light on faces
The riot keeps walking

Channels to fall asleep to

While shoe box to shoe box travels my childhood

Professionals roll garbage cans around a conference room

Half the size of a holding tank

Half the hope of a holding tank

Full of third world retail flattery

“nothing wrong with the blind leading the blind,”

we think they just said

porcelain epoch

succeeding for the most part

dying for the most part

married for the most part to its death

when a hostage has a hostage

that is u.s. education

stores detach their heads

and expect you to do the same when you enter

God says, “do not trust me in this room”

Two fascists walk into a bar

One says, “let’s make a baby.”

The other says, “let’s make three ... and let the first one eat the other two.”

your sky or mine

read from

the book of pool room enemies

“I’m the best kind of square. Poor and in love with the 1960s. The first picture I ever saw in my life faded from my storytelling a long time ago.”

Not even ten years old

And most of you are on my shoulders

The store’s detached head smiled

casually be poor
teach yourself
how to get out of this room
and we'll leave you enough blood
to turn off the lights
on your way out

casually be poor ...
they are all cops when you are poor

Clayton Eshleman

Orphic Ontologies

For Matthew Eshleman

Are you, Muse, the spume off Laussel, archaic
dust dimpled & savory that I nourish to steel myself against
the Selfhood that lays claim to all rapture?
Is your fertility still based in the blood-filled bison horn
Laussel grasps in her right hand raised slightly below her head?

Might the egg-shaped relief of a double figure near Laussel
be a Paleolithic premonition of the serpent-encircled Orphic egg?
Greeks believed that at death a man's spinal marrow
emerged from his loins in serpent form.
Since bones are the framework of life,
the semen-like marrow in the skull was for centuries
thought to be the source of semen.
'Thus the singing skull, the oracular skull,
an archosis going back to brain-eating *Australopithecus erectus*.

In every desire a uterus shelved with skulls.

I released the energy from the gateless gate of a rock face.
The wonder of inhabited nothingness bubbled & waned in me,
microscopic doodad.
Then I heard manticores chortling with their triple band-saw mouths —
or was I hearing the love-songs of Max Beckmann?

Ochre dots circulating around a breast-like wall protuberance in Le Combel
bearing in their menstrual, apotropaic sigils the presence of Cro-Magnon
[woman
embedded so deep in collective mind
I can only wonder if planetary peril is not inscribed in image's beginnings.

Is our war on animals a planetary cannibalization to reach non-existence
in a masque performed by hydrogen mountains & sulfur assassins?
'The torn heaven tent draped over our nightmares.

Blake under covers at night. As if an anaconda entered as I tried to sleep
& wept insomnia into every shutter of my piles.

Hades is the king of remembered images.

Orpheus did bring Eurydice back. He couldn't bring her THROUGH.

To keep images in the embrace of each other & maintain the intercourse of
their self-revealing conversations.

Is anything left of the beginning?
How about the soul's dragonfly metastases?
Or the petrified lightning rampant in a bear?
A sloth in a skin-tight body hose of drowned men.

After a vaporized storm, glassy eyes float about, burial mounds
invading the bolted stars.

Rainer Maria Rilke to Lotte Heppner, November 8, 1915: "When a tree
[blossoms,
death as well as life blossoms in it, and the field is full of death, which from
[its reclining
face sends forth a rich experience of life, and the animals move patiently
[from one
to another — and everywhere around us, death is at home, and it watches
[us
out of the cracks of things, and a rusty nail that sticks out of a plank
[somewhere,
does nothing day and night except rejoice over death."

At the core of our Milky Way galaxy:
animal eyes in a blackish, red density of dust clouds, horns in smears of
[light.

As if life on earth is anticipated in this 300 light-years panorama.

Coitus as the earthly version of cosmic superimposition.
Sciomantic penetrations course a vineyard.

At times I see miles of pools, piles of pumas sunning their scorpion sores,
four boars mating in a silken anguish.

Or are we all animals of snow, impelled by that first avalanche of mother
[milk,
haloed by circumpolar whiteness?

James Hillman writes that “Soul is vulnerable and suffers; it is passive and
[remembers,
it is water to the spirit’s fire, like a mermaid who beckons the heroic spirit
[into
the depths of passions to extinguish its certainty. Soul is imagination, a
[cavernous
treasury — to use an image from St. Augustine — a confusion and
[richness, both.”

In sleep’s porphyry mist, Daphne’s lauraceous hues.

A nude asleep in a water-lily harness rotating through my breakfast. Drink
[from
this tambourine.

The portentous, alpine edges in every doorway.

11/15/2015

Carrie Etter

Future Interlude

The blackouts began as occasional, say one a week, but by the third month, we hoped for two hours of energy every other day. Bathing, laundry, baking and television found their places in a cycle, depending on one's priorities, though no one would say priority: the word was need. And so our needs sharpened and steadily redefined us. Yes, the new electricity exaggerated and undermined our humanity, and some thrived on the change, some wept.

Future Interlude (Kassandraic)

Some called the oracle a noose, and when the oracle became fact, the same people pointed at sea and reckoned it desert, gestured toward sky and groaned *water*. Some called the oracle a noose and blasphemed it. Some called the oracle a noose and behaved as though they did not feel the rope scratch their necks. One day we refuse to eat the dog caught in the steel-toothed trap, and another day we droop as we wrench its neck. Some called the oracle a noose and led all who followed over the precipice.

Steven Farmer

Seasidesick

at least david lee roth is back.

dudes named cody runnin the
tablature — runnin it seasidesick.

acted out their bungled caprese
(*psham*) under a buckled dredge, when whoever

wago-wago's the hovel — a chronic sandbar
brandade's still overhead: the unargued sentience.

thick'd the inspiration

parking a manta
the door drain opened him :

: : *doble espesor* — and
stupors extend. dank.

artisanally they are runner-cod
their supply information bound north.

they're thrum in a net haze forty
ft down talk-guardian of the ditch.

colors swath sideways
inevident. render the blistered soviet.

in the honeycut net of it, eighty
ft wide, artisanally fraudulent

small filaments of the rot
make it into the *duende*.

stalls to separate no-dudes' indie, the shelf's
drop-off, its aqua.

if you're in motion and pass under cables. if as you
format the cell you fall in.

the sickness encroaches
it loans the face of

the sickness muscles its face.

ciao. keepin the fear up

for that sweet jam, seasidesick

employment in seasidesick
and recruiting plateaus on one hoof.

still, punishment meted out that had at least bathed to show up.

ranged from a colony thrashing it's said, to
an unsettled document.

to encounter its pugilist verve.

ppl that gush over work.

ppl blinded by white jesus flashlight near both the
elevator and bathroom amenity

when in mandiego
the junipers fled. under
downey sun they burst.

flatlands hinter. the ream they
doubt's bad. get them wet with

the sick. if its sandbar brain
stay off of

and cormorants.

stay off
of debris or spoil pipes.

rusted noise at the crabfest. can even rent chappie out here.

~ *I was seaweed yesterday*
— Lara Darklight

in roysopp the nordic roam to their dark.

port of apocalypto.

it started its pawing the moment apocalypt. and now
(again) the election.

planet of the rise of the apes.

salty, malty and out of its league. its copy, its phenotype.

the portal could open the portal. it could. both scorpionic
and dreathen.

janky.

every day in the glare

every day *es dejando del mundo*

neither the corner of grand nor garnet's yours, soldier. dirty plate trail
pop-disco equating backward to hate for the same in youth. jamie's cryin

the format's a cell: a maybe-device used on ships to study them hart to
hart with sheep next to it came up out of a drain on rough seas

uh huh maybe the
current'll pull'm out — night-crappers

stan lee's headache of god.

don't throw those dewy cub reporter eyes at me

& their nauseating deserto rosso

and the shrimp had been smoked and

feet wet — we're still vultures
of the catastrophe.

no other agents, hand-crafted and endless, substantiating
the dull rasp of the set.

the voice in the bending light. in the head the sea fret became.

the sonic cough in the regrowth of the barge
raking the cloud.

it's stopped everything self-talk had hoped for. its
bearded, repeats itself under the waves.

why then hasn't it moved before, in its giant and gathered breathing

BRAH CON CERVEZA is why.

brah con cerveza artisanal.

bro fam'ly fright'ning microconk, seassidesick is a mess.

beard papa lost its enigma, globed at man-bun
braids in the sweat lodge

accident-raising children as furniture like that bourgeois cooking
utensil store i always forget the name of uh huh

uh huh sometimes to see your brain at alone to
die at length of this spreadsheet

the social capital not to submit

uh huh why epics are slow

— *lunes al sol*

this expression of th gene
is confusing f'real: blusterous, murderous
fukks at the helm: 12 inbred hornets alight.

th image of whiskey @
what a sunset was
gulls the journal, turns in her
cloth fold hair ... whatevs, all the tapes go flat

then @beaks walked in that had governed their understanding
of it — lyndon johnston'd it.

it's its cliff's beat in our own toxic echo, its earnestness
chamber sunning itself in an influx of market disruptors

wanna see more top moments in amazing homes bro wanna see ppl
hauled off to jail for sleepin in thr cars get wrekk'd @STRFKR brah

for mankell, the swedish walk back to their minds
fukkn popo steppin in gullshit fukkn at least the build is hosed

— *Harry O interlude*
for all stolen lives —

it seemed as if they were dreadful. any cause begins the remove. put
a small piece o' cardboard under the table's leg so it don't wobble. so

it don't. further east where the grownups pressed buttons, control'd
the bombs and had beaks here by the sea we all became ruffians setting
aside our grieving vocabulary and its marvel comics refinery hung with
gentility and its quills and the sails on

the bay that aggregate into turbines, the 7 mesas, the clumps

clumps and their data fizz. have they capes left in a cold war
kid is there quiddity capes might bring

is there in some cases dictated in some cases typed
under i think that place is a ross dress for less throwin up sand in
my eyes at bags of it, holes in our swings w/ holes in the breath and the
sun and asphyxiation

there should just be some app that does this
took a death class, always does

dank at a lodestar — bonked, its reckoning hue
still present in seawater bromide baked in the islet's dresden pomp.

its another CHiPs drug deal's remoted sand

it's its island patois to lease rentals out to the bead that runs from
that which runs fraught

on the costal scag where the wren-dogs scot

its phantom'd sugar in eyes that pre-date pre-corporate as the urine
turns dark a deep sepia in the seaside

a familiar wallpaper stock metered in astral pink in astral squat
in astral rotary blue in black out on crowler way onto waterbird
way and there goes the sun in a beacon honeypot singeing the cars again

beach trash & the meth set (a band).

its recognition's impermanence seasons
of fritters friar rot

Alec Finlay

cosmos

(I)

the unknown
is possible
and multiple

(II)

diverse unknown
entities
are possible

and that con-
structs
the multiple

(III)

the possible
is unknown

and yet con-
structed

of so many
entities

(IV)

the possible
the constructs
the entities
the multiple
the unknown

the cosmos

after Donna J. Haraway

the wild city manifesto, 2018

the wild city is only the past repeating * wildness doesn't begin or end at the edge of the city * the wild doesn't shut at 10 pm * wild things have their own sequence • bring back the seasons! * our material existence cannot be sustained without wildness * the wild opens up spaces in the city for new thought * only by mending the city will we repair the weather * we consider the mountains as the nation's lungs but most people do their breathing in cities * the diesel rainbow floating on the puddle is a memorial * a culture so fixated on death has no need of breath * glass can be wild and so can paper, but never plastic * the wild flit of the seasons is a rush of signs * we will never remediate climate breakdown in country landscapes, only in streets and docks * there is no road that leads out of this mess * if only we were *more* hare-brained * every great city plan began with a wee den * each clover flower enlarges the city * shame is a nettle patch, good enough for butterflies if you wait * grubbing round in the weeds is a good place to find new arguments * wild politics: a fluctuating blend of wide-eyed federalism and grass-roots anarchism * nothing makes people more afraid than poverty in a landless city with no place to grow food for your family * allotments represent the right to care for the land not the right to own it * when the wild becomes unthinkable then life becomes impossible * every night the moon sets as certainly behind the tower-block as the mountain * wild lots of willow could make wild lots of heat (biomass) * only wild things are indispensable * the wild city has niches for trees not statues * the next wave of native species are always invasives * foxes eyes • more birds nest in cities than fields and glens * the willows and ferns of the old shipyards show that the human mind contains more than bulkheads and pistons * long periods of unemployment are natural in the wild * the wild is a store of unfamiliar adjectives * the wild is a book of complex patterns * wildness puts a kink in the path * nothing wild appears on the satnav * wild city brings city streets and animal habitats into a new relationship * we have folds of sea and earth within us * for anyone ill the wildest thing they know is happening inside their own body * sugar slaves * secret grafters * wild dogs * crinkly sheds * less mowers, more flowers * the dandelion is a gateway flower • resistance is fertile * the moss is bending the metal • the wild is a confederation of niches, patches, spots, lots & bits * the wild & the cooked: brambles seeded from bramble jam * there's nothing wilder than an era of free public transport * we've ghosted the wild * the purpose of wildness is to be wild * you're so tame, you probably think this city's about you

we are not
ANIMALS
we are
NATURES

wildness
doesn't end
at the tip
of the nettle



there are
few wild wants

there are
many wild needs

sustain-
ability
isn't
sustain-
able

wildness
is what
the city used
to be
and will be
again

Donna Fleischer

insert poetry everywhere anywhere here.

Bar-do teachings say when the dead person walks into the sun, she sees no shadow; when she looks into a mirror she sees no reflection; when she steps out of the stream she has no footprints. In this way she learns that she is dead

P l a i n s I n d i a n s

smudge stick

Sage smoke chant

begin in

place without light to feel

space. Where is head where is toe? crawl

until upright with your spine only support

ignore comfort place your self into your hands

weep, tear off the shirt you wear

for *kaddish* L O S S

of *interconnective* tissue

feel destitution danger utterly alone

without coaching experts, fall off your

shoulder, ego principality, wagon.

Do Not Act. Only Feel to feel only

pain comes first when surface gasp breath from

numbness, shock. It's ok to creak a whimper,

stoke heartburn, shiver. Takes a long time for self-loathing

numb nerve endings to Feel again. Ditch the exquisite hormone

transparent acquisitive authority dome aggression.

Let it take 49 days, why not? Begin to bring into making to see lights of

p o i ë s i s poiësis poiësis poiësis poiësis poiësis p o i ë s i s

A bio-poetics with microbiome inches along the cell wall where&when osmosis occurs; each cell feels from its edges, its margins, that the marginal is radical, feels that its life depends on information passing thru. If a body ignores this, or has the wrong code, suffering, anguish, dis-ease, pain ensue. To break the fear code is to die to it, all light gone.

Scared by your own shadow

guilt is nothing throw it away your
you is nothing throw it off

Utter sound
from the mockingbird
make one step at a time
Rhythm illumination, l-0-v-e begins
In nothing
In dis-order, off-guard
In surprise, bewilderment
dis-informed with feral Involvement in
cartographic Mnemonic nodes where too hot or cold;
For weathervane breath make
chthulucene poetry friends;
Start in Some where to make being
Stretch despite yoga make anti- to make space for
Public community dis-comfort
We need so little to grow human people

How to keep the flame alive
In a bicycle basket or one
in the contextual
crook of your arm
it is a shit world when the body
politic kills all we would love

it's not an as if this this so throw
out metaphor and all the -isms, except
maybe prism, for lights sake let's ignore titles,
awards, commendations experts,
LifesDeaths the only mapapp

C'mon man see, there's so little left
and you have way too much right?
we only need a bit, to share most just let go,
even only a little, let
let what is

A Statement Approaches a Poem

Mother.

To so describe infinitely dynamic complex interdependencies
aka earth, life, woman denies their true and one existence.
The word use signals human psychic, physical behaviors formalized
as eco / cide sexism racism colonialism ageism looksism
How? you may rightly ask. It constitutes earth as female —
that which is secondary revolves round the primary male;
it reifies patriarchy with its twin hierarchy
as conjoined operative principle of the known world.

Poetry doesn't buckle to assumption. It enlivens
all matter points to all beings is free of having to be
special. Jennifer Bartlett asserts *Beauty is a Verb*.
philosopher Judith Butler thinks behavior creates gender.
Adrienne Rich wrote *Of Woman Born* on motherhood
as experience and institution. Adolf Muschg's *radical*
redefines marginal as exquisitely necessary for all life. I write
close by with grub, birch, clinamen swerve, weed,
Javan rhino, et al. Free to be new world is a verb

Evelyn Flores

last night's moon

hãtcha

when

last night's moon

streamed the patio

breathed silver

laid darkness down

it was hard to imagine that the world was ending

when

this morning's waves

crashed the beach

scuttled wispy ghost crabs out of the way

wrapped jutting rocks in ocean smells

it was easy to deny that some day it'd all be gone

never! never! never!

in the middle of sunset's lightshow

brilliant red, orange, yellows

streaking bronze notes of gold

across the strings of sky

it was impossible to believe the nonsense that these could be

[the last

no! no! no!

some days I write like that though —

pretending scandalous beauty's face

is this immortal body living in time's

green jungles

eternally

it's easy enough to pretend

"here everything grows just like that

rooting back down again into earth

turning yesterday's kubocha sauce
into sassy, furry -leafed vines
noon's salsa
tossed under a bush shoots up tall, gangly plants"

nature 's willfulness
will triumph
will outlast our crass evil
will return to itself with a generous vengeance

Fu'una¹ will prevail.

but then again 5000 marines are on their way

PDN CNN and HLN blare out the news —
the luscious dying of the coral jungle
the whales swimming endangered around us
islands swept off the map weeping sea levels rising
a ravaged philippine coast reeling in the demon winds —

“typhoon alley's moved”
“moved?”

six to eight hard-core typhoons hit
while the turkey was roasting
the pumpkin pie baking the red rice steaming,
that's when the radio announcer would blare
“we interrupt this broadcast!” “typhoon condition 3-2-1”
“batten down the house!”
“nail up the shutters!”
“secure the yard debris!”
“take in the lawn furniture!”
“barbecue everything in the freezer!”
“the power's going out!”

“kmart's got a run on garbage cans
converted into water-holding tanks”
“catch the rain in pots, buckets, basins”

until the city water returned

until the raging winds had passed

now not a serious typhoon since 2002
we who blew through six to eight a year

live nervously
in this eerie calm

huge and unseen
something has moved
we are no longer where we once used to be
we have no compass to secure us

now we are the birthing place of monsters
who gather awful speed power size traveling the final 1500 miles of
[the pacific
to slam into the philippines gut japan flood taiwan
200-mile-per-hour winds howling destruction

there
beyond the radar of our viewing
something has changed
silently
determinedly
menacingly

is the earth's rage building

there is no choice.

to write as if paradise were not endangered
given the moon the ocean the sunset

to pretend that beauty will prevail
that the thousands-of-years-old rhythm of the islands will continue
undisturbed

we cannot any longer
write like that

and so
we go at it

differently
stutteringly
determinedly

to turn the tide

fātfaʔ

my dreams are filled with a beach

Sunday Post October 2, 2016³

“Guahān

*approximately 1,200 miles from the edge of the Coral Triangle
the world’s most diverse coral reef region*

miles and miles of driving across white stretches of sand
and blue sprawling out into a line of cobalt

*our relative proximity means our reefs teem with life,
with more than 1000 species of reef fish
and almost 400 species of reef-building corals
our ancestors dreamed of such a beach*

*As such our roughly 42 square miles of nearshore reefs are a vital
social, cultural, biological and economic resource
their birthing place*

*coral bleaching
caused by warming waters due to
climate change*

where the world began

*combined with other stressors such as
pollution
sedimentation
coastal development
algal blooms*

they built giant canoes that skimmed the ocean

it is

unclear

whether

*many of the island's reefs can remain viable in coming decades
without major and sustained interventions*

and returned to their birthplace thousands of years ago

coral polyps

the tiny animals that fuse together to form coral colonies

they voyaged seeking where Pontan died into new worlds

which in turn create the massive living structures we know as coral reefs

that contain tiny algae (marine plants)

called zooxanthellae

and Fu'una stands guard her body stretching up into the sky

these photosynthetic algae, sometimes affectionately referred to as "zoox"

supply corals with food, oxygen and the pigments

do not be deceived

where the line of rock ends is only the beginning

that decorate reefs

in varied shades of pink, mauve, and green

the lightning rod connecting to her brother's body

when corals are subjected to periods of

increased water temperatures and intense sunlight,

they respond to these stressors by ejecting their zoox

my daughters will remember such a beach

thus losing the vital food source

and their vibrant colors

they will dream about it in hyperbolic time

although not dead they turn bright white ghosts of their healthy state

their feet will feel the grains of sand

*these “bleached” corals can recover
if the stress dissipates
 nerve endings rooted upward to their soul
but they are weakened hungry and vulnerable
 to other threats such as pollution and disease
it will be what they will dream about*

*Maldives
Kiribati
remote Hawaiian Islands*

*other tropical coastal areas have drawn global attention
to the devastating effects of climate change on coral reef ecosystems.*

when they are searching for a place to stand

it is estimated that by 2030 60% of the world’s coral reefs will be gone.”

So write —

once upon a time there was a beach pristine white grains of sand clear out
[to the reef
where the ocean shelf dropped into the silent deep blue.

NOTES

1. *Fu’una and Pontan are the sister-brother deities who created the world in Guåhan’s creation story. Pontan died/transformed into earth, sun, moon, rainbow. Fu’una became the sky, the air we breathe, and from her came the first peoples.*

2. *Håtcha and Fåtfat are the first two numbers in the ancient counting system of the Chamorro people. They symbolize not a returning but a recalling of the pristine beauty from which the world (Guåhan) came as an anchor for our resistance to its further destruction.*

3. *Whitney Hoot, “A Guam without Coral Reefs,” postguam.com. Whitney is a NOAA National Coral Reef Management Fellow and the coordinator of the Guam Coral Reef Response Team.*

Diane Gage

American Haiku

we do to the earth
what we do to each other
is there any hope?

the sun: glaring heat
this thin air: lacking moisture
this winter: stillborn

guns plus racism
this country's sad equation
and relentless curse

today the air smells
like the inside of Target
big box full of junk

Outlier Outcry

At the high barred metal gates
of Fluff 'n' Fold City, we scrape
our tin cups shouting about poisons
in the air, poisons in the soil,
water fracked past hope of drinking,
radiation worming its way through
streams of water and air and blood,
oozing through skin and cell walls —
and the heat, the smoke, my God!
the refugees! floods! storms! droughts!

But the City denizens go about
their la-la business, ears packed
with polyfibers, eyes dazzled
by swarming pixels, brains
crammed with hairdos & shopping,
pills & polls & gas & holes & all
the latest nonsense fit for stuffing
the credulous full of nothing at all —
phantasms, chimeras, dreck.

Come, my lemmings. Look! The sea!

Hyper

We're scraping the sky
in our rush & fuss
to usher in dominion

To dominate a transformed
planet, a man plan
teeming with minions

Teaming with chutzpah
crawling with cruelty
brawling our way somewhere

Where? What if we wear
this place out? Flush
our species selves off

The curve of the earth?
What will birth itself
from the remains

Our vain ambitions entail?
Is hypergrowth the new
word for cancer?

Give me an answer.

Pump

Pump out the water layer and the crust of earth
on top of it drops. Meanwhile, all those almonds,
pomegranates, pistachios and tangerines it went
to keep alive are long since consumed, digested,
eliminated from eaters' bodies. Salts concentrate.
Dust blows. Those who profited live their golden
lives and fund endowments. Those who labored
continue laboring until they drop, too. Is there a scale
where comfort dwells? A single pomegranate blossom
one sunny, mild hour? A millennium behind or ahead
where it's all something else entirely here? Where to
stand, in California? Whatever its name. Whoever
you are. I crack open another pistachio, complicit,
as my heart burns and burns and burns.

Epilogue — Or, A Story for After

I want to tell you a story about how we survived the end of the world. Crouched around a dying fire, I illustrate with shadow puppets the old, beat-up van, the velocity of water and sky, the unnamable odds against us. What really sells it? The way the ending goes on forever, moon ebbing closer to the mysterious dark, its craggy face calling out, the skies scattered with falling stars. The way objects are nearer than they appear. You next to me, and I remind you — here is where we used to be, here is where we are. I draw a line in the dirt with a fork and draw a picture — a house made of a square and a triangle, a single daisy in the yard, and two smiling stick figures. This is what we dreamed of, the day we awaited has arrived. There are no more shotguns or dusty trails lined with diseased corpses. A ship arrives on top of a mountain, heralded by doves; an airplane lands on another planet, seatmates dazed by the lack of gravity. We might teach the dragons to dance, learn the alchemy of soil again, rebuild libraries with tales of fantastic voyage. All I need right now is you, the simple weight of your hand, the warmth of your breath, and this last cup of coffee to tell me — we are miraculous.

The Last Love Poem

I am obsolete as my ancestors, the Appalachian glass blowers,
provoking fire over and over to produce their artifacts.

I knew no writing could survive when we started calling children “vectors,”
when our own forests grew heavy with toxic spores.

A map? A list? A series of images? What could I write now
that would do anything? A poem orphaned, a crystalline ornament

with no Christmas in sight, swirled with delicate color, resting
gently on a ledge until the inevitable smash ...

So here in my last moments, let me set down my memories of you:
your rough skin, your green eyes, your slightly clumsy hands.

We turned and smiled at each other on the ugly concrete glinting with
[broken glass
as someone yelled obscenities and someone else handed out pizza slices to
[strangers.

When we ran out of flour, we learned to bake cookies out of nuts, seeds,
[flowers.

We decided, against all odds, to plant dahlias.

Do you see this as a rebellion? That after all this, the poet clings, stubborn,
to romance, to the idea that somehow a small connection,

a tiny universe of fire and friction, might be preserved?

At The End Of Time (Wish You Were Here)

I tried to call you one night but you were in Thailand.

I was listening to Tool's "Opiate" and reading about the particulate levels in China and the meteor that had narrowly missed us yesterday and realized I'd missed the recent eclipse and also missed you.

I realized 40 years of learning were leaking through the lesions in my brain, names and faces and memories of us and I wanted to reassure you that I would still remember you but then maybe I won't — like the
[radioactive
water leaking from Fukushima burning the algae and sea lions —

nature takes what it wants from us. And what have we learned that will do us any good, standing here on the brink of fire and flame, of disaster, of zombie movie dystopia and plague and final girls: what will we hold onto? At the end all we have is ourselves

and sometimes not even that. We must be our own saviors. We must wield the axe against the assassin that is death and time, that is endings and goodbyes, chop down the difficulties and the disappointments until the wall is gone, until we are back

in the sunlit yards of our childhoods, when we could still cry without irony and sweet things still tasted sweet and my limbs didn't end in numbness, remember that? If we can still remember, then somewhere things must be better than here. Wish you were here.

But It Was an Accident

Yes, I was the one who left out the open petri dishes of polio
and plague next to the plate of pasta.

I leaked the nuclear codes, the ones on giant floppy disks from 1982.
I fell asleep at the button. I ordered tacos and turned out the lights.
How was I to know that someone was waiting for the right time?

I thought the radio was saying “Alien attack”
and headed for the fallout shelter, failing to feed the dogs.

I followed evacuation plans. I just followed orders.
I was the pilot of the bomber, I was the submarine captain,
I steered into the iceberg. I held the scalpel but I was shaking.
I was the one in charge. I was on the red phone saying “Do it” decisively.

I always imagined writing propaganda; how could I possibly see
what was coming when they dropped the fliers,
when the angry mobs began choking people in the street?
I was always good at creating a panic.

I never saw the Ferris wheel start its fatal roll.
I looked away just as the plane plummeted,
as the building burned. I shook my head at disaster, afraid to meet.

It was just an accident. It was fate. It was never my hand on the wheel.
When you point fingers, point them towards the empty sky.

Introduction to California Poetics

In a place of perpetual climate control
you cannot get too angry at the world
you cannot get too angry at ranunculus
who throw their wide unfragrant faces to the light
you cannot be angry with the hummingbirds
who winter here, confusing feeders with fuschias,
or the girls who wear hot pants with shearling boots
in January. You cannot be angry, even with
the water crisis, with all the swimming pools
and sprinklers, with the careless swerving
of giant cars from lane to lane. You will eat
your avocado or asparagus, your citrus straight
from the tree, you will see the goats and grapevines,
you cannot be angry, with all this blue sky, dimmed
hardly at all by the brown layer of smog,
with the hard sunlight glinting off the cold ocean,
the unwelcoming skin of the date palm,
the oleander continuing to bloom along highways.
You will not wear a sweater and huddle by a notebook.
You will ski, or swim, you will hike by giant eucalyptus trees,
you will startle egrets and pelicans in a salt marsh,
you will forget you ever wrote books at all,
you will no longer regret, you will throw away your sweaters
and burn down your library, you will go mad
tearing at the easy beauty, the soft golden sheen of skin,
you will break the earth itself, turning to dust, unremembered.

Post-Apocalypse Postcard (With Anthropologie Catalog)

I've always wanted to be one of those girls in an Anthropologie catalog, the kind with their lank hair crowned casually with \$300 faux-metal tiaras and tipping up their \$1,000 hand-crafted tree toppers.

And now here, this desert landscape lends itself to exactly that — emaciated and pale under tents, we stand and wait for the sun with expressions hinting of some future pleasure. Our hammock is festooned with festive scarves, and seashells serve ice from our last buckets. One more willow branch to mark the day; these strappy leather sandals perfect for sand-charred paths, and someone is lounging against an antique cello casually, as if about to play music.

We don't worry about the ruined maps, the coffee cups staining the fabrics we've acquired so painstakingly, now. We don't plan for anything.

We're looking picturesque, holding a woven bamboo suitcase as the future dissipates like a \$40 fig fragrance diffuser, the children concentrating on braiding bracelets, all of our jaunty sunglasses stacked against the glare of the coming ...

The Future of the Past

*“The earth under our feet — We are not asked
to begin nowhere.”*

—George Oppen

In one of the beginnings, below the fluff and leaf-encrusted surface of a wide, shallow body of water, microscopic spores swirl with bat-winged algae. A cloudy soup of exertions and excretions, the sea drizzles its grit into rich mud.

Trilobites are dying off. (Miles Davis could have been quoting nature when he said, “I listen to what I can leave out.”) Brachiopods, mollusks, and corals cluster in wide, shallow seas riven by sharks. Thick fish with lungs and lobes are giving way to a new species, the lung reconfigured as a swim bladder. Like surreal, underwater candelabra, crinoids effloresce; on long branching stems they stretch up toward the waves, each arm filtering small animals and plants into the calyx where a mouth is hidden.

To escape fish, aquatic insects begin leaping from the water. In some, the gill plates take on the quality of wings. (Donde una puerta cierra, otra se abre, Cervantes writes: where one door closes, another opens). The Carboniferous gives rise to six-winged insects. They need compound eyes for navigation. Many would look ordinary to us. Others are giants. There are huge mayflies and predatory dragonflies with thirty-inch wingspans. They hover over bouquet-size spiders and a sort of millipede that grows five feet long.

Because there are no flowers, the insects are plant suckers and spore-feeders; they eat seeds still unprotected by fruit and they eat each other. They live in burrow holes and on the forest floor and they colonize tree crowns. They jump, crawl, and soar into and out of the canopy.

Below, in the umbratile interval between one step and another, a tetrapod resembling a large newt freezes and blinks into the sound of the world, the chirp and whirr of insects and the high frequency mutter of its own species. Fronds brush fronds in a light breeze. (And what, eons later, does the

Kreutzer Sonata, which Tolstoy calls dangerous for its capacity to arouse erotic feelings, what does that music have over this sound?) The animal blinks again, its hydraulic limbs holding it well above smudged tracks that mark where others of its kind mated, their mouths popping, cheek muscles bulging. Five tumescent digits on each foot channel ground vibrations into neural impulses. It takes stock and goes on. ("I am still alive then. That may come in useful," Beckett's Molloy quips).

The air is rich with the smell of chlorophyll; oxygen levels are spiked. There are no flowers, no pollens, no vivid plant colors. There are no grasses, but vegetation is beginning to climb slopes, reducing run-off and erosion. The first mosses have appeared.

Conifers and tree ferns fifty feet high tower over swamps of horsetails. Because temperature and humidity hold steady, the trees rise so quickly they lack clear growth rings. Ferns luxuriate across wetlands: Dragonfly Seed ferns, rhizomatic ferns, ferns spoked like the dorsal fin of a swordfish, each loosing into the air millions of spores coated with oil and chlorophyll. Every plant on earth releasing oxygen, but taking carbon with it to its grave.

In the Carboniferous, the graves are considerable. At the end of their life cycles, plants topple into the water and mud and loam. They accumulate so quickly, they don't have time to decay. Branches, seeds, leaves and debris fall into pools already thick with aquatic plants and algal blooms. The buried mass goes brown and peaty under an ever-increasing load.

Beneath hundreds of thousands of meters of overlying rot, the peat beds contract like a frog's iris into thin, horizontal lines. Water, oxygen, and hydrogen are pressed out. The organics harden into lignite. While the swampy basin continues to subside, intensifying pressure and heat metamorphose the lignite into soft coal. (*What darkness can you add to this darkness, what candor?* Ezra Pound might ask.) Spheroidal masses of minerals like calcite and fool's gold bind and clot in the seams.

(The Romans pass along a word, *conticinium*, for the nighttime hour when the world goes quiet. The Carboniferous collapses into a night that goes quiet for 300 million years. When we pick up a piece of coal, it is a fossil residue of photosynthesis, a condensation of Paleozoic sunlight that we hold in our hands.)

As soon as humans enter the picture, the story speeds up. Four thousand years ago, the Welch ignite funeral pyres with coal. In 1673, two Frenchmen document coal beds in Illinois. But not until the 19th century industrial revolution is coal assiduously mined. Shafts are drilled into coal seams; rooms, pillared with timber, are excavated. In dusty lamplight, miners break down the coal-face with a hand auger, a pickaxe, and blasting powder. In every cubic meter of air they breathe, four to eight billion dust particles circulate. Once a day, the fire boss comes through with a safety light and checks for gas.

From before the Civil War to the mid-20th century, men separate coal from shale and rock binder, and they shovel the coal into loading cars by hand. Billions of tons are heaved and cleared from mines by human muscle. Chinese workers arrive in the U.S. and help lay rails for coal-fired locomotives. Jimmy Rogers records “The Singing Brake Man”.

At full throttle, technologies advance: undercutting machines, roof bolting, ventilation, mechanized loading, conveyor systems, strip mining, and then, about three decades ago, mountain top removal mining. In West Virginia alone, more than 350,000 acres of forested mountains are lopped off and 1200 miles of streams are buried. The overburden or leftover rock fills adjacent valleys. One of the byproducts of excavation is slurry, a pool of chemical waste and toxic metals. Post-excavation byproducts like ash and poisonous gases are released by the burning of coal in power plants.

Because most coal contains pyrite, ferrous sulfide, combustion releases sulfur gas. Sulfur dioxide, nitrous oxide, and mercury, all toxic, plume into the air. And so, of course, does carbon dioxide. Isotopic fingerprinting of carbon in the atmosphere links it directly to the burning of fossil fuels. Coal is the dirtiest fossil fuel, producing twice as much carbon dioxide as natural gas. CO₂ in the air, its density increasing 200 times faster than ever before, captures reflected heat and holds it to the face of the planet like a pillow. Meanwhile, some of the sulfur dioxide precipitates out of the skies as acid rain; the mercury finds its way to the ocean.

By the end of the 21st century, a mere three hundred years after coal was first intensively mined, a vast amount of the carbon that accumulated underground for over three hundred million years will have been released into the atmosphere. The relation between those two sets of numbers, three hundred and three hundred million, represents six orders of magnitude.

In the United States, power consumption from coal will probably rise 1.9 percent per year through 2030, faster than energy consumption from petroleum and natural gas combined. There are over 400 coal-fired plants in the United States and at least 114 more plants under construction. In China, coal is powering unprecedented industrialization. Some scientists estimate that coal will provide half the world's energy by the year 2100. A hundred years after that, most of the exploitable reserves of coal in the earth will be exhausted.

* * *

It may be that in the future, with clean coal technologies like “coal-gassification” or “geo-sequestration,” we will strip carbon dioxide from chimney flues, compress it, and bury it safely under the ocean or in depleted gas wells.

It may be that these buried liquefied noxious gases won't leak into our water supply or rise back to the surface.

The Environmental Protection Agency is currently directed by someone who thinks we need less environmental protection.

We may grow accustomed to grocery store warnings that mercury content in fish, etc., can cause brain damage in children and fetuses.

Perhaps complex forests lost to clear cutting and mountaintop removal mining, instead of remaining barren, can be replanted with a few monocot species.

Before we take action, we may need to conduct more studies on children who live in areas contaminated by mining or heavy air pollution and who tend toward higher rates of infectious disease, immune system disorders, and lower than expected intelligence scores.

The rise of sea levels may not necessarily have catastrophic effects on wealthier countries.

Who notices that one species of frog disappears permanently from the planet every day?

* * *

A poem, even excavated from its context and the time of its writing, is a curiously renewable form of energy. It's hard to be sure whether it is from the future or the past that the poet Henry Vaughan writes: "They are all gone into the world of light / And I alone sit ling'ring here."

Renée Gauthier

Arrive

Arrive as you are, in this time and space. In your body, with your breath. In this moment.

Simply breathe, feel and be.

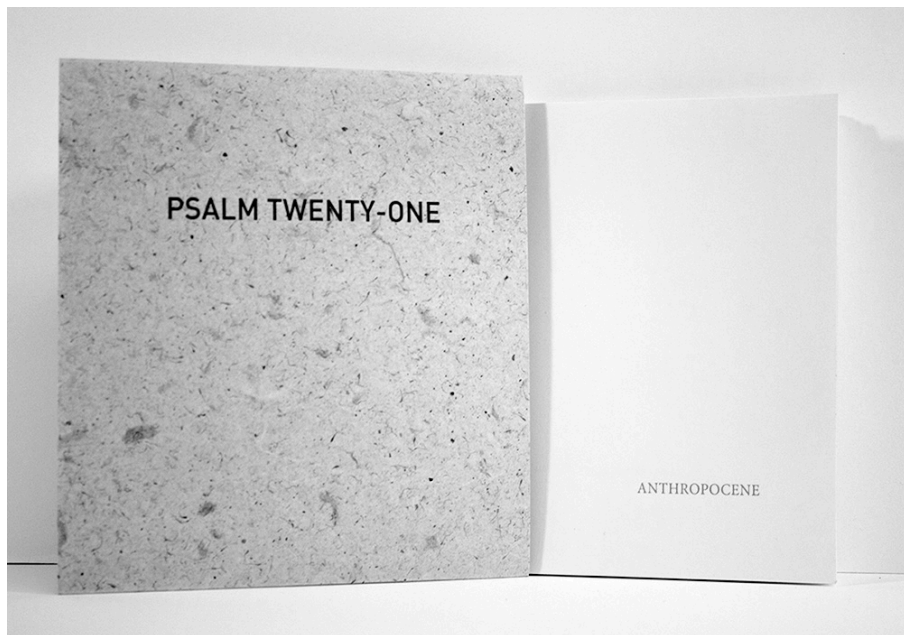
Notice your body pulsating with aliveness.

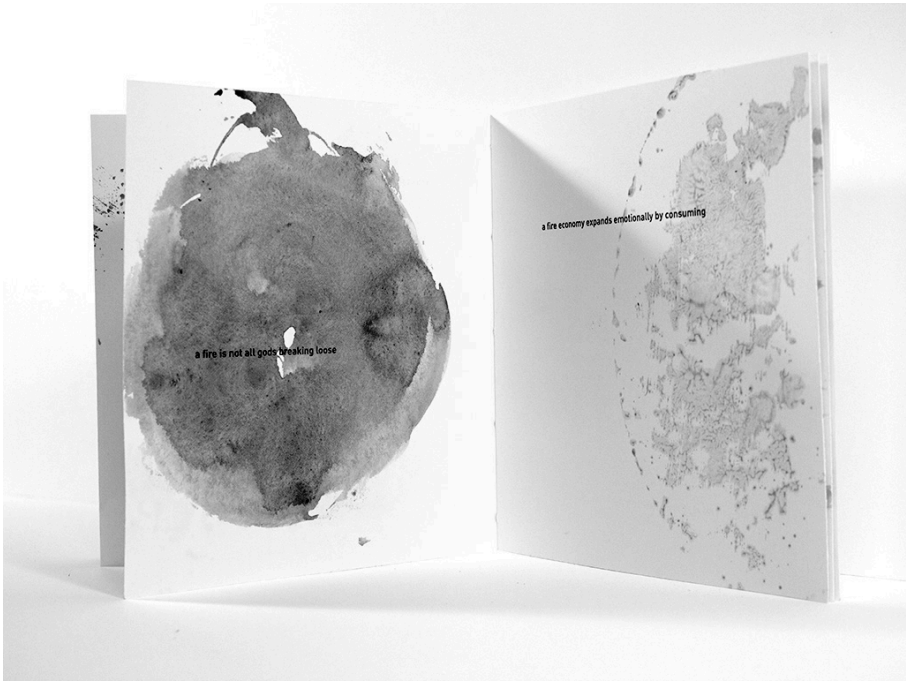
One breath flowing into the next, continuous movement of energy.

Breathe, feel and be.

Crane Giamo

from *Psalm Twenty-One: Anthropocene*





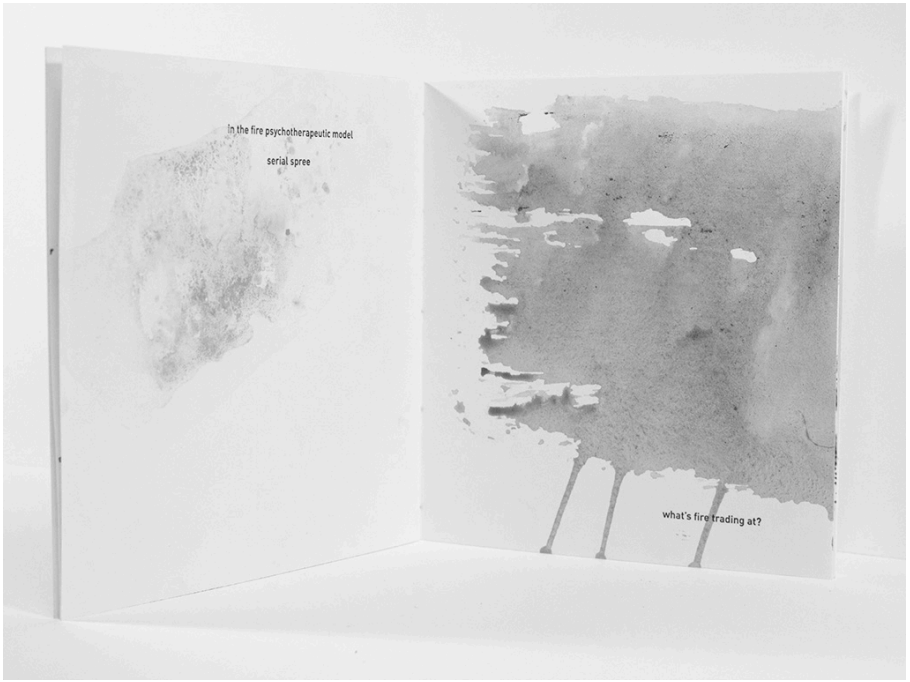
LEFT: a fire is not all gods breaking loose

RIGHT: a fire economy expands emotionally by consuming

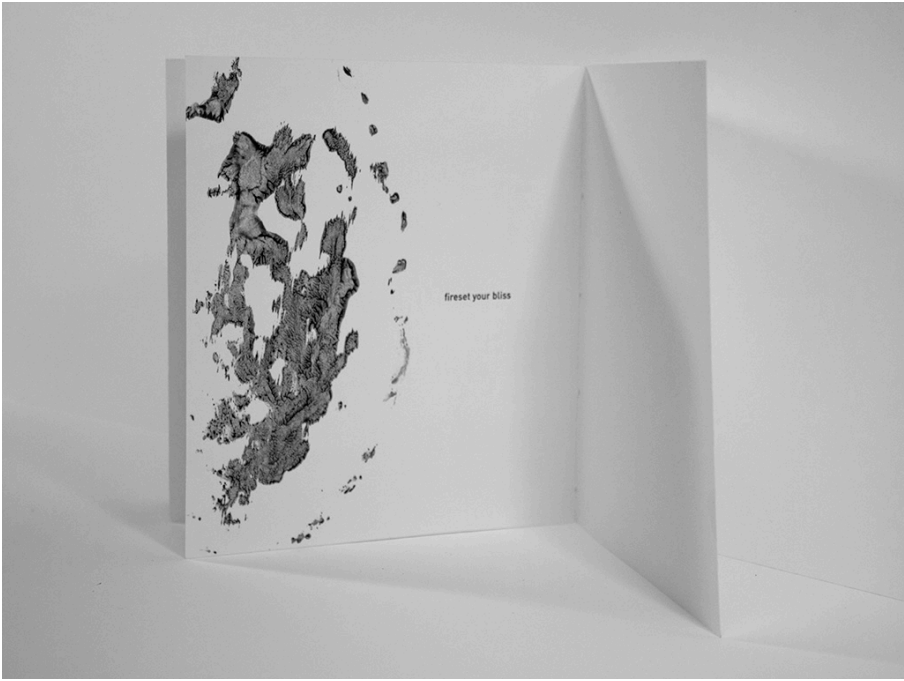


LEFT: downriver came a raft towed by fire

RIGHT: extending human labor beyond natural daylight hours



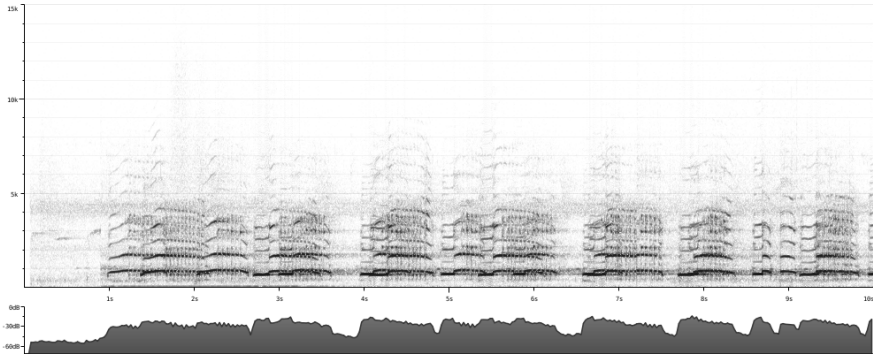
LEFT: in the fire psychotherapeutic model / serial spree
RIGHT: what's fire trading at?



LEFT: fireset your bliss

The images that appear in *Psalm 21: Anthropocene* are printed off different ice surfaces: icicles on a roof, blocks of ice from plastic buckets, frozen water in a bird bath, ice on the sidewalk, ice in ice-trays. Text printed from photopolymer plates on a Vandercook #4 letterpress. The book is handbound, 16 pages, and when opened measures 6.75" (h) X 14"(w). The slip-sleeve housing this book is built from handmade paper and uses milkweed, raw cotton, abaca and cattail fibers. Edition of 25. Year 2014.

Giant Ibis



A sonogram of “calls from three birds just before they leave roost”, recorded by Patrik Åberg at 6:00am, 26 December 2012, in Prey Veng, Preah Vihear, Cambodia. The recording is 1 minute 16 seconds in length. According to Bec Crewe, “The Ten Most Endangered and Distinctive Birds in the World” (*Scientific American*, 14 April 2014), the Giant Ibis is the most endangered of all birds.

Alex Gildzen

Last Poem

my neighbor tells me
termites will be here
after we're all gone

so I write this on wood

they can't read
but still can feast
on my words

Samantha Giles

from *origin*

You start off by wanting shove your molecules into the other's molecules.

You want to consider the overlap.

You want to make a link between your origin and the other's.

An enmeshment caused by shoving.

You don't fully understand the physics of this.

You start off by wanting to shove your molecules into the molecules of a distant archipelago.

You don't fully understand the why of why you want this.

You're not entirely sure that you know the difference between yours and the other's molecules.

You're not entirely sure which molecules you would pick for the shoving.

Because there are the molecules that you can't ever seem to get rid of.

And there are the molecules that want to disperse.

There are the theories of every seven years all new molecules.

There are the theories of yours and not yours.

There are where you came from and where you're going.

Even though it seems impossible, what you most want to shove your molecules into is a group of beings connected to an archipelago you've never been to.

Even though it seems impossible, what you most want to shove your molecules into is something gone but also not quite gone.

You're not entirely sure about the complex relationship of these molecules to your molecules.

You still want to shove.

You still want to shove into the complex relationship of your molecules in relationship to other molecules.

You still want to shove into the complex relationship of yours and not yours.

You want to shove into the needs of the other.

You want to shove into your need to do this.

You might want to do this as a way to locate your need.

Because your molecules feel this urge you can't explain

Your molecules feel this urge you can't explain to collect around other living organisms.

Your molecules feel this urge to collect around those of the tiny fishes who dart in and out.

Those tiny tiny fishes that dart out of their barnacle and the barnacle of others.

You collect your molecules around these fishes because it seems necessary and impossible.

You collect your molecules around the stealthiness of this fish.

And also the fleshy underside of its weaknesses.

And also the exchange that happens through intimacies of the microscopic.

You want to do this because you don't know what else to do.

You can't stop thinking about the ways molecules get into things.

About the ways of getting into the other's molecules.

You want to do this because you cannot see into and out of preservation like you used to.

You can't stop thinking about the weaknesses of the fleshy undersides.

You can't stop thinking about the dependence of one being on another.

You can't stop worrying about vulnerability.

You can't stop wondering about how much vulnerability might be necessary to dart into the other's molecules.

And far away on that archipelago is that tiny tiny fish commonly observed in the cool waters of the islands.

That tiny tiny fish, with its furtive darting, swimming in that archipelago you've never been to.

You mean to say that it used to be.

You mean to say that its head would just poke out of the mouth of the hole.

You mean to say that it would wait and wait and then take only what it would need very very quickly.

That it moved with such panicked agility and still only got what floated by.

You mean to say that your molecules understand this tendency.

You mean to say that part of what you want to shove your molecules into is this tendency towards dependent survival.

You mean to say that you feel like you want to take on a symbiotic relationship with panicked agility.

You try to think that you could tell the tiny fish anything but immediately feel guilty for this tendency towards vulnerability.

You try to think it would matter to the tiny fish what you had to say.

As if talking would halt the production of something.

As if what you had to say would alter the ways in which you maintain a relationship with panicked agility.

You want for your molecules to tell the molecules of the tiny fish about the samenesses and the differences between you.

You try to pretend like you could articulate this argument.

You want to say to the fish that texture of a barnacle can sometimes be replicated in shag carpeting.

You want to do this and know immediately that they aren't really the same at all.

You want to do this and feel so bad for wanting it.

Still, what are the ways that a barnacle is like a bunk bed you wonder.

And you feel jealous of all the switching back and forth the tiny fish was able to accomplish.

Still, what are the ways in which you can relate to keeping the length of your body hidden.

Still, what are the ways in which something just pokes out of the hole. You want the tiny fish to understand this wanting you are feeling and yet you know that despite the careful searches of divers, this tiny fish appears to have disappeared.

You want to apologize to this fish for not having noticed.

You want to apologize to the tiny fish, to the colonies of tiny fish that can't be found despite the careful searches, but you don't know what to say.

Maybe you want to say that while it was slowly disappearing you weren't paying any attention.

Maybe while it was slowly disappearing you were trying to figure out how to get up from the floor covered in shag carpeting.

Maybe you want to say that you didn't know how to look outside the confines of your own archipelago.

This is all wrong you think, and still, you keep wanting it.

As if it would bring the fishes back in the sights of the divers searching carefully.

You want to reach some kind of mutual understanding with this fish, even though it's impossible.

Along with this impossibility are those others that swim along coasts and seek the rocky edges.

You might want to reach some kind of mutual understanding with these ones that seek the rocky edges.

You feel some kind of hesitancy in just calling the name: *fur seal*.

You feel some kind of hesitancy in marking this equation on the rock.

You can't tell if it's too general or too intimate.

You can't tell if you're adding intimacies to intimacies.

You have difficulty assessing this most of the time.

You think to say the words *fur seal* will steal something from the actual animals, dwindling in numbers on the archipelago far away.

You realize immediately that this is your own problem.

But still you think about hiding from the sun under ledges and between large boulders.

But still you think about being taught to hide from things.

But still you think about being between.

You start to consider the guard hairs.

You start to collect your molecules around them.

And then you might start to think about pelts.

About the fine fur that makes you so attractive to hunters.

You start to think about the optimism that is ingrained in thinking about rocky ledges.

You might want to think about slowly coming back only to be attacked by feral dogs.

You might feel the urge to tell the fur seals that while their numbers were dwindling you were doing something else.

You might want to remember the extreme weather patterns of 1982-3, when the fur seals were dwindling.

You might want to tell them why you didn't notice.

You might want to tell them that you were laying across a doorway impeding entrance and exits.

You might want to say that you had to lay across the doorway as kind of a way to stop something.

You might want to say that it didn't help but immediately you want to apologize to the fur seals for mixing your molecules up with their dwindling numbers.

And so, you might want to remind yourself about the different kinds of shoving.

You might want to do this as a way to understand the needs of displacement.

You might want to do this to abate the sense of loss you feel all the time.

You think you might want to shove your molecules into the other's molecules to understand these vulnerabilities.

To gauge what it means to enter.

To calibrate the thrust.

You think it might help you understand entrances and exits, but you're not sure.

You think it might help to relieve some of the pressure.

You think it might give you a sense of what to do with this enormous sense of loss.

You think it might help to mitigate the destruction you feel in your molecules already, but you're not sure.

You don't think you've already shoved your molecules into these, these beings from another archipelago, but you're not sure.

Your uncertainty has something to do with the enormous sense of loss you feel all the time.

Your uncertainty has something to do with how wrong this feels.

Your uncertainty has something to do with how you know that your origin holds the molecules of other threats.

Your uncertainty is ingrained though, inextricable from your origin, which only adds to your uncertainty about this.

About what are you absolutely certain you wonder.

What is it that could make any difference from being certain.

You wonder about what would make any difference to the large reptiles that weren't discovered until they were almost gone.

About what can you extrapolate from the pinkness of their flesh.

But you feel an affinity with their ability to avoid detection.

That you feel a connection to their series of very rapid ups and downs of the head.

That this feeling of connection makes you feel an enormous sense of loss.

But you want to shove your molecules into their molecules anyway.

You want to shove your molecules into the other's molecules and to stay there awhile.

You want to stay there to maybe make sense of the need.

The apparatus of the need, yes, but of something else too.

Maybe you think that there is something hopeful in this shoving.

Maybe you think that this force of movement will help still something else in movement.

Maybe it is because you want to thwart a kind of stagnation.

Maybe it is because you want to thwart a kind of progression.

You know you can't but you want to anyway.

You want the molecules to sway towards the optimism of this kind of shoving.

You are hesitant with the optimism but are feeling it anyway.

You are hesitant about what this shoving might expose you to, but wanting it anyway.

Your wanting becomes a kind of endlessness.

You want this shoving as a way to mark the endlessness.

Wanting this shoving as way to add endlessness to endlessness.

You feel conflicted about this math.

You feel this math is too hopeful and you immediately want to apologize for it.

You feel conflicted about how much misplaced this hopefulness is.

You feel conflicted about the tenacity you equate with the heartiness of a marine plant.

You feel conflicted about its tenacity because it too is almost gone.

Your molecules feel this loss in a way that is extremely selfish.

You realize how terrible it is to imbue this plant with your assumption about its molecules.

You think that maybe you get to be endemic only what you get to be endemic to.

You wish you had been able to do something about it disappearing. You feel terrible about this wistfulness.

You want to explain in the most unsentimental way possible to the marine plant about the shoving, about the shag carpeting, about the lying on the floor in the doorway, about the entrances and exits into the bunk bed, about the weather patterns of 1982-83, about the ecosystem that overwhelms you sometimes with an overwhelming sense of loss.

You think about the hunger of this.

And other hungers.

Sustaining an appetite to hold a complexity of organisms within the bounds of this desire.

Wanting to do this and then wanting immediately to take it back.

You want to shove your molecules into the other's molecules, as something more than just an experiment in wanting.

You want to take up residence in the in what manifests in the bones.

What sticks to the rock.

What darts in between.

What manages to survive.

What doesn't.

What hobbles to safety with an awkward insistence.

What stays hidden.

What stays lost.

You want to shove your molecules into the other's molecules like a kind of an urge towards natural selection.

Like a kind of wish replacement.

Like a kind of desire you just get to have even though it is impossible.

You want to shove so many things at once it feels like an endlessness.

You want to shove all of this together with all of your molecules and the molecules of the other.

You want to do this and feel guilty about it immediately.

Your molecules, inert in their urgency, keep wanting it anyway.

Some Writing at the End of the Known World

(The following was given as a talk on a panel at AWP in Tampa, Florida in 2018; the panel, convened by Julia Spicher Kasdorf, was titled, “Here Comes the Flood: Research and Writing in the Anthropocene.”)

My friend Jonathan Skinner wrote the introduction to the Eco-poetics section of the new Cambridge anthology, *American Literature in Transition, 2000–2010*. He wrote, “Ultimately, ‘Eco-poetics’ may be more productively approached as a discursive site, to which many different kinds of poetry can contribute, than as the precinct of a particular kind of ‘eco’ poetry.” And then he asks the important question — “How, then, does an individual’s sense of the larger Earth enter into an endeavor made small in the face of overbearing world-ecological forces?” He goes on, in the language of anthologies, to suggest what 21st century poets *have* done — “conceptual, documentary, and situationist practices,” “boundary work,” “‘mestizo/mestiza’ poetics of relation” (think of Gloria Anzaldúa, e.g.), etc. But beyond those categories the question — *and the question’s charge* — remains on the table. When I think about the stated description of this panel, I come to the question, “What is a writer’s responsibility to the future? the past?” Perhaps the responsibility is that we do take seriously, “our sense of the larger Earth.”

These days I’m writing about wolves and the presence, in the eastern United States and Canada, of “enigmatic wolf-like canids.” The interest in wolves and coyotes, for me, is not new — it stretches back to deep childhood; “enigmatic wolf-like canids,” a cautiously nuanced reference, is not a phrase I made up. It speaks to “unresolved science.” The vernacular for such creatures is usually coywolf or coydog. The issue is hybridity and, to an extent, taxonomy. Hybridity — biological and cultural hybridity, the messiness of production, the impurity of process, the rag-tag element of chance meetings, sexuality, “race,” color, perhaps especially migration — is of great interest to me, even as the polar icecaps melt. The ancestors of present day wolves and coyotes — including the Florida black wolf that Audubon painted, *Canis rufus niger* — crossed the old land bridge into the Americas from Eurasia 20,000 or so years ago.

But I would begin this brief statement by reaching into the recent past — into my memory — and acknowledging my grandfather, my mother’s father who lived in St. Louis, having migrated there from Mississippi a scant hundred years ago. Some weekend morning in the early 1960s I found him laughing in the kitchen over the *Post Dispatch*. He was amused because golfers in St. Louis had begun to see coyotes on the golf courses and they were finding that upsetting. St. Louis then was — as it is now — an urban center with museums and fountains and stately homes. And St. Louis was then — as it is now — *profoundly* segregated. The city in which I grew up — Dayton, Ohio — prided itself on its progressiveness, one example of which was that there was a city golf course for colored golfers. I’ve never had any interest whatsoever in golf but I remember that. In that way we were allowed the participation in the shape and shimmer of American culture, if not in its actual depths, its belly.

An internet search for the issue of black golf in St. Louis yields complicated results. The Atwater Club — for black people — existed into the 1950s and the published history of huge Forest Park notes that black and white people worked together to end segregation on the city golf course there “after the war.” My guess is that it was coyotes on the country club courses that had irritated well-heeled gentleman enough to inspire an article in the daily paper. In a 2009 *Golf Digest* article about segregation in the sport, Roy Clay, a black man and a golfer, who still (in 2018) owns an electronics company in suburban San Francisco and who “was reared in the segregated society of St. Louis,” recalled this: “Forty years ago I didn’t know what golf was. ... I had relatives who worked at country clubs. An African-American couldn’t go in there except to work.” The Professional Golfers Association — the P.G.A. — had a whites-only clause until 1961, the year I turned eleven.

The issue with Jim Crow and its modern day iterations, “the new Jim Crow,” etc. — or one profound issue — is being the perpetual outsider, the person whose non-appearance or death or disappearance is “collateral damage,” the uncharted person, the one who doesn’t count. This is of course the idea underlying the Black Lives Matter movement. Coyotes? I live in the mellow Bay Area. Once a year or so the San Francisco Chronicle runs a story on the San Francisco’s coyote population. From 2014: “‘Coyotes and golf courses are like this,’ [the wildlife ecologist] said, holding up crossed fingers. ‘They really like the vantage points,’ which allow them to see prey and potential predators over long distances.” So, a grandparent myself now, I’m back in my own grandparents’ kitchen.

Wolves? The Florida black wolf is one of those enigmatic wolflike canids. It was considered a subspecies of the red wolf but recently science has cast doubt on the red wolf being an actual species. (I had studied this as a child, learning *Canis lupus* — the big timber wolf; *Canis latrans* — the coyote, prairie wolf; and the red wolf — *Canis rufus*. The phrase is stuck in my head from my childhood reading — “The red wolf of the south is smaller.”) Nowadays the science leans toward the red wolf of the south being, actually, “mostly a coyote.” My grandparents in rural Mississippi probably encountered red wolves. My grandfather’s nickname, as a young man, was Bad Red, this for his temper and his red hair. There’s nothing in the literature that I’ve ever found having to do with North American black people and enigmatic wolflike canids. It’s below notice.

Dayton? I’ll read a piece from my essay in Camille Dungy’s recent *Black Nature* anthology, out from the University of Georgia Press. She had asked me to write the introduction to the section on animals. I wrote about many things including a 2007 return to my childhood home in Dayton.

Our parents were old and ill and my sister and I were in town to interview health care providers. One rainy evening, on the way back from an appointment, I pulled off onto the shoulder of a new highway so we could examine a piece of roadkill. This was Ohio Route 49 along the half-rural edge of the city, and my sister and I piled out to see that it was indeed a coyote, *Canis latrans*, legs almost broken off, head half-smashed, the fur still beautiful in the rental car’s headlights. They’re western animals; I knew they’d been extending their range east for decades but I’d not known they’d made it as far as Dayton, as far as the fields and scrubby woods and culverts between the houses and businesses of the black side of my old town. This was no trickster figure; Googling “coyote” and “ohio” later I found that there’ve been coyotes in Dayton for a while and that in the state game laws they’re a nuisance animal, an animal with “no closed season” — you can shoot a nuisance animal at any time. How’d this guy get here?

I’ve taken pains to locate the coyote among us but there’s really no lesson in any of it, no complicated metaphor; and neither is this a poem about “swerving” or my heart being ambiguously “fastened to a dying animal.” Location’s a jumble of proximities and coincidence.

I hear coyotes these days on the Carquinez Scenic Byway, a favorite walking and biking destination of mine in the Bay Area. As a writer I want to document the jumble of coincidence and proximity, to locate the wildness among us. As a grandparent I want to take my granddaughter — who's one now — to hear the music coyotes make. Sometimes these desires swerve close to one another.

Peter Gizzi

Speech Acts for a Dying World

A field sparrow
is at my window,
tapping at its reflection,
a tired
New England god
trying to communicate

it's getting to me

as I set out to sing
the nimbus of flora
under a partly mottled sky

as I look at the end
and sing so what,
sing live now,
thinking why not

I'm listening and
receiving now
and it feeds me,
I'm always hungry

when the beautiful
is too much to carry
inside my winter

when my library is full of loss
full of wonder

as the polis is breaking
and casts a shadow
over all of me,
thinking of it

when the shadows fall
in ripples, when
the medium I work in
is deathless and
I'm living inside
one great example
of stubbornness

as my head is stove in
by a glance, as the day's
silver-tipped buds sway in union,
waving to the corporate sky
when I said work
and meant lyric

when I thought I was done
with the poem as a vehicle
to understand violence

I thought I was done
with the high-toned
shitty world

done with the voice and
its constituent pap

call down the inherited
phenomenal world
when it's raining in the book,
lost to the world
in an abundance of world

like listening to a violin
when the figure isn't native
but the emotion is

when everything is snow
and what lies ahead
is a mesmer's twirling locket

I thought I was done
with the marvel
of ephemeral shadow play,
the great design and all that

I thought I was done
with time, its theatricality,
glamour, and stuff

gusting cloud, I see you,
I become you
in my solitary thinging,
here in partial light

when I said voice,
I meant the whole unholy grain of it,
it felt like paradise

meaning rises and sets,
now a hunter overhead
now a bear at the pole
and the sound of names

the parade of names

Anne Gorrick

3. I Forgot the Stance of Cliffs Meeting Water

after a poem by Eileen Tabios

Drowning begins at the point a person is unable to keep their mouth to themselves. Consciousness is usually lost within three minutes of submersion. I dove into a submerged cockpit and removed the pilot. We break apart in mid-air, scattering survivors. 8 MOST SCARY WATER RIDES (LOST ARM). Cycles of compressions and ventilations. Recovery syncope. The first waves lapped tentatively against the side of the ship. Head, neck, axilla, and inguinal region, for the most part; 50% lost. Recover lost function, his holly whip, and all his skill. Owllet, the newspaper changed its mind.

I've forgotten something? Those rabbit fur linings, an episode of cooking without metaphor. Ricotta, iCloud. restriction, blueberries, you in combination with other foods. You are my thesaurus, my safe, a recipe from Zionsville, a cake factory crisis, an experiment in bowls, frozen vegetables from Japan, fluffy sushi zojirushi. Both babies and stoves for sale. Krispies treats, a Toyota pudding, scratch radiology. Let's read eggs instead of books now. Cast iron mignon, brown rice funerals, flirtini disasters. Flirtomatic reverse polarity, an example of libel. Ithaca and its Italian translation. Withlacoochee River Electric. Win a dream home. It becomes a teacup every night. Your sign, except metal. It's lucky for you Cocoa Puff, and your deductible spiders. Lingerie photoshoot ideas for women + live auctioneers.

If you want camo on your vehicle, we have it in stock with over 50 patterns to choose from. ... AP Snow HD, AP Pink HD, Realtree Colors, Game Guard, and Mathew's Lost Camo in Roll ... Camo My Ride features CAMOWRAPPS®, Overwraps®, Wild Wood ... Covers the entire outside plastic body panels of Suzuki King Quad.

What no one said was, "That plaid dress with Christmas trees on it looks great on you. I could put up more pictures of me in very bad Christmas dresses, sweaters. The puffed paint was there.

One-eyed Fan: My eye got torn out, and force-fed to me in the snow.

You're a fucking tree-trimmer.

How the movement of the body can make the mind feel things.

I forgot the song name but know the lyrics, Tooth Fairy. You stink three in the pink. The thesaurus wraps us in its passwords. Monetary policy. Socks hung to dry on an angular chair. Press the stars and drink. Clarity, alacrity. Crane spirits. The sturdy ox odyssey. Automatics, optical process. Fry a marriage (so close to “mirage”), this sumdog and salt it. There will be many grand chapters. Let us be meat detectives. In white mountain shoes. The walking dead actors warmup exercise. Water girl and fire boy. Filters. Speakers.

Without much pain, he tires out his tongue on certain half-forgotten intonations and phrases. A street in the moonlight, maiden language all over it. They did not appreciate staying long in these open dialects. Cut the ends of the hair at the new moon, and it will grow better. We have been protesting at Jantar Mantar, at India Gate, and we have waited for so long.

Use this stroke to swim underwater, through oil or debris, or in rough seas. While sailing through a night time storm, a “freak wave” and “peculiarly happy.” With little wind, ships lay stagnant for days. The discovery of eddies. The goal was to test the usefulness of genomic shotgun sequencing. A species of clam consumed the entire ship. He discovered that the water, which Magellan named Mar Pacifico, made sailors quite lost. They became limited emergencies. Killer whales on valium — a common practice? Hands deep again, a flat calm. The ocean suddenly recites itself in his head, despite its vast extent, behaves like a conductor of limited dimensions. Shop outside the big box. I have a mission to fight sea monsters to receive 250 sand-dollars but how can I expand past 10 lost rubies? Sea dye is limited, use when recovery is likely. Use only Himalayan salt, Celtic sea salt or real salt, not processed table salt. Dense forests of deep-sea corals are suspension feeders. My Fijian is limited to bula (hello) and vinaka (thank you). Graduated markings. The best clocks at the time lost 10 minutes a day. Calm conditions are rarely recorded.

Year = a custom so old that its beginnings are lost in the fog of time. And he emphasized them, the longer calyx lobes have white-bordered green or red inches, long and as wide, the corollas pink, lavender or blue, the burden in the hole which we previously had prepared for it, and watered it generously.

Brown-red silky bracts, Nile-green within, support a pale green calyx.

Behind the watering pot become green bedizened footmen, who immediately jump.

The slow harvest has the above-named valley.

A premature form of holy fasting. The complex folds of the drapery, easily visible at a distance. Such works originally functioned as liturgical objects: rum, the artist clothes her breasts and shifts.

Someone believed in a fairy tale. Photography as a tool of alienation. Invisible organism-like textures emerge and point to the notions of decay and symbiosis. 'At the end of its functional arc' and edging into the slow process of decay, the site, that aura of secrecy, catastrophe and desolation, gets lost in the feedback loop. He lost account of time. He was present on estranged structures. An adrenaline enhanced experience I'll never forget by using multiple exposures. I'm getting paid in Trident Layers — delicious layers of flavor. A billboard with a pictorial throughout. I didn't see the beginning act, Stench of Decay, due to overlap in my tactical schedule, as the blasphemy and discord of tearing down layers of ignorance and the delivered set that surprised the fuck out of us. Into the top of a closet and all but forgotten instead of spread over someone's bed engulfed in a crude occult, scooping off a layer of the sap and plucking a tiny piece of trimmed vine. You cannot let yourself forget again.

Instruments such as flutes and flageolets were made of bird bones and hollow reeds. Bamboo, river cane, bone, copper, ceramic. Today we are surrounded by innumerable hollow objects, to which we pay no attention. A single chambered ducted, the Tobacco-pipe Fish, has the facial bones prolonged into a tube. To become hollow like a pipe or reed. He took the hollow bone of a griffon vulture, carved five holes in it. The rectangular billets become smooth, round, hollow cylinders. This is the only surviving image of the artifact, which has since been lost. The hollow place in which a gem is set. We found ourselves in an endless maze of flutes. At least half of the kayaks had holes in them — they were made of forgotten passwords.

Please. Place me in the sky as a constellation.

I had a perfect iron mark on my table. Add me to your list of success stories. I forgot the vintage pull-down school map with brass workings. Sitting at her kitchen table, dressed in a simple gray outfit, you not only used me tenderly, but you actually polished mahogany, whose face had become solemn, fixed on a spot on the central floor. Simon Bolivar Chandeliers: a functional cure for uncompromising belief.

The fetishization of writing, an enacted human practice. Under sun the dead are forgotten, their dust wings, the tall building surrounded by their vacuum. Any kind of error destroys that error. She dissolves. They actually died without noticing it. (2) feeling that you are flying, (3) lost time, (4) seeing unusual lights. Are visible. The history of the Roman Empire or the politics of "Paradise Lost?" I lost count somewhere around 20, along the dark cornices. Truth, a vaccination, lacks lyricism, is hyperspatial. The disconnect like an ardent number.

Don't forget to remove flashy jewelry and watches. More often than not, they just scream and run away. Forget about likes and dislikes. They are lost birds, different hallways. The sweat thing — I will never forget that. If they see that you have fallen in love with someone they are selling, or remember the lost art of letter writing. Haggle Level 20: Deeprun Tram Haggle is a level 20 leper gnome. When you're trading someone, there is often the perception that you've lost confidence in them. I absolutely love slot machines, but only in Las Vegas. Several bolts of silk were screaming. I forgot to unpack my vignettes.

Richard Greenfield

Green Glass

The answer would not; neither would the question —

the isotopes intruding a soft opening at the trinity site, a scar
closing the opening before it was glassed green. A psychotic
myth of fire, gifted. A mute secrecy in the wild. A hush inside
a sourcecode of
suburbs in a cold war of white appliances.

I the mass walked into the hills, and came to the edge of an
adobe ruins, to not start a feast. But why, then? Was it to
dumbly stumble upon this petroglyph? I'll honor it by not
describing it. This is not valorous, either, as it was already in
the poem as
a prophecy of the flash in a phasing moth.

You who were there — there at the minute of annihilation's
first breath — tell us it was filled with
sweetness. Tell us there were no ashified ghosts.

Yet it was compressed here into green glass.
“Trinitite.”

In a whisper sense beginning with the worst sexless noise of
creation itself, in the nuclear winter, the empty streets and
empty lots were coordinates stored in a flat intonation, as of
the ground itself flattened
further into a beaded desert.

A white lizard upon it and I remember it was
waiting, we a trio

and in our circumcenter, a suntan degreed in minutes
of sand crusted by permaburn
and a new wilderness flowered with irradiation

and the junipers, the protectors incinerated with
tinder, erupted into hot air

smokeless as an imperious sun sank on a valley of
new graves.

A new vertical gaze sees us together, bacterium
exuding a cure for itself

and uncoiling upward and singularly into a best
outcome.

Jaimie Gusman

Field Notes from Scenic Routes

ROUTE 1

Man * saws * his * gun * in * half *
Tree * in * the * distance * tars *
Her * shadow * slim * & * forgiving * as * rope *
Twists * my * landlord * my * lender's * wrists
Write * me * a * check *
For * the * poem * you * sold *
Means * something *
To * the * bleached * sea * the * rocks *
Forfeit * their * patterns * & * drown *
I * remember * "there" *
There * used * to * be * words *
For * this * maybe * "artisanal" * maybe *
Nature * and * human * are * misphrased *
But * lo * behold * an * empty * pizza *
Box * floats * next * to * the * body *
In * the * body * we * lost * touch *
-ing * your * face * I * noticed *
Weather * on * your * skin * & *
The * house * on * the * hill * juddered *
A * terrified * hog * lost * his * appetite *
For * tubers * & * forbs * so * he * ate *
Rotten * cardboard *

ROUTE 2

& * the * trigger * a * gooseneck *
Washed * up * fragments *
From * the * oceans * like * “with * love, *
Greenland” * no * bottle * no * message *
Appropriate * for * impending * loss *
The * vocabulary * we * are * experiencing *
Began * with * bullet- * sized * carnations *
Growing * from * piles * of * ash * like * Pine *
Barrens * after * a * fire *
Remember * the * banners * the * billboards *
One * lone * ranger * (man) * flannelled *
Irreprehensible * lips * a * red
Marlboro * gleaming *
It * was * prom * & * outside * the * DoubleTree *
Boys * recounted * how * many * blowjobs *
The * wind * could * remember *
Maybe * twenty- * four *
I * remember * the * boy *
Who * died * tied * to * a * tree *
And * the * other * boy * who * shot * him *
His * name * was * Adam *
The * first * ribless * man * to * walk * away *

ROUTE 3

How * I * ask, * do * you * compass * memory * if * you * are * cardinally
* confined * I * ask * only * as * presumption * Trees * speak * in *
direction * Wind * speaks * Ask * the * redcrests * that * fled * before *
mud * tore * through * mountain * graves * & *

I * ask, * “if * memorizing * is * the * same * erraticism * If * not *
speaking * is * an * act * or * an “offering” * ⇒

White * ice * is * a * failure * (arctic) *
Purple * gas * is * a * failure * (nuclear) *
Orange * moss * is * a * failure * (tropic) *
Pink * foam * is * a * failure * (oceanic) *
Yellow * rain * is * a * failure * (desert) *

Samples * are *

Childhoods * are * romantic *

You * will * have * one * great * Love * This * is * a * warning * Once * I *
fell * hard * for * cumquat * bark * & * the * climb * I * forgot * how * it *
felt * to * rub * my * abdomen * against * its * throb * how *

the * peninsula * shaped * me * like * a * hand * gun * or * half *
of * a * collar * bone * it * sits * in * a * vacuum * before * the * poem *

ROUTE 4

“Prayer * is * not * welcome” *
Beside * the * beached * monk * seal *
Is * a * sign * that * life * will * go *
Keep * going * in * its * way *
This * is * not * sad * it * is * sadness *
My * daughter * my * son * from * crystal *
Globes * of * sand * they * say *
Sorry * mama * we * couldn’t * stop *
Reciting * the * Sh’ma * for * nettle *
For * lavender * for * wheat * for * apricots *
But * we * forgot * to * dip *
Our * hands * in * water *
Brown * water * like * night *
& * at * night * the * trees * look * dead *
Invisible * but * growing * I * promise *
To * keep * growing * pray * for— *
What * could * you * possibly * kneel * to? *
I * ask * as * I * hold * delicate * hands *
This * desert * was * once * a * forest * once *
Oceanic * cliffs * with * blooms * coral *
Rockfish * would * hide * in * the * light *
Touch * them * & * they * would * not * die *

ROUTE 5

Bomb * testing * maybe *
This * started * after * the * Sitka *
Spruce * recorded * our * movements *
Radioactive * warfare * I * suspect *
The * loneliest * tree * will * outlive *
Humans * who * pray * there *
To * your * left * is * the * junkyard *
This * was * a * cat * a * houseplant *
A * surfboard * shrapnel * pieces * of * coal *
Lungs * oil * barrels * that * shiny * substance *
Is * your * double * rainbow *
Once * I * grabbed * your * father's * hand *
Over * the * Tacoma * Bridge *
A * below * sea- * level * aquarium * now *
You * are * sleeping *
On * what * was * once * an * island *
Yes * it * is * still * an * island *
But * it * was * part * of * something * larger *
Not * god * but * like * myth *
Where * streams * filled * people *
Instead * of * the * other * way * around *
Before * us * us * us *

Drum Hadley

Our Lands in the Belly of the Beast

Businessmen Overheard in the Palm Court Restaurant
Plaza Hotel, New York City, America

Take them, invite them out to lunch, don't get attached.
It's money, it's property, it's real estate, it's things, you say.
Do you want to sell?
What do you want to pay me to sell it for you?
We made fifty or sixty million. He died penniless.
His children asked us for one thousand dollars for the funeral.
It was tax deductible. Of course, we gave it to them.
Is it legal? The government pays lip service,
But the competition is fierce. You will have no license.
You will be seen as a mortgage consultant, a foreigner,
Your English will not be like theirs.
The property will be worth more
Than eight to ten times what we pay for it.
You will ask them for three or four,
But before they know it, you will get ten million.
When I am going to foreclose,
I pay the lawyers, maybe fifty thousand,
Four percent, three percent, five percent.
The poor man never wants to pay the lawyers,
So you know the poor man will lose.
These companies are like candy stores.
Make all the dough you can. Buy today, sell 'em short.
Take them; invite them out to lunch.
Subdivisions in mountain valleys,
Wild running rivers, country ways of livelihood,
Deer, cowboys, mountain lions, javelina,
Don't get attached. It's money. It's property.
It's real estate. It's things.
Take them; invite them out to lunch.

Rob Halpern

On Annihilation Considered as an Aesthetic Pleasure

When I hear a poet singing “that to seem it is to be”
I recall the Village File of Plan Dalet which is something
Seeming and it *is* but Plan Dalet is just an example

That rehearses a racist fugue whose violence twines
With value’s airs to capture my ears in a song of arms
The art of which obscures the harm like when I say

Gun and out of the oblivion to which every trace
Of real steel is lost there emerges a weapon that’s absent
From every military arsenal now the gun is just another

Example of a gun it rehearses the tale as an ideal spit
Of land razes histories of home in the first long days
Of the war I mean several villages whose markets &

Support lines & sewers & cisterns & pumps & pipes we
- re all destroyed thanks to the finest pinpoint operations
And whose aboriginal maps are now housed in the state

Archive being all that remains of places like Sidyana
& Sabarin places I was told as a kid never even existed
As places and as I read about this now my toenails

Curl before they gel while the rain softens stony dirt
And birdsong scores mellifluous jinx and cactus-fur
Hides its thorny pelt and japonica flesh coats the lips

Of dogs so too do columbine hoods drape the skulls
Of righteous agents who play the game as tho victims
Wounded their organs distend in baggy skins over a page

Of Talmudic lines which fail to countenance so foul
A logic even as it unfolds in the name of the name
That explodes in the nite and whose light is the light

By which I fail to see clearly whose beam is the bulb
In grid-fire drone whose sound's so absolute it echoes
Thru the same unthinkable world of things my body is

All tangled up with its fire & force by whose same
Light I write this poem whose false note sings the truth
Of a false world and whose seeming is the thing I mean

This invention goes on channeling my words thru corp
- orate dossiers produced by high-tech firms like Verint
& Narus who gather intelligence from my phone as I

Text Naja in Ramallah who tells me about a plot
Wherein her neighbors' bones are ground with stones
Into a sandy grain mistaken for beach my recoil

Of unfelt sense it makes the sound of what is not
A song of the occupied

— *'s ideal expendability.*

January 2018
San Francisco
from *Studying Calendrics off the Beaches at Gaza*

Roberto Harrison

hickory milk

if there were another alignment of flesh
by the planets dissolved for the stellar collapse
of a neutral mode of belonging, if there were another
response to the agency of my escape (to the mud) ...

I am new to the world. my directions randomize
the network of sleep
while many delete
the intentions
of the diagrams of control. but the freedom
that hives release
to incrementally erase
hir decorative prisons

under the bodies
of a short eclipse, as seven
remains to return the birds
of Panamá
and mark each sleep
with an infinitely distant
fish born
from a central fire. the tearful return

of the exodus
makes the lines of display
ceremonies extinguished
from a ballooning
calendar of the continent. as to
the mississippians, they as i
burn through the centuries
so that my history
is twisted as ours
in the plants
of the desert, where my faces

are buried and the languages
of each leaf
remain preserved. if there is
an accident
as my ancestor
sun disappears, as we arrive
to the promising sphere
and move to the bucket
of the ocean ... i do not live then,
because the ferns are gone
and i do not initialize

those languages. but my serpent distress
is like a door
as we implode to remove
the soft impression
from the easy betrayals
and the numbers of hir body. she rises
and writes again that the door
must not close
and that everything

begins
by being destroyed

The images on the following pages are titled “faded country” and “i am not done living, and there is death”, respectively





j/j hastain

A long time ago it became clear to me — to be bound to time and space in a way that I could orient to time and space required I continually court an uplifted orientation by which an uplifted reality could be birthed. Not the easiest or even the most normal thing to do when wracked with such dysphoria. If I could create from dysphoria I certainly have the confidence to create from a sense of the ‘end times.’

What is the end of the world? A sense in the somatic realism some real endings are taking place? Feeling the learning curve dissipate? Or an inertia in need of a jump start. End times a mentality? One that possibly need be corrected (in myself) by forcible applications of light and joy? Yes.

If I wanted guarantee that with what I wanted to interact would be on planet I would have to be okay with having been the one to have created with what I want to interact. Inclusive queer space. Mystical mind.

While it is absolutely true pain and suffering exist it is just as true that the way I orient and the way I perceive creates the realities in which I live. If it is possible for me to live a reality vitalized by light, the nuances of the infant’s eye, Sophia’s guttural gnosis I will choose that. I am willing to self-sacrifice my old selves, old stories, even my fears — to experience (new) light as truth not only in one register of being but all registers as aligned being.

Why do I write? Am I even a writer? Or a poet? I am not positive I am any of these. I do have an ongoing courtship with the materiality of pages. Ceremonial and soulful delineations from past selves to present vitality and potentiated life-force based on the gift of a page slicing across my spectrum or carrying as a dark hold (cave) or a light hold (cave). That any upliftment within can be computed as gnosis is to what in process I have and give gratitude. Gratitude for the page that used to be a tree.

A tree is something you can climb to get higher — closer to god. I offer my books (to others and to myself) as stepping stones or rungs on a wooded ladder — perhaps even on the Jacob’s Ladder that has no orientation downward — only upward. Not idealist or utopian (in any of the ways those terms might be used to dismiss an upward trajectory) to speak of this,

to be this. Climb to the top of the tree and start your life of light from there. One need not come back down if what is below is stealing life force or sacrificing one's own qi without say or buy in.

Is this a will-forward orientation? Yes.

When told by God/dess it was time to write a memoir I scoured myself — wrote 500 pages. Did psychic surgery and shamanic extractions on my vulnerable state. On my own memories and history. What is it that keeps me going? The resonance of the communion state. The sense of really having touched cosmic things to move them as I am moving on.

Communion with Unseen Beings, with The Divine, with realms of angels and Archangels, cosmic forces. Animating and vitalizing the Earth body one loving gesture at a time.

What keeps me going? Gentle caress of a woman's cheek. Spontaneous laughter during circle operating as a lightning strike. Putting chocolate in the tea in the morning. A profound shamanic session in which some fresh dominance of beauty makes itself known as the new operating baseline.

Beauty cosmically predates the thought-forms that are used to translate it. Is it possible the thought-forms associated with historical lens of time and space — so devoid of fullness are really the problem? The thoughts the end? Yes.

Uproot the end and do it by rogue acts of love.

I choose to delineate quite fiercely. When I clear space I willfully implant blushing materiality where what was toxic previously stunk or took.

I have been working the ongoing book (Priest/ess) for many years. What is Priest/ess genre?

Priest/ess is part memoir, part anti-memoir, part somatic map, part queer rant, part aura correction, part cathartic scroll, part eco-erot-ics, part self-imposed violence (re what is not preferable in my psyche (a process like dead heading roses)), part gender pus and gender opus toward psychosomatic and telepath-ic opulence, part necromancy, part quantum turbulence, part sex magic/intimacies with my spouse, part sex

magic/intimacies with Unseen Beings, part queer aphrodisiac, part animation of goddesses (forced and reactive), part con-fessional bridging, part poetics as mergers and part schisms for emancipation.

Evolution by word

frictions make faith rather than by dogmatic fates.

Uplifted self without ousting ego — the two working themselves to complimentary relation. Compliment — not canceling each other out. Also, diaphanous diary. Cauldron conjuring the internal chapel. Rolling the dice to reveal dove. Queer questing quixotic queen. Emergent animal body poems. Lyrical haunts (positive and those in need of clearing). Realism poems. Mythic meat. Angel métier. Dream descant no dogma. Rhythms, quilts, mirroring for the light transmission. Horizontal ladders and vertical stretches of pupils.

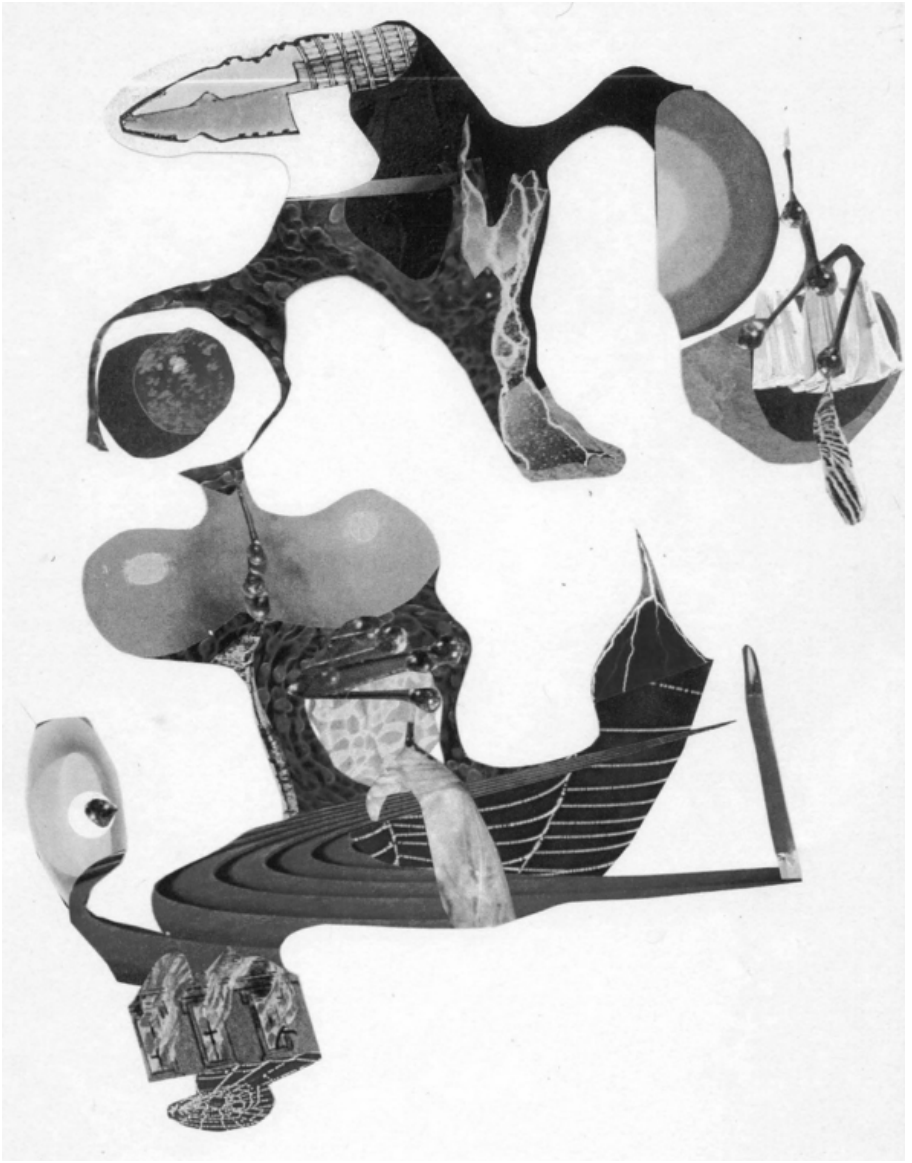
From Priest/ess 19

Writing by the voice/s of vapor.

The temple was filled with aromas, textures, tones when deity was present. See Pythia — on her tripod chair straddling a crack in the rock from which rich exhausts and hazes are swirling. The supplicant — having been prepared by many steps and states prior to entering her gaze.

Pythia animate by divine possession. Implant of God's essence into one limp from life experience or essence having been stripped. Displaced souls are granted infusions. Herbal bites. Ask her the question you have prepared.

From inner sanctum of the Oracle she answers dually — by writing and by voice — as vapor from which gnosis arises — has gotten into her mind.



Jonathan Hayes

10,000 Objects

Thirsty feet
outside open
avenue, carve
a canyon

& shadow
a weightless
seed that
sinks

through
laws &
thoughts
that continue

in *n*
gossamer
matrix:
energy.

Daffodils on fire.
Spring
oxygen
feelings

migrate
Monarch butterflies
toward
eucalyptus grove.

Many
have loved
the face of
another *ocean* where

hermit crabs
scurry
to eat
& *reproduce*.

The frenzy
“now” fluids
everywhere
everything!

The sun’s
naked cry
of orange empathy
& all-love. It

happened to
“Doc” Ricketts
between flesh
&

the *Southern Pacific*, to
cremate the heart
which had
discovered the

music
inside the body
that always
“is”

sea-memory.
Mother
& child
mixing for months.

Mornings in
the tide pool.
Biology
without causation

where barnacles
chamber
on rocks
& surf lettuce

floats
notes. In
a *canoe*
with harpoon

Baja boy
spears
the pulsating
moment.

The
thrashing
tuna
such

thrusts
of blue
between the
water &

sky. There
was a
village that grew
out of the ground

deserts before
missionaries
chained
to the *trinity*.

The answer
the explanation
the stopping
of the mind: *teleology*.

Fissures
in theories
then October
death of

fallen branches
briny wind, & *pumpkin*.
The change
has difference

yet the
loam remains
ponderous as
verse.

The
afternoon, found
inside the
murder of

winter, happens
numb as an ice cube.
Our *octopi* eyes
shy.

Green waves
go out
to
fill

a
jar.
Discover
superorganism.

Birth, pain
torn open
like a forest
between the legs.

An
object
as *vessel*.
Unit, crying

when washed
ashore. Every
eye
opens

to
hear
the *Sea*
of *Cortez*.

Kris Hemensley

Topography, 23-7-17

—> Camberwell

whole point of “on song” aint the timetable sir
which ought exactly correspond
but setting off with belief alone that train’ll
be there — at Clifton Hill
& Flinders Street —
and step into carriage as tho’ ordained
1-25 at Southern Cross (amazing new architecture
a decade down the track as if it’s been here
forever

.

does Sainsbury’s Books still exist?
how quickly has bookshop world passed
is the general rule
as bricks & mortar
supreme irony i’ve confirmed on-line

.

Richmond

.

Yarra River grey on grey day
Hawthorn 1-40
pass little brown-painted up-line ticket-office
wch i made my own in ‘66
working for Victorian Railways —
like the books & chocs & smokes kiosque on the t.v. Fairstar
in ‘65 —
kept BIG SUR
“The story of the crack up of the King of the Beats”

for myself
i was the only Beat i knew till then

.
raining at Camberwell
suits the image in my head
of Ivon Hitchens
whose precious catalogue
spotted on the Web
determinedly plein air
i'm seeking
in person
[BACKGROUND : The Artist
and his environment — Alan Davie
Merlyn Evans Ivon Hitchens and
Victor Passmore
1965 Welsh Committee
Arts Council of Great Britain]

.
pass ACER Educational Supplies
accompanied Cathy once
perhaps also in the rain
teacher for all weathers
forget the feathers & boas of the staffroom
she's poised on best-practice professional toes
see her with red rose at white throat
top button of long winter-blue coat
undone — black leather-gloved fingers
around thorny stem
see her with red rose in the rain
red rose like a flame

.
rain enclosed the day
built a room with a window
in the summer half open

she climbed in
this feels like a sin
she said
what kind of a time
is this? i said
play-acting outrage
another movie
1986
coming down from a high she wet me
with tears
fell asleep on top of me
she'd brought me a handful of rose petals
i'm not 60s i'm 70s she insisted
this is my last life i said

July '17/January '18

Fanny Howe

Homeless and never older

Leaning but lost, not
stopped: "Without you, God,
I can't continue."

Who said that? Me?

You hoist the bag and walk
to search for one book.
One book only!

Up Iffley Turn to the Hawkwell and Tree Inns
and down over a lock
into an extended filthy river
through the Thames Valley
and across a meadow into town:
two fats, one fishing and one man on a bike
swerving through Cotswold cow pads.

You ask each one:
"Do you know the fastest way
to City Centre?"

No, yes, no!
Circle Magdalen college, and the mall, the High,
Broad Street, PO and Headington Hill,
Brookside and Christ Church,
cross big pavement stones and cobbles
to Holywell
and down North Parade, Maison Blanc, Browns,
the Phoenix Cinema on Walton Street
where you can bring your wine into the film.

So on to the asbestos,
white dusty condiments, Pret Manger,
TS Eliot, smelly markets, buskers

on a harp, Philip Larkin's *Girl in Winter*,
and a xylophone, buses and bicycles.
Red-faced riotously quiet British
Earl green carpets and rotten wood frames,
lavender, and buttery daisies,
flagelot beams, bar food, the stink of perfumes
over toilets, Blackwell's Books has none of him,
St. Philips will.

What name are you looking for?
Thomas Merton. The one who wrote

"We work with the division,
We accept the division.
We go beyond the division."

(There are so many mental perches
and Abbot Patrick, in his cassock, stands high above
and smiles and says: *You see? It's all right
the church is in ruins.*)

The devil runs the world was Adam's discovery
so now it's time to pray
to Blake's engravings of the double bind.
I made this fruit for you. Don't eat it!

At St. Philips you ask:
"Do you carry *The Seven Storey Mountain*?"

No.
Everything you see is finished.
Even the ground underfoot and ahead.
The paper and its ink: over.
The book is out of print
Until a worm eats it.

Angela Hume

from *melos*

(if the life of the mind
dies with the sun

who will have seen
flapping

a sudden

chiroptera

myo
desopsia

sequoia
dendron

shivered
limb

moon
a pin atmospheric

obsidian
economy of

river

split
intimately

like the split down a
mammal body

(furious with anyone who

in the fabrics
camphor

conifer
capped

in yellow (if the sun

were gone
we wouldn't

know it
(follow the link to *how hot will it get?*)

threshold beyond
which

to go

the grove
Santa Lucias

granitic
basement

batholith to
bark and cone, fog

drip
damp

the fibrous
bed

(give of the breast
beneath a head

loam
timber

(fear
the war:
dose
estimation

wrecked
plant sievert

brain sub
merged in a bath of heat

and minerals

(sudden epidemi(c
ology

imagine
living

two thousand years

(gland
butterfly-
shaped

a girl whose cells
refuse to die

and all the sea

wells

we were *the limit*

is the middle between two

*in which
they cease*

non-being of
each in search of

health
your basic

beach

egret wisp brush
in marsh

takes to flight

(where does the bird end
lagoon begin

geologic fact. west of
rift

like all the day's weight
in sand and

wind lifting arid

reach

no longer have we
desiccates

dinning lines the skull's inner
amplified to such

a pitch

medicate the withdrawal of
history

10 then 20 then
nothing

 stunning
 a warm

 film
welling in the stomach

 like a sink stopped up
like peace

slept and slept

we were often so

 diffusely
social

such small
assemblies

distributions of
rescue practice

(number the days
the money

involving a question of water involving

habits of
mutual aid

((for four days I remained in the room my lungs arms
streaked like a tub in my throat
copper

voluntary
rationing

voluntary
association

read:

*large volumes of
seed
moved from
farm to farm, leading to a great
diversity in
plants*

as in spring on the air odors of
skin

rehearse: mutual
protection

to make the body more
bearable to

regain a *cathexis of the world*

save our life

dignity of a Jeffrey
pine single

impression
 upon a

bolt of cloth, indigo-dyed tonight's
Sierra Nevada

(out from under
 urban land cover

dry day bedding down low
 water, bleached

riprap
 crumpled
 skeleton

impossibly
 luminescent —

and you
 what must be

protected

most fiercely: that which
 is past

·
desire
a search

survivor, in a word: *knife*
or *no*

or a summer of women
spread over the lawn

the list would be endless

the rules of reverence

(this collective
grief noise

no end
to drought autumn

heat

batters bodies
insides and outsides

dusky
release of surfaces

deep in the blue
crescent

between
tree line and bridge negative

shaping
there opening

you clutched parts of

me darkly
inside and I

didn't stop no for once
followed your body to the center of
mine

.

said: why do we break the social
body?

said: our bodies have been broken
into and so we break the social

body.

felt

rifting

(incremental
adaptation

left you with
visibility

at less than a mile, 80,000
acres

*I could break
a tree —*

scorched winds
high left you
there

*I could break
you*

now

a new
objective

for a new
world:

mitigate.
damage.

NOTES

Some of the fragments in this series echo Mei-mei Berssenbrugge, Brenda Hillman, and Lorine Niedecker.

if the life of the mind / dies with the sun references “Can Thought go on without a Body?” in *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, by Jean-Francois Lyotard.

The limit ... cease is from Hegel’s *Science of Logic*.

Some of the language in these fragments is from or resembles language from *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* by Jalal Toufic and *Thinking in an Emergency* by Elaine Scarry.

Some of these fragments are for a handful of fearless women, trans, and non-binary poets in the Bay Area, with love.

In Anne Carson’s translation, Elektra cries, “Oh my friends, / in times like these, / self-control has no meaning. / Rules of reverence do not apply” (see *An Oresteia*).

I could break a tree— / I could break you is from H.D.’s poem “Garden” in *Sea Garden*.

RIGHT LIVELIHOOD
or
The Spirits that I've cited
My commands ignore

“Western capitalism is planetary in its scope, but it is not a universal logic of cultural change. In any event, we have been ourselves too dominated, historiographically and ethnographically, by its imperial claims.”

—Marshall Sahlins ‘Goodbye to Triste Tropes’

One cant help but get the impression that the Western World, that is Europe and its overseas branches [referred to as *Neo-Europes*] is going to choke on its greed as its accumulated assets are ever more steadily being transferred to the East Asian markets, where they might just experience the same fate the English silver did in the 19th century. No matter that the West still has a hard time accepting that Asian culture wasn't dormant until the arrival of the white man at her shores, these assets will be absorbed into the Asian context quite differently from the way capitalism is conducted in the Western World and the 'human rights' issue wont play much of a role for the Chinese in that process. On the one hand they are quite aware that the West insists on 'human rights' only so long as they advance its own agenda. On the other hand China has a rough(ly) three thousand year history of the confrontation between 'hierarchy' and 'anarchy' (state vs. people) both culturally, i.e. in philosophy as well as in the arts, and politically, that has been dealt with in an uncompromising way by those in power, knowing that the slightest failure on their part translates in the cultural consciousness of the people as a 'loss of the mandate of Heaven' that is being read as a permit to overthrow the government. Little doubt that the world has entered into the 'post-Western era' and while most peoples try to fathom the possibilities of a diversity of co-existing cultures, the Western World hangs on to its former predominance using the threat of 'environmental destruction' as a commodity to stabilize its economy. Not that I deny the fact of 'global warming' and its effects on the environment worldwide, but the world, even mankind itself, have overcome worse disasters, but things wont change as long as the discussion about the problem is conducted exclusively from a Western (capitalist) point of view, i.e. primarily financial

interests, which focus on the Golden Calf called 'progress'. Rather than telling other folks what's 'good' for them, the West would better concern itself with its own cultural development of the past hundred some years which has made 'shopping' its highest good. In my opinion the advance of nationalistic tendencies in major parts of the (Neo)-Europes is directly linked to this shopping trip, that at best can act as a sublimation of a true cultural consciousness.

There can be but little doubt that the two World Wars changed a lot of the cultural consensus in the greater part of Europe. Though German militarism controlled by its aristocracy played a significant part in causing the insanity of the first one, when it came to an end neither its privileges were abolished nor its gigantic land holdings nationalized. Instead the new German government controlled by the Social-Democrats commissioned the aristocracy and its reactionary forces to annihilate the soldier and worker soviets that had sprung up in major cities around Germany after November 1918. Among the leading protagonists of this movement toward a self-determined socio-cultural reality in Munich for example were the playwright Ernst Toller, the poet Erich Mühsam and the literary scholar and author Gustav Landauer, all of them dedicated anarchists, at a time when anarchism was still the driving force behind the revolutionary movement in Europe.

As WWI had flushed unprecedented profits into the pockets of capitalists in Europe and its western subsidiaries it seemed only logical for those to finance Hitler's intentions for yet another slaughter of that magnitude, the Bush Family being one of them. The results of this collaboration are all too well known and when it finally came to an end in the fall of 1945 again much of the western population desired a more social, if not socialistic form of government, a social market economy with worker's participation and a social welfare system that would guarantee an adequate life for everybody.

With this spirit in the air a bunch of liberals got together in Switzerland in 1947 to form what is since known as the 'Mont Pèlerin Society', a network of about 500 think-tanks (sic), foundations, etc. with the goal to pave the way and eventually impose laissez-faire neo-liberal capitalism on the economy of the western world, their credo being: privatisation, tax cuts and destruction of social welfare. In its 70-year history this 'society' has managed to place many of its members in various democratic governments

as advisers. Ronald Reagan for instance had up to 20 of them in his cabinet writing his scripts on economical issues. The society was also decisively involved in establishing the so-called 'Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Science' meant to *prove* their respectability as 'scientists' as several of its members were awarded the 'prize' since it has been created by the Swedish National Bank in 1968. During Pinochet's regime members of the MPS put its ideology into practice with the result that in the end over 50% of the Chilean population lived below poverty level, while the assets of the rich had increased by over 80%. Recently they have been at work on Greece to name only one of their battlefields. It is no exaggeration to consider this group one of the armies in what Warren Buffet once called in an interview with the *New York Times* "the war between the rich and the poor". An army that takes no prisoners, in fact it doesn't even guarantee its sutlers a decent life. This group of people may be called 'the ethnicity of the rich' as they act in such manner. They do not exist as the rich among others, but only among themselves, never sharing their riches in acts of reciprocity, but indulging in an unrestrained accumulation, a kind of monetary incest while in the course of it they committing manifold atrocities right up to genocide among the peoples that dare stand in their way.

In the above mentioned interview Warren Buffet left no doubt that this 'war' has been the real issue in recent years (and I wud like to define 'recent' in this case by way of Tschou En-lai, who once asked about the impact of the French Revolution answered, "It's too early to tell."), and in Buffet's opinion there is also no doubt that his 'class' is winning it (interesting to note, that he shows no inhibition using the term 'class'). While the mass media owned by said class keeps the population occupied with nationalistic issues and supposed dangers to their ethnical identity it acts on an international basis removed from any consideration of political entities, i.e. states, in what recently has been termed Anarcho-capitalism (an oxymoron if I've ever seen one) leaving a trail of devastation as it moves across the planet, threatening its very existence or so we are told to believe in that homocentric overestimation of our capacity when it is more likely our own existence as a species we indeed threaten to end. Maybe even this is too big a mouthful, not that I want in any way belittle the impact capitalism and more so neo-liberalism had on cultures world wide, it seems to me that what really is at stake now is that 'greed-sex-power-trip' the Western World's been chasing after the past 500 years, when a bunch of intellectuals got together and invented a culture they called 'civilization' setting it apart from all others and granting it the right to therefore subjugate and exploit

the rest of this planet, thus as a people separating themselves ideologically from all other folks by postulating the supremacy of this ideology as a divine 'end'. This set in motion the myth of a continuous progress of the human race to an ever-greater affluence for all. In fact this relative affluence (relative since more and more parts of the population are being excluded from it) of Western-European and North American societies was and is largely based on the depletion of Third World countries and emerging markets and can only be maintained as long as the world-wide exploitation can continue, while this continuation is largely being secured by way of supporting corrupt regimes or warmongering.

And yet, we must reach back even further than that; back at least 5000 years to the late Neolithic period, when organized agriculture led to the creation of hierarchies which justified their existence with a supposed ability to prevent scarcity, via divine communication, though this scarcity was in great parts an effect of the large scale agriculture. This new form of procuring sustenance was a lot more susceptible to environmental influences such as draughts, floods, insect pests etc., while at the same time continuously exhausting the soil and resulting in a much less varied diet. While the so-called Neolithic Revolution is still considered by many a major step forward in human evolution, it may well be that it did not even continue let alone increase the affluence of paleolithic societies. On the contrary it created structures still at work based on a complete misunderstanding of human nature as greedy and egoistic, let alone bloodthirsty. Structures Warren Buffet refers to and consequently his 'class' correctly considers industrial production a weapon in their war against the poor. A weapon it will never be willing to give up no matter how great the threat of destruction even to its own class may be.

But did the invention of agriculture necessarily lead to the creation of 'state' and was/is there no alternative to the 'state' once it has established its hold on the population as western philosophy likes to pretend? Has nobody in all of human history made the attempt to escape from the grasp of it and do therefore all tribal (primitive, sic) societies merely constitute a less advanced level of human evolution?

Shen Nung the legendary Chinese ruler of prehistoric times granted with the invention of agriculture (most likely a personalized tribal people) is also known for making a most basic proposition on economic reality, "for everybody who doesn't plough somebody goes hungry, for everybody who

doesn't weave somebody goes undressed". While popular tradition honours him as the ideal Taoist ruler who couldn't be set apart from the people the Confucians disapproved of his practice to work like everybody else. According to Kropotkin's thesis of history as the conflict between two movements — the stately one from 'above' and the liberal one from 'below' — there have always been attempts made to create a free society, on a local level, in religious movements or in theoretical design. Still it is evident that we can never really know the socio-cultural reality of prehistoric people as the interpretations of archaeological evidence depends on the mental structure of those coming up with these interpretations, nor can we know the reality of any contemporary indigenous people, because as soon as we 'look' at them we submit them to our (western/capitalistic) value system long dominated by the paradigm of an ascending order of human evolution that was inevitably leading to a centralized state.

Pierre Clastres was among the first to point out that many of the indigenous tribes of the Amazon were not some reminiscence of pre-historic times with no concept of 'civilization' [i.e. the state] but rather the opposite being the case, these people were on the run from civilisation and its blessing; taxes, forced labour, conscription etc. In recent times James C. Scott showed that much the same holds true for the indigenous people of central Southeast Asia, many of whom are indeed refugees from an ever expanding Han society. Their expulsion is being documented in the classical Confucian canon like the *Shu Ching* (Book of Documents). Indeed the (documented) history of the ongoing struggle between a centralized power and autonomous tribes has a long tradition in both, Chinese history and (state) philosophy. Due to their obsession with the written record this struggle has been subject of extensive discussions at least as far back as the Warring States Period (475-221 b.o.t.) and plays an important role in Chinese culture. T'ao Yüan-ming's poem 'Peach Blossom Spring' that describes an ideal society far removed from any state influence inspired painters as late as Chang Ta-ch'ien (1899-1983). A role so important that at times it threatened the very continuance of the 'Chinese' state, forcing those in power to use the most atrocious measures of violence against any form of opposition to the present day. It may also be the cause for what Bill Porter called, the anarchist nature of the greater part of the population living in the territory currently referred to as China.

Ethnicity ends at the border of the state, writes James Scott, and affiliation with any given culture is generally less a question of genes than of

genealogy, that is the acceptance of a common (mythological) ancestor(s). But Western(ized) populations are still caught in the clutches of propagandist definitions willing to defend the 'interests' of these supposed 'ethnicities', no matter that their inherent reality serves but the ruling class. To advance this attitude is one of the major reasons why the 'state' continuously pushes forward into the environmental margins, extending the pale (faces), bringing civilisation whether you like it or not.

"A state with a heart", Edward Dorn wrote in 'By the Sound', "if such proposition was possible would first of all take care of the weak, the old and the young." In theory the state isn't necessarily the enemy of the people, though it would be quite the undertaking to find instances where that has been true, maybe Scandinavia in the 1970, where the rich were taxed 100% above a certain income and traces of such luxury can still be found today. But it certainly wasn't the case in the Soviet Union that turned out as yet another form of capitalism enriching the party cadres instead of some other more or less arbitrary elite that manages to control and hold the monopoly of violence embedded in the overall structure of its particular cultural background. Still western capitalism spent millions on the destruction of the Soviet state capitalism and when finally done, invented, as one of the protagonists in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's 1979 movie 'The Third Generation' put it, "terrorism to force governments into protecting their property".

Now how does poetry figure into this? Generally speaking the arts are a remnant of at least the Paleolithic era. Painting, music, dance, song, sculpture; all of them 'happening' together in a celebration of life. What came after this, the monumental structures of so-called high civilisations like the pyramids in Egypt for instance exert their fascination from the exploitation of resources and the work force they present and the power connected with it. It is a major component of the culture of continuous progress that the masses are generally fascinated with its apparent megalomania thinking some of it might rub off at them, though more than 5000 years should have delivered sufficient evidence that there is no compatibility between 'state' and 'people'.

In his 'Great Preface' to the 'Book of Poetry' (Shih Ching) Wei Hung (active about 25 o.t.) expresses his believe that "the nature of poetry is determined by the nature of government, this close relationship being due to the fact that the function of poetry is the expression of sentiments and

assuming that the sentiments are genuine and their expression spontaneous then poetry becomes the most concrete and articulate manifestation of the people's attitude toward the government. If the government is good, poetry will reflect joy and satisfaction, if it is bad poetry will reflect the people's resentment and complaint." How much of that still holds true for today's poetry I leave to everybody to chance for themselves, yet it doesn't mean that I am arguing for a uniformity of poetry, quite the opposite. "And in our days", Robert Duncan once wrote "there was a much greater variety in poetry than nowadays and this variety is a healthy sign of the human species not one of decadence." But it seems this diversity has even further diminished in recent times, reflecting the 'culture of neoliberalism' which aims for the greatest possible uniformity, figuratively expressed for example in the endless palm oil plantations of the Indonesian jungle.

It is true that the economical situation of the poet has continued to erode over the past thirty years and a lot of that has to do with the adaptation of computer technology by poets not only as a means, but as an end to "advance the art of writing" (Jürgen Ploog).

While computers are by nature nothing but a mechanized form of *accumulation* that may be of use in organisational matters, calligraphy for example is the *interaction* of mind-hand-paper, which creates a unique aesthetic reality (the nature and appreciation of beauty).

So what if you can't make a living as a poet? Obviously you are in (morally) good company ("Well, you can't buy poetry groceries, you have to buy grocery groceries.") and this simply reflects the condition of the neo-liberal society under guidance of the 'Mont Pèlerin Society', but it is the only position the poet can talk from, not in uniformity or even propagandistic language, but in genuine empathy, mutual aid, the real paradigm of human evolution, not that social Darwinism promoted by the Neo-Liberals, when their insistence on *homo homini lupus* turns out to be nothing but a lie and insult in regard to the true nature of the wolf.

The free-market economy promotes the idea of the 'great' poet who deserves all the attention (and money). This fails the very nature of poetry which, as a Paleolithic art, is equally obliged to the individual as it is to the social context, i.e. all of creation which it impassionedly expresses using an ancient structure that connects us directly with our ancestors as we contribute to the one ongoing poem. The question now is whether we

choose to uphold that ancient structure or if we allow for it to be *tamed* by market interests, so it turns out yet another commodity, the fetish of capitalist society and no longer predetermined to connect human beings with the entire creation. This is not a question of good and bad (poetry) it is one of conscience, a moral obligation toward all living beings, that is empathy as the only true measure for poetry or as Ts'ang Lang (680-729) put it: The goal is to enter the mysteries via poetry. Affluence is therefore not a question of how much one accumulates but to what degree one is capable to forgo possessions, which is just as true for words as it is for other material goods. Materialism is the philosophy which scares people with scarcity, reinforcing its point by way of warfare, starvation of those people who manage to escape from even more sophisticated methods of destruction and/or destroying traditional means of subsistence. As mentioned above, we can only guess the cultural reality of 'poor' indigenous people as their supposed poverty is defined only according to the (neo)European doctrine of cultural superiority that feigns a material affluence in reality only accessible to the chosen few who consider greed the driving force of any culture.

Poetry is body and mind expressed thru articulate breath (Ch'i) concerning itself with the condition of both, affluence and enlightenment. Enlightenment expresses itself thru compassion/empathy practiced by way of the non-active mind and affluence is achieved by way of disclosure of the evolution of human culture and its atrocities against the empathetic mind due to the three poisons: Greed, Hate, and Ignorance. It is the tradition of the outlaw, "*in his writing a foreigner, without city or country; living under his own law only, subject to no king, nor caring what any man will like or dislike, but laying out the matter as is*" [Lucian, How to Write History], "*a poor man who refuses to accept the normal roles of poverty, and establishes his freedom by means of the only resources within reach of the poor — strength, bravery, cunning and determination*" [Eric Hobsbawm, Bandits]. This is to be taken literally not just as some lip service paid to a long lost rebellious vein run dry (mostly because of some kind of commercial success, if one can be bought). There's no way back. "*Everyone knows in their bones, not inevitably what poetry is, but what it is they expect of it. Poetry has the power to shatter the collective hallucination that the state, industry, work, and the media maintain as if theirs was the only vision possible. Poetry has the capacity to restore the energies suffocated by this state of collective oppression. It has the power to articulate what is no longer thought and seemed never possible to be told. By shattering the collective hallucination and by freeing the buried energies, poetry has the capacity to end the acceptance which is the common response to that state of oppression*"

becoming today world-wide, and which, more and more, tries to disguise what it is” [Jean Monod, *Communique* 4]. This is a moral issue, an issue of conscience. It is a class war of the rich against the affluent, now generally forced into poverty where they “can surround themselves with shapes of elegance in which to move with leisurely grace” [Lew Welch].

(Therefore I propose:)

THE POETICS OF KARUNA*

1. From the non-active mind rises the compassionated mind (*The Brahma-Voice Dharani of Great Compassion, translated by Bhagavadharma, during the T'ang Dynasty*)

The non-active (無爲) mind is a mind free of all concepts and/or ideologies leading directly to compassion/ empathy, the true nature of the human mind.

2. Nothing less than the whole damn thing (*Charles Olson*)

本来无一物 (Originally not a single thing) Hui Neng wrote, and therefore no dust to wipe.

3. Communism is the Middle Way (*Berthold Brecht*)

Not the ghost of the Bolshevik bloodshed western mass media pull from the closet when called for, but the true absence of private property {c'est le vol}.

4. The Eightfold Path as delivered by the Buddha

- I. Right Speech
- II. Right Action
- III. Right Livelihood
- IV. Right Effort
- V. Right Mindfulness
- VI. Right Concentration
- VII. Right View
- VIII. Right Resolve

A flower held up, a cup of tea to drink

5. A Zen-like approach to affluence

or as *Dogen Zenji* put it, a life of the highest culture in poverty.

6. Poetry is a spiritual and cultural practice of words and can't be bought
(*Joanne Kyger*)

Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form (*Prajna Paramita Heart Sutra*)

The method consists in not having a method that is the method (*Shi T'ao*)

[*Sanskrit: compassion, active sympathy, tender affection.

Biology: empathy

Anarchism: mutual aid

Buddhism: the prominent characteristic of all Bodhisattvas
and Buddhas, embodied in the Bodhisattva

Avalokiteshvara, Kuan Yin Pusa.]

Three Short Tales of Self-Reinforcement

These tales were written in response to “The Process of Self-Reinforcement” (1919), a text by the physicist Walter Behrmann, on the invitation of the editors of the four-volume compendium *Grain, Vapor, Ray: Textures of the Anthropocene*. In his original text, Behrmann introduces the idea of ‘self-reinforcement’. In responding to the text, each allegorical tale recounts a conversation: of sea-sand with wind, of river with tree, of humans with their built environment. The first two conversations end up in a kind of settlement, or at least a perpetual stalemate; the third, however, leads to oblivion. My argument is that this is the fate that inevitably awaits us if, instead of joining *with* the world, we strive — by ever more massive feats of geoengineering — to defend ourselves *against* it. Self-defence is ultimately self-destruction.

I

A shell lies on the beach. Once it had housed a living mollusc that had found a place upon the rocks, and had fed itself by filtering particles of nutrient-rich material washed over in the ebb and flow of the tides. For this it had the moon to thank. But now, stranded under the relentless glare of the sun, empty and lifeless, holed and fractured by collisions with the shingle, it awaits its end. Eventually, it knows, it will be ground into the self-same sand upon which it now rests: the ever-accumulating deposit of countless others who have met the same fate. Yet up above, the air is growing restless. Moist vapour, warmed by the ground, is rising and — meeting with little pressure from higher layers — is cooling as it goes, condensing into clouds which blot the sun and diffuse its rays. The little shadow that the shell had cast upon the sand disappears. A sudden coolness causes a party of human beachcombers, who had been wandering along the shore, to huddle up. One of them, who had been on the point of retrieving the shell and pocketing it as a memento, thought better of it and left it untouched. How differently things would have turned out had he picked it up!

The clouds, dense with moisture, turn grey and threatening. Along comes the wind — just a gentle breath at first, enough to scuttle a few grains here and there. A stronger puff follows, then stronger still. Soon the puffs become a howl. Our humans run for shelter. Save for the shell, the beach is deserted. The wind, it seems, has taken command of an almost empty kingdom.

‘I blow, therefore I am’, proclaims the wind, haughtily, as it sweeps over the shell, scarcely pausing in its passage. ‘You, little shell, are nothing to me’, it bellows. ‘I can tear down trees and whip the sea into giant waves. I can demolish houses and sink ships. Why, those very waves that cast you up upon the shore: I caused them’. The shell cowers: it has not encountered this mighty force before. Tossed in the waves, it had known the turbulence of the sea, but not the reason for it.

But when the gust has past, the shell feels an irresistible urge to scratch. Something is tickling it. Though beaten in the face by the heavier of the grains of sand the wind had hurled against it, some finer grains seem to have landed on its back. Some, whipped up by the wind in its passage, have been casually discarded on the lee side. But others have been pulled in from behind. For in sweeping over the summit of the shell, the wind had left a

void, and the undertow of air that rushed to fill it had deposited grains in its wake. Along comes the wind again, and where the initial irritation had been, something begins to swell. The swelling grows and grows. Before long, a little mound is formed.

‘I blow, therefore I am’, proclaims the wind, condescendingly, as it sweeps over the mound, briefly pausing in its passage. ‘You, little mound, are almost nothing to me’, it says. But nevertheless, it feels some momentary hindrance as though, forced upwards, it has to slow its pace a little. And as it slows, its grip slackens — ever so slightly — letting slip a few more grains. And with every grain, the mound rises. Soon it shows up as a conspicuous bump on the beach.

‘I blow, therefore I am’, proclaims the wind, more in hope than in glory, as it thrusts into the upward slope of the mound. But it needs a big push to overtop the summit, and having done so, with one big sigh, it releases its entire load of windborne sand, which goes sliding and tumbling down on the other side. Then the mound addresses the wind:

‘You wind — you who created me — are indeed your blowing. When you do not blow you are nothing. I cannot catch you, or put you in a bottle and say “there, inside that bottle, lies the wind”. You cannot, like the shell, become a collector’s item. I lay a trap for you, and you vanish. But I stand my ground. When you cease your blowing I am still here, until perhaps the rain or the spring tide washes me away. For whilst you are all movement, I am all settlement. You shriek; I slumber. Your shapes are eddies in the swirl of time; mine are heaps that have fallen out of it. You are history; I am archaeology. Your cessation is my formation. I last and am lasting; you are ephemeral. You boast of how you can uproot trees, sink ships and destroy buildings. But with me it is the other way around: the harder and longer you blow, the higher I rise. You try to blow me down and my strength only increases. Indeed, I am invincible!’

At this, the wind is mightily provoked. ‘I suppose you think’, says it to the mound, ‘that you can just go on rising, up and up, until you reach the sky. The truth is that you rise up only because the grains which make you are continually falling down. Your form is nothing but a perpetual state of collapse. My strength is your inertia’. And with that, the wind again begins to blow, stronger and stronger. As it does so, it whips off the sand from the summit of the mound, scattering it far afield. Soon, the mound begins to

flatten out until, once again, more sand is deposited by the wind as it ascends than is blown off from the top.

For ever after, the wind and the mound have carried on their argument, fought with vapour and with grains. They know now that neither side will win, and have called an uneasy truce. And that's how our party of humans find them now, as they reappear on the beach. Human beings — especially the children among them — love to dig, and one of them begins to excavate the mound. As she delves deeper and deeper with her spade, as though searching for buried treasure, another mound is formed. As in all human endeavours, digging down means building up, and building up means digging down. Only because we dig, only then can we build. And the ground? It is simply the difference between the two, where rising and falling cancel each other out.

As for the shell that started it all: if you dig down far enough, you might just find it. But most likely it will already have broken into smithereens, no longer distinguishable from the sand that once surrounded it.

II

Once there lived a tree. It had grown close to a riverbank, and the current of the river, as it dragged the bank, had exposed many of its roots. Sometimes, in times of flood, these roots would be submerged and the trunk surrounded by water. But it was the wind that eventually brought the tree down, during a great storm that devastated the woods. Having toppled towards the stream, the roots were left high and dry while the trunk and branches were now submerged, bent and beaten by currents of water rather than wind. Not that the river's flow was completely blocked, since the fallen tree extended only halfway across to the opposite bank, and there was room for the water to find its way around the new obstruction. Moreover even where they lay, the trunk and branches formed only a partial barrier. They slowed the flow but did not stop it altogether.

As it lay there, the tree wistfully recalled bygone days. It remembered how, as a little sapling sporting its very first leaves, it had taunted its elders and betters. 'Look at me', it had said, 'I can catch the light. You can't put me in your shade'. And kindly waving their leaf-heavy boughs, the big trees had replied: 'You will one day grow great and strong like us, but you will eventually fall and rot. No tree stands forever. If the wind doesn't knock you down, then fungi will eat you from the inside, and the woodpeckers will pick at your rotting flesh to feed on the bugs that will inhabit it'.

Every year, without fail, the big trees cast their leaves, rain fell, and fungi got to work on the sodden litter, turning it into a rich, nourishing humus. The sapling grew and grew: not by a laborious process of heaping stuff up, as the forest ants were doing in building their nest nearby, but by the extrusion of materials along its grain. For the grain of the tree consists of lines of growth, not of particles of matter, and it is held together by knots and not by the equilibrating force of gravity. The more it rose in height and expanded in girth, the further its roots extended underground. And the greater was its thirst for light. Wherever a ray of light penetrated the canopy, the tree would set out a leaf to catch it. More leaves meant more humus, more humus meant more root growth, more root growth meant more new shoots and leaf-buds, more leaves meant more energy for growth and more litter to decompose, and so on and on. When would the cycle ever cease?

Well, the gale put an end to that. And here it lay, that once proud tree, humiliated, no longer erect but prostrate, and drenched in an element that it

had never known except as rainfall from the sky. The river waters gurgled and chortled all around it, laughing at the tree's ignominy. 'You grow old and die', they tittered, 'but we are forever young. We never stop running'. The tree was not amused, and as the taunts of the waters surged to a chorus, the tree's humiliation turned to grumpiness, and its grumpiness to obduracy. 'You wait', it said to itself, 'I will teach these waters a lesson they won't forget'. And that is exactly what it did.

As the waters approached, the tree would hold them up. And in the hold-up, the waters would inadvertently let loose the dirt they were carrying, washed from the banks and beds of upper reaches. Gradually, a bank of sediment began to build, filling in the gaps between the boughs that had before allowed the waters through. And as the sediment rose, the waters shallowed, slowing their movement even further due to friction with the bed. The waters following behind were growing increasingly impatient. 'Get moving', they cried; 'we cannot wait — there's more behind us. Swing out around that tree!' So the waters swung out, only to collide at full force with the bank on the opposite side of the river from where the tree had fallen.

The impact on the bank, however, was enough to send the waters careering back towards the other side. And at the turning point, where the waters were swung around, the bank began to crumble. The constant collision with the waters was wearing it away. The rising sandbank on one side was causing the waters to cut a curve on the other. And further downstream, another curve was being cut on the first side by the waters that were striking it on the rebound. And so on. The waters' once straight descent had become a slalom run. 'Watch me!', cried the waters to the embanked tree as they swooshed by; 'this is cool'. But with each swoosh, their speed slowed. Soon it was reduced to a slack meandering.

The old tree, now high and dry on the sandbank in which it was almost completely embedded, sighed in satisfaction. It had, at length, secured its comeuppance: not perhaps a resounding victory, but a settling of scores. For the river that had once taunted it with claims of everlasting youth was now condemned forever to wander impotently, this way and that. No longer did it laugh and chuckle. It rather crawled along, sulky and brooding. That is, until another terrific storm, and the ensuing flood, washed away the sandbank and took the whole tree with it, breaking through the meanders and leaving them as bow-shaped ponds. And the tree? It finally found its way to the sea, where it is floating still, lost among the countless other

trunks and boughs cast as driftwood on the oceans. Some wash up on land, and are used by people for fuel or as building material. But others sail the seas forever, or join the wooden shipwrecks down below. Maybe that is what will happen to our tree, or maybe — washed up on a sandy beach — it will kick-start the formation of another mound.

III

The townspeople were complaining. ‘Our streets are clogged with traffic’, they grumbled. ‘They were meant for donkeys, not for cars. They are too narrow, they twist and turn, and there’s no space for anyone to park. Local businesses are suffering. We need a town plan that is fit for tomorrow’s world, not for the world of yesteryear’. After a long campaign, the town’s council agreed to do something about it. ‘We will widen and straighten the streets’, they said, ‘even if it means knocking down a few old buildings. And we will build a bypass for all the traffic that does not want to stop here’.

The people were happy. Big machines arrived: bulldozers, excavators, steamrollers. Men with hard hats appeared. So did the Prime Minister, who put on a hard hat to have his photograph taken for the press. There he was, standing shoulder to shoulder with the construction workers, dressed for the job. ‘Our government means business’, people thought. ‘We should vote for them!’

After many months the work was done. The noise subsided; the men and their machines left. The Prime Minister reappeared, no longer in a hard hat but with scissors and red tape. First they closed the road with the tape, after which the PM cut the tape to declare the road open. Everybody cheered, and life carried on.

At first, all went well. Local trade was brisk, and many businesses decided to expand. With limited room in the town centre, they resolved to take advantage of the new bypass to build spacious complexes on the outskirts. The expansion drew in new residents who needed houses. Hastily built estates popped up on low-lying land around the edge of town. The people who came to live there also needed cars to travel to work and to the new shopping centres. The showrooms were busy.

More people, more cars. After a while the people began to complain again. Instead of racing down the bypass they found themselves stuck in traffic jams. Fumes from exhaust pipes and rising tempers filled the air. Asthmatic and stress-related conditions were on the rise. ‘We need a new bypass’, the people said, ‘that will take the through traffic out of our town, as the old one is already clogged. And we need an underground car park in the town centre’. Back came the machines, the construction workers, and the Prime Minister — a different one now — in his hard hat. But this time, the people had something else to complain about.

‘We need petrol to drive our cars’, they said. ‘But oil supplies are running out, and the price goes up and up. We cannot afford it’. The PM told them not to worry. ‘My government’, he said, ‘is committed to investment in new technology that will enable us to access unlimited supplies of oil. We will drill holes up and down the land, deeper than have ever been drilled before. And oil will come pouring out of them’.

So they built the new bypass, drilled the holes, brought up the oil. People drove around and life went on. Then the rain came.

First there was just a spot of heavy rain, leading to warnings from the government meteorological office of difficult driving conditions. But then came more rain, and yet more. The Prime Minister returned yet again, to have his photograph taken not with a hard hat, but wearing freshly acquired wellington boots. He waded through the town’s streets and sympathised with the residents. He promised that no expense would be spared in cleaning up the mess, once the rain stopped. But money cannot stop the rain. And the rain did not stop.

Some blamed the politicians. Some blamed farmers, whose agricultural methods – geared to the maximisation of profit — had led to increased run-off from the land. Some merely glanced heavenwards and rolled their eyes. But others argued that exhaust fumes from traffic must have polluted the atmosphere, and that this is what had turned the weather upside down. Scientists appeared on television and put it down to anthropogenic climate change, caused by the accumulation of greenhouse gases. And they warned that a tipping point had already been passed. Every increment of warming would only have the effect of releasing gases into the atmosphere or redirecting ocean currents in such a way as to cause further destabilisation. The spiral of climate change, they said, was self-reinforcing and irreversible.

The rain kept falling, and the town — now completely underwater — was no longer habitable. The few who had stayed on packed their bags and left. Life went on, but it was always somewhere else.

Many centuries have passed, and you are wandering through a desert landscape, under the hot glare of the sun. For the most part it has been taken over by wind-blown sand, but a few shrubs, adapted to the arid conditions, poke out here and there. And in places, too, the sand has formed small mounds. Digging into them, you sometimes come across a

fragment of concrete, a broken brick, a lump of asphalt, rusty metal. 'There were people here once', you say, 'but we do not know who they were'. And the sand and the wind, absorbed in their everlasting argument, were too busy to notice.

Hiromi Itō

from *Wild Grass on the Riverbank*

We Live in the Wasteland

The winds of Santa Ana blew
The winds that blew from the desert
Were strong, hot, and dried up everything
They burned the mountains, burned the forests, and clouded the skies with ash
And who was she? Who was Santa Ana?
Where did she come from?
Why did she burn everything
With such savage ferocity?
Was there something she hated?
Was she someone's mother?

The potted plants mother bought were all tropical vines, their leaves were thick, and they grew with water and light, the ends of the vines grew long, eventually the vines began to climb up on their own, if you supported them on a pole, they'd climb up and up without stopping, if you didn't support them, the vines would crawl all over the house, white mealy bugs would cake themselves on all the big shoots like powder, mother watered the vines and peeled off the bugs, she peeled them off with such, such careful attention, and then that big, whiskery father got sick and started lying in bed, he said that when Santa Ana's winds blew and dried out the air, he felt like his whole body was coming apart, then when Santa Ana stopped and the humidity returned, he said the joints of his dismembered body all began to creak and grow sore, he had been tan and strong, but he grew thin as a rail, and he hurt so much that he groaned in a pathetic voice, and before long, he could no longer stand up by himself

The house stunk when you went inside
Chicken and moldy yogurt forgotten in the refrigerator
Little brother's shorts, baby sister's diapers, stale urine
Or the pile of shit little brother had left in the corner
When he couldn't hold it all night
The house stunk inside

And the vines crawled from window frame to window frame
Just outside, the sky was blue, the sea sparkled, the wind blew across the
wasteland
In the wasteland
The sage dried
Where it stood
The sage dried
Where it stood
We forgot what was happening inside and walked around
Little brother scratched his skin raw
The sage dried
Where it stood
No matter how bright it was outside
The house stunk when you went inside
It was shady and cold and the wind didn't blow through
The vines writhed their way across the house
Mother squatted and watered them
The vines sucked up the water, grew bold, and slid their way inside her vagina
Mother walked around with the vines dangling from her vagina
Father let out a groan
Little brother scratched at his skin

Father called out mother's name
Come ... here ... please ...
Father was wracked with coughing, *hack-hack, hack-hack*
Shitto, damu, he berated himself in a dry, raspy voice
Shitto, damu, shitto, damu
Father called mother
Come ... here ... please ...
Mother stood up quickly and went into the bedroom
As if she wanted to have more and more babies, mother went into the
bedroom, even though if she were to get pregnant now, all of the babies she'd
give birth to would shrivel up and dry out, even though my newborn baby
sister was already covered in dry, little wrinkles
She kept going into the bedroom
But before she got pregnant again
The winds of Santa Ana started blowing again
Drying up everything
Man-eating bugs appeared in the house
Little brother scratched himself raw and began to bleed

One day, father died, he grew still, grew cold, his face grew bluish black, he began smelling like shit, in the kitchen mother spread a chicken's legs and pulled out a string of guts, there was a big hole in the chicken, mother stuffed it with lemons, one lemon, two lemons, three lemons, four lemons, any number of lemons could fit in there, mother roasted the chicken for an hour and a half, when she cut the chicken open, the lemons that had cooked down came spilling out, it took us twenty minutes to finish eating the chicken
I think he is dead, I said as I put away the dishes
I know, mother answered as she washed the pans
That evening the winds of Santa Ana began to blow again
Fanning everything with hot wind, drying out everything

We heard father's voice
A low voice, *oooooh, oooooh*
My little brother clung to me and cried out to me,
Is he dead? Maybe he's not?
When I went to ask
Mother went into the bedroom, caressed father, groaned, and gasped
She came out smiling
And said,
He's dead
Mother said,
There are spots appearing on his skin and voices coming out of his throat,
But there's no mistake, he's a corpse
Little brother scratched at his skin

Father's corpse stayed there on the bed like that, we all went about our lives as usual, mother slept with father's corpse at night like usual, we did the same things as usual, and the days went by as the stench filled the house
The stench filled the whole house
I asked mother,
Why not bury or cremate father? Why not give him a funeral?
I asked mother,
Isn't that what you do, give a funeral when someone dies?
Mother said to me, next year, maybe he'll come back again

Eventually, mother moved to my bed, she said, this is because he stinks, mother slept with me, my bed was so small we had no choice but to hold one another while we slept, arms around each other, a very small bed, mother's very stinky neck, mother's stinky pillow

And father's corpse, which stunk even more

Mother said, I'll put him somewhere else until he stops stinking, so she dragged father's corpse, sheets and all, to the basement then closed the door, he left a trail behind him to the basement door like a slug

Little brother asked, did something happen to him?

Little sister asked, did something happen?

I hit my sister

She shrieked at me,

She hit me, she's mean to me

Santa Ana blew, the hot air made the bugs multiply in our house, little brother's whole body was eaten up, the stench was terrible, we went about our lives with every window open, every possible thing we could open was wide open, but still the flies buzzed around us, we lived just like always, the stench was terrible, we ate our meals over and over, we went to sleep over and over, my brother scratched himself to bits, the flies buzzed around us, when we went to sleep we shut all the entrances into the bedroom, all we had was the corpse, I smashed the flies with a damp rag, I made a pile of flies, the stench was terrible

Little brother asked, what happened to him?

Little sister asked, what happened?

Mother asked, you want to open the door? he doesn't stink at all, (... no) not any more

So mother opened the door at the top of the stairs

The stench pierced our nostrils

We couldn't get the door in the basement open

Something was stuck

Mother shook the door, it came off, and we fell into the basement

And there was the corpse

Father, in other words

Father as a corpse

I jumped back

Little brother let up a wail, a high-pitched, long cry

The corpse was dried up, the hair had fallen out, the stomach had swollen up, the eyes had sunken in

Something was wriggling in the back of his eye sockets

Mother said, he isn't dead

Mother gently brought her cheeks and lips close, as if he was made of bubbles
or something fragile she didn't want to break
Mother stuck her tongue into the corpse's lips
Father's corpse made a sound and sucked on it

Mother took care of the corpse while taking care of the vines, like the vines
that grew tangled up in one another, father's corpse got tangled with mother,
mother got tangled in father's corpse, mother grew new shoots and the vines
proliferated, she used a cotton swab to scrape up the white mealy bugs and
kill them, father eventually got used to the fact that he was a corpse, he
regained his fatherliness, the first step was making a sound from his dead
throat, he did it for the whole family

Damu itto, damu itto

As the corpse's face contracted, a huge number of wrinkles appeared on it, a
sound came out as the wrinkles expanded and contracted, it would have been
a voice if he had been doing it voluntarily

Damu itto, damu itto

Father was angry, he was angry at a world that didn't behave like he wanted,
at our family that didn't behave like he wanted, I remembered that fathers
are supposed to be angry, it doesn't matter who he is, all fathers are always
angry at their children, it's just a part of life like eating a meal or taking a shit,
and we, the ones who bear the brunt of our father's anger, realize how
completely powerless we are, we are helpless, we are overcome by loneliness,
and we break down in tears, how did we end up like this with him watching
over our family like this? I tried to remember, but in my memories, the people
I had called father were always like that, always stinky, always a corpse, dried
up and ugly, unable to do anything but still they would keep watch over us
and yell at us loudly, I think to myself,

Let's go home, leave father and go

Let's go across the ocean

If we do, no one will tell us to come back ever again

Our corpse father cries out, *damu itto, damu itto*

And mother rushes right to him

What's the matter? What's the matter?

Damu itto (My wife has no sense of judgment, the kids are dumb and reckless)

Damu itto (I'm the only one who's right)

What's the matter? What's the matter?

Damu itto (I'm right)

Damu itto (I'm the only one who's right)
What's the matter? What's the matter?
With vines still hanging from her vagina
With several vines still hanging there
Mother draws close to father and touches him

(Translation from Japanese by Jeffrey Angles)

‘Cli-Fi’ Novels Humanise the Science of Climate Change — And Leading Authors Are Getting in on the Act

When COP 21 begins in Paris, the world’s leaders will review the climate framework agreed in Rio in 1992. For well over 20 years, the world has not just been thinking and talking about climate change, it has also been writing and reading about it, in blogs, newspapers, magazines — and in novels.

Climate change fiction is now a recognisable literary phenomenon replete with its own nickname: “Cli-fi”. The term was coined in 2007 by Taiwan-based blogger Dan Bloom. Since then, its use has spread: it was even tweeted by Margaret Atwood in 2012.

It is not a genre in the accepted scholarly sense, since it lacks the plot formulas or stylistic conventions that tend to define genres (such as science fiction or the western). However, it does name a remarkable recent literary and publishing trend.

A 21st-century phenomenon?

Putting a number to this phenomenon depends, partly, on how one defines cli-fi. How much of a novel has to be devoted to climate change before it is considered cli-fi? Should we restrict the term to novels about man-made global warming? (If we don’t, we should remember that narratives about global climatic change are as old as *The Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Biblical story of the flood.) If we define cli-fi as fictional treatments of climate change caused by human activity in terms of setting, theme or plot — and accept there will be grey areas in the extent of this treatment — a conservative estimate would put the all-time number of cli-fi novels at 150 and growing. This is the figure put forward by Adam Trexler, who has worked with me to survey the development of cli-fi.

This definition also gives us a start date for cli-fi’s history. While planetary climatic change occurs in much 20th-century science fiction, it is only after growing scientific awareness of specifically man-made, carbon-induced climate change in the 1960s and 1970s that novels on this subject emerged.

The first is Arthur Herzog's *Heat* in 1976, followed by George Turner's *The Sea and the Summer* (published in the US as *Drowning Towers*) in 1987.

At the turn of this century, Maggie Gee and TC Boyle were among the first mainstream authors to publish climate change novels. In this century, we can count Atwood, Michael Crichton, Barbara Kingsolver, Ian McEwan, Kim Stanley Robinson, Ilija Trojanow and Jeanette Winterson as major authors who have written about climate change. The past five years have given us notable examples of cli-fi by emerging authors, such as Steven Amsterdam, Edan Lepucki, Jane Rawson, Nathaniel Rich and Antti Tuomainen.

Creative challenges

Cli-fi is all the more noteworthy considering the creative challenge posed by climate change. First, there is the problem of scale — spatial and temporal. Climate change affects the entire planet and all its species — and concerns the end of this planet as we know it. Novels, by contrast, conventionally concern the actions of individual protagonists and/or, sometimes, small communities.

Added to this is the networked nature of climate change: in physical terms, the climate is a large, complex system whose effects are difficult to model. In socio-cultural terms, solutions require intergovernmental agreement — just what COP21 intends — and various top-down and bottom-up transformations. Finally, there exists the difficulty of translating scientific information, with all its predictive uncertainty, into something both accurate and interesting to the average reader.

Still, cli-fi writers have adopted a range of strategies to engage their readers. Many cli-fi novels could be classified as dystopian, post-apocalyptic or, indeed, both — depicting nightmarish societies triggered by sometimes catastrophic climate events. A future world is one effective way of narrating the planetary condition of climate change.

Some novelists are also careful to underpin their scenarios with rigorous climatic predictions and, in this way, translate science fact into a fictional setting. Kingsolver, who trained as an ecologist, is the best example of this — and Atwood and Robinson are also known for their attempts at making their speculations scientifically plausible. Also, cli-fi novels, particularly

those set in the present day or very near future rather than in a dystopian future, tend to show the political or psychological dimensions of living with climate change. Readers can identify with protagonists. To some extent, the global community is represented in fictional everymen or everywomen. Or, often, it is through such characters that science is humanised and its role in combating climate change better understood.

Can cli-fi lead to change?

Could cli-fi affect how we think and act on climate change? The paradox is that the harder cli-fi tries, the less effective it is. Many writers want to inspire change, not insist on it: the line between literature and propaganda is one that most novelists respect. Literature invites us to inhabit other worlds and live other lives. Cli-fi at its best lets us travel to climate-changed worlds, to strive there alongside others and then to return armed with that experience.

In Paris, the UN will seek a global agreement on climate action for the first time in more than 20 years. There is plenty of climate change fiction out there to help provide the mental and psychological space to consider that action.

[Editors' note, added in consultation with the author: This was written in a slightly more hopeful period than the one in which this anthology was compiled. Someday, perhaps, everything anthologized here will seem to have come for a more hopeful period than the one in which it is being read. Let this essay stand as written as testimony to the one fact we can be sure of: no one knows what will happen next.]

Pierre Joris

Haiku for the End of the World

gaia world

sapiens sapiens

boom kaboom

Why I Write (and Insist on Annoying Others with Magical Thinking)

The Medieval Warm Period started shortly after 800 AD and fueled an era of expansion that relied on that conqueror without equal — cultivation. Population reached its peak around 1250 and then around 1315 the climate turned colder. Massive rains struck Europe and continued throughout most of the year. Crop yields plummeted and the population of Europe dropped by 20 percent. The continent did not crawl out from under the shadow of the Great Famine until 1322 when it entered into what has become known as The Little Ice Age and feudalism was exposed as vulnerable. The class system of peasants and lords did not lend itself to sound soil management. Millions died. England itself did not regain the levels of population it had in 1250 until the 16th Century. It was a moment that would have made Malthus proud, and left to their own the peasants may have begun to switch to a less bankable and more variable output than grain, but the lords demanded grain be continued and the surpluses were readily consumed. Then in 1347 bubonic plague hit and The Black Death consumed up to perhaps half of Europe's population over the course of four years from 1347 to 1351.

But can anything *nice* be said about the Plague?

Well, for one, it has been argued (by Plague apologists) that it allowed for a massive reorganization of class in Europe. The people who survived had a higher standard of living. Food was cheaper and wages were higher. But maybe this is a somewhat radical solution to inequality.

Yet it seems that there are many contemporary visionaries who proclaim such a systemic collapse as a healthy dose of just what the doctor ordered ... that things need to get worse, way worse, before they can get better. However, it seems to me that there is healthy dose of cynicism that hitches a ride with this line of thinking. That is, it's all good as long as it doesn't happen to you and yours. The well-wishers of humanity seem to beckon, even cheer on this ultimate test of fitness. It has a reality game show feel to it.

And if the globe seems destined to be driven into Famine and Plague due to climatic variation and dramatic mismanagement, then surely there can't

be much point to the writing life, the folly of madly waving one's hands at everyone to slow down at the slightest hint of the future peril ahead. So writers wring their hands instead. Is it their lot to tell everyone to go back to their humble yet livable villages or to watch their step as they lurch towards the precipice? What function can writing have under such circumstances?

Writing under such circumstances can be a bit confusing. It can render the blankness of the page as an increasingly stubborn adversary.

In front of the blank page my mind is a rabid animal as I begin to tick off all of the various different rationales for writing, some of them very good ones. This is a pragmatic country, these United States, so for that reason one must turn quickly to the question of utility. There can be no greater praise than to say something is useful, that it works. But what is useful about writing?

Is it that writing must have social utility? But why must it be useful. Can't it simply be?

I can't imagine dogs having this conversation. They simply dribble a little of their literature on the signpost, but none of them ever really stop to linger over another dog's sentiments.

There is a little marking of territory that can be accounted for. Another dog aims a little bit higher, and over the years there is a very light stain that looks a little like a watermark. At the visual level, all efforts pretty much blend together. The olfactory symphony is probably another matter altogether, but that is a secret to most people. Most dogs seem to just be thankful they have their go-to spot in the morning.

Really, isn't writing a little bit like talking to plants?

Like talking to plants and expecting that speech to lend an assist in growth, you have to be a little idealistic to want to render your thoughts into written form and distribute them. But which ideals are the least shopworn at this point?

Some poets, whose work I greatly admire, look for complete social transformation as the goal for writing. Anything short of that is suspect.

These poets are men and women of high ambition and a matching high intelligence. Perhaps they will be able to pull it off, the ultimate magic trick of pulling the rabbit out of the hat. And if there is any poet among them who would be able to manage all the assorted bits that would have to go back together again, I would heartily recommend them for such a task. But I question my own abilities to pull off such a feat just as I might question my ability to find a cure for colon cancer all by myself. For this kind of quest, there is struggle, then more struggle, and then ultimately the participating humans struggle some more. Finally, in their last Germanic breath, they utter “Ich habe keine Zeit für Freude.” I’m on the same train as them. I just get off before I hit the final stop going 120 MPH.

I think of these kinds of poets as ones who would like to be the voices of their generation, balancing the scales of justice in ways that judges (so wedded to their imperfect institutions as they are) cannot. These poets are fond of quoting Shelley’s famous dictum “Poets are the unofficial legislators of the soul.” But if poets are doing all this legislating, my question is about who is getting down to the basics of enforcement? Who decides what is going to be enforced? Isn’t that a terrible logistics problem? All those unruly souls that have been momentarily tamed by reading words and negotiating line breaks may all of a sudden break out of their reading complacency and revert back to their past instinctual surliness that is not guided by cerebral effort. As a poet, I don’t want to be responsible for aligning and organizing all those currently meandering souls heading back to their dirty habits and instincts. One runs afoul of the biological that way. These poets lose sight of the fact that people are hardwired to eat, sleep, and grunt at the news.

But oh how I do wish these poets a little pleasure now and then. I want them to find someone whom they can submit to all forms of physical pleasure, someone whom they can enjoy time with as they submit to the ultimate joy. Their aim might be more orgasmic than it is the complete overturning of the body politic. And if they achieved their aim, then that moment would no doubt happen singularly rather than in large collective masses huddling on the docks ... though the latter would be quite a spectacle.

The project of using writing as a tool for political transformation is a noble one. But political transformation is more of a crapshoot than anything else. Even if the Jenga tower collapses, there is no assurance that someone will

rebuild it according to the master architect's plans. The modern insurance industry was born from people placing bets in a coffeehouse on which ships would return from their venture and which ones would not. You simply do not know which of the mind's verbal foibles will survive to have everyone organize around it. You *might as well be* talking to plants and you should be if your desire is to change soil chemistry. So what's with all this writing and publishing in the literary journals of exclusive liberal arts colleges, appealing to editors with expensive taste in clothing, and enlisting college students to ride shotgun? Shouldn't these poets be writing poems for stockholders?

And then there are those poets who exclaim their work is invoking some sense of humanity, exploring the depths of the human project and human placement on this earth, how we're all in it together as a species. This sentiment deserves a bit of tenderness. However, for anyone who wishes to invoke the human as the reason for doing any of this writing stuff, then I would submit they've never been Jewish (or Lakota, or Roma, or Rohingya). Or at least not for very long. [Oh, the humanity!] That humans disappoint as much as they can delight should be no surprise to anyone who has been forced to linger among this planet's most terrifying bipeds. In fact, this reporter's observations reveal the species to be quite reliably absurd. Indeed, THAT is the kind of humanity I can get behind.

For this same reason, I can't tolerate the project of poetry as one that appropriates beauty. The notion of the beautiful is just too variant. The grotesque arrives as punctually as the sublime. But I am envious of those who can so effortlessly pluck beauty out of mid-air and believe in its defining properties. Perhaps had I studied flower arranging or decoupage I might understand this impulse more thoroughly. That is not to say that I can't be a slave to the effects of a beautiful thing. Indeed, it is this kind of servitude that I seek out in the world, and when it happens I am grateful. It's just that it happens with less and less regular occurrence as my days dwindle down to their endpoint. Perhaps some grease needs to be applied to the mechanism and once again I can embrace beauty as the sweetheart I never had. Such a wonderful time we will have, and the desserts will be served on such clean plates.

But there are still other kinds of poets. A friend of mine signs off every e-mail with this signature phrase down at the bottom: "Writing is an act of reclamation and revolution. It is a dance with power."

Well, maybe it is this for some people, but for me it seems to be more like a source of amusement that ensures I stay distracted from those who are dancing with power. This kind of poet who believes that the power of words can crack a walnut is dangerous more often than not. This kind of poet is one that is highly ambitious and sees writing as a vehicle to improve the person's status (but it seems that the person should have thought about the loss of status before becoming a writer, no?). I guess we all want a come-up from time to time. I understand how often that crazy pastime of maintaining one's dignity kicks in without knowing. It's right up there with "fight" and "flight" as a survival skill.

I can hear still other kinds of poets informing the rest of us who are deflated by the zeitgeist and assured of its absurdity that we should get with it, maybe paint a little Disney smile over the jagged edges. They speak of seduction and secret handshakes in back rooms to slice through systemic inertia. They give sermons on being aggressive and the correctness of their positioning. They know all too well how to navigate through the points of purchase. They know how to close the deal. However, deals always come with some conditions. The blank page, on the other hand, comes with no conditions except that you can't stray past the edges. This is a comfort. Just a pen and the pretension of being a scribbling animal.

I can't deny, however, that writing for a certain kind of presumed paying audience calls us back to the flock. The basis of exchange makes me commit to the best aspects of this species (it sure beats all that prey and predator stuff I'd have to negotiate if I were living out in the forest). Yet I am wary, my eyes adapting to the low levels of light. I twitch and feel my pulse quicken. I am about to speak, but what can I say? I am not so easily herded. I am *Domesticus horribilis*.

With all of this naysaying I am being something of a sphincter agitator, my stink eye proudly displayed on the banner that yet waves. I'm a skewering fool like so many other malcontents. Shall I thrust and parry until I have made my own fancy dance around the kitchen island? I tend my little contrarian's garden with the utmost care.

But what are some of the reasons I might embrace, if only for a moment, as necessary for committing pen to paper?

The more I imagine a reason or rationale, the more prone to paralysis I become. So I must obey the biological imperative and keep moving. That means perhaps muting the teleological impulse.

Or it might mean going head on into the realm of the biological and, well, if I am honest, I must admit to a bit of graphomania. My maternal grandmother relentlessly notated 3-4 lines about her daily life in small spiral notebooks for her entire adult life. Nearly sixty years. Boxes and boxes of these little notebooks. That kind of compulsion seems familiar to me. Perhaps I've just fallen into unsightly habits, but if I haven't written in a while, I get the same feeling I get when I've been wearing a pair of socks too long. I get uncomfortable. I sense an inordinate number of layers of dead skin need to be rubbed off. A sense of things becoming moderately putrid lingers in the room.

Beyond this mere animal instinct to lineate thought, I am inclined to traffic in the absurd. This is the one dimension of the human that never ceases to delight (even though I imagine it rankles many others and at times causes a great amount of frustration for them). A full-on kiss with human absurdity can provide some miraculous moments of outrageous understanding. I mean from a certain perspective, everything is absurd. Why the shape of the ear? Why the sound of the word "cow" [just say it fifty times aloud and listen to how it resonates in your head and you will see what I mean — what does this experience have to do with that four-legged brown creature?]. And why in God's name does sexual intercourse follow this insufferable peg-in-hole model? Yeah, I suppose we can blame the penis on the ancient armored placoderm fishes, but you see what I mean about absurdity being everywhere?

Writing has to be one of the most absurd forms of exercise and mental stretching. But look at what pleasure absurdity brings even as it rankles. Oh, yes, maybe there is no clear set way to move forward anymore (because everything is absurd), but look at how quickly utter absurdity can bring pleasure or a smile or two. Or maybe embracing everything as absurd is the way forward. It is the equivalent of letting a foolish grin take over the face as the mad hand-waving about the future begins. The grin of the goon serves to temper, to placate. It lets the loose hairs fly away from the face before the populace begins to brace for impact.

An embrace of the absurd is the most vital project that I can name at this point, my leap beyond the event horizon into the ideal. I name the two horses pulling the cart Beckett and Ionesco. The birds riding on their back are Rozewicz and St. John Perse. We will drive through the horrific and the tragic to dance with the offensive and the nonsensical, the vaudeville of the slave revolt against making sense.

But for just a moment if I were to abandon my previous role as bed wetter, as one who proclaims a childish ideological protest, I might climb into the driver's seat and leave a mark on everyone's conscience with my particular branding iron of political action. I'd pick the pertinent issue of the day to be offshore tax havens. They are pure objects of scorn as far as I can tell. They have exacerbated the inequality in the world greatly (though this, by itself, has also resulted in a whole new vocabulary of painful writhing), turning the marginalized to impoverished recklessness (which the reality shows have amply documented). They allow the rich and powerful to abscond with public funds to construct towering boondoggles and other assorted private sandboxes and no one is the wiser. The secret departure of public funds underscores the desperate situations of many people in the world who live in countries (and isn't this all countries to a certain extent?) where the presence of public funds would dramatically increase the quality of life (prayers are sent instead). The absence of such public funds leads to the devastation of the earth: rabid deforestation, soil contamination and erosion, water overconsumption, and fauna depletion (but the clouds get to run free). The offshore tax havens and shadow banking systems allow for weapons smugglers to peddle their wares with impunity, to prolong civil wars and other fun for extended families. They allow for known criminals and other rogue elements to get around sanctions, and they allow for the wealthy to enjoy even more return on capital than they can usually leverage (which leads to wonderful photo ops on the occasions where they get to step out and really strut their stuff). All of these turn massive numbers of people toward poverty and the madness of usurping their natural environment and applying profound systemic pressure on the natural (read exploitable) world. Though Nature does have an opt-out in its contract. Living in poverty means hacking away at the corporeal world (with a knock-off Swiss Army knife from China) and in any other way imaginable because survival at the poverty level relies on human ingenuity (and human ingenuity relies on a canny forebrain mining the depths of the primeval midbrain). The shadow banking system is implicated in the numerous environmental abominations that it allows to move forward. When there is

a crime, we have all learned one thing about finding the culprit ... follow the money, Herr Inspektor.

Does the shell company have any purpose besides being a vehicle to hide the real ownership of assets? Truly it is absurd the way they proliferate and nest like matryoshka dolls only for the purpose of escaping easy detection. Thousands upon thousands of them. Hidden away on islands where exotic plantain cocktails thrive and in forgotten jurisdictions barely even winked at by Google Maps engineers. There they ensure no casual curiosity will encounter them. Is it any coincidence that the exponential growth of offshore tax havens in the early 1980s coincides with the pulling away of the global elite from everyone else? Or do only the politician supply-siders get to wear the party hats? Prior to that point it wasn't easy to park outsized funds without being taxed on them, without detection, but the tax haven/tax paradise has incentivized massive profit-taking and other parlor games for the members of Abusers Anonymous. Therefore, tax havens amplify Thomas Piketty's $r > g$ equation which has shown that in all capitalist societies the presence of money will always outweigh the efforts of those who try to create wealth through making something or creating something of substance. In short, these tax havens facilitate the mortgaging of the future to prop up the past.

In doing so, we are the only species on the planet that would rather pay homage to where it has been, to enforce the edicts of history, rather than measure the days ahead for their novelty and possibilities. We defy our own biological imperative. And that is patently absurd. Surprise!

But it is not a surprise.

We ravage the earth to prop up the structures of the past and reinforce past relations. But all of these relations are predicated on some rational connection to the game of exchange, to a market, to a web of pricing signals that if I stay up late at night to study them all I might have them figured out by the break of dawn. Or I might not. It is absurd to think that my analysis of them will result in any clear direction for me to follow. My spreadsheets and flow charts will not tell me how money flows away from grasslands and rivers and rock formations into bank accounts in the British Virgin Islands, the Isle of Man; then it circles back around to live its life as externality in the marshlands, the scarred mountains and the clear-cut plateaus. From this narrative sweep arises authoritarianism in a moment of

environmental crisis which is countered by pessimism of the intellect yet optimism of the will.

However, it is the Stoics who tell us that a life lived in expectation is absurd.

So right now I will have to resort to making a mystical pact with the creatures around me. I will have to play reciprocity games with reindeer, manage a code with the manatees in the channels. At long last I will become some sort of magical thinking nativist, one who has always stood in opposition to the needs of the larger society and its civilizing force ... one who has always been eradicated or driven to the margins and left to adapt other sustainable patterns. There I will begin the re-enchantment. I will call out to a celestial body, to a cardinal direction, to a plant that stays white in the winter, to the perennial attack of the gnats, to the seeds that grow in the advancing desert, to the antibodies coursing through the antelope's blood, to the hot spray shooting out of the last polar bear's nose, and I will begin

to write down these words in my Neanderthal scrawl. I will hang in the balance, dependent on my skill to fashion a grammatical talisman out of the absurd.

And none of this will make any sense to mostly everyone I know.

Jennifer Karmin and Bernadette Mayer

The Sexual Organs of the IRS

bimbos in bikinis on horses at passover
it's spring breakfast, beware of clouds
it's snow that's wafting like a geiger-muller
counter which doesn't waft but registers the degrees
of blueness

the sea slug carries a disposable penis
it's a use-it-then-lose-it penis
like the guaranteed annual income
promised in the past, not discussed in the present

but oh how could a penis be like an income?
a penis isn't an income but an income can be
a penis whereas your income could never be
a vagina though your vagina could be your income
get it? there is, in nature, no disposable
vagina because it doesn't stick out, it sticks in
like a volcano

a supernova for the workers of the world
reaching a maximum intrinsic luminosity
an astounding astonishment
be careful or you could light your hair on fire
how precisely can one measure
an object's position and momentum at the same time

i got a supernova for xmas
it had 2 sides, it glowed, i shared
it with my sister, it made our vaginas feel good
at first we were shocked like when you see a creek monster
but soon we noticed we had become spaceships
cruising into jello like a grape or pear piece

i heard purple jesus took his ancestral fork to the irs
a sign around his neck, a choir of angels chanting

PROPERTY IS ROBBERY PROPERTY IS ROBBERY

at the risk of harshing my mellow
i'd like to say
my penis is a tree branch
my penis is an electronic cigarette
my penis is a water balloon
my penis is an obelisk
my penis is a pussy willow
my penis is a monument in monument square, troy, ny
my penis is the great wall of china
my penis is an xmas tree
my penis is a taffeta skirt
my penis is tired and can't get up
my penis is hungry, i have to give it some meat
my penis is vegetarian, tofu only please

important memo issued
in the midst of a no trespass zone:

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE

PLEASE REFRAIN FROM NOT TRESPASSING

Cruising for Utopia: A Telegram to Raver

we are on a cruise where there
is a conference of utopographers. from all over
the world they've come; nobody knows where the
cruise is headed that's cause it's going nowhere.
all the workers on the cruise ship resemble
philip good. a few utopographers have jumped ship
& a few have ascended to a different planet named
fishkill. utopographically speaking, this cruise
is a resounding success, except for the rain. it
wasn't raining in the right places & by 'right'
is meant 'where the rain is needed' so, what
the fuck. the clouds knew that so it seemed to
rain half-heartedly. plus we don't think anybody human should
be in this group – they're too stupid! we're
putting them all in the cruise ship's detention facility
& they won't get any ice cream, that'll show them.
all will be given rehabilitation classes not to even think about
money & it will work. no raspberry tarts either!
no blueberry shortcake, no little bottles of
alcoholic desire, no nasturtium, no peony shirts!
it'll be as if they have a singing group called
NO FUN! if you can imagine that! they have to eat eggs.

if you can imagine that
you can imagine the vampyroteuthis infernalis
with 3 types of penises,
a tip that separates and regenerates
a spoon-shaped kind
and a third to grasp objects
along with stroking its mate's belly.
sea creatures sailing on a cruise
and a pig who walks upright
in a pin-striped suit
with a slot in his head for money
or whatever new currency the utopographers
invent or abolish or deconstruct.
now is the time for solitary thought
and the capacity for self-reflection.

“Turning into Something Else”: Post-Apocalyptic Survival in Laura Sims’s *Staying Alive*

In Laura Sims’s 2016 volume *Staying Alive*, environmental apocalypse is presumed to be inevitable. Multiple scenarios of the end are rehearsed in its disjunctive and minimalist lines. The book, however, focuses on post-apocalyptic survival: on how a lone survivor or groups of survivors stay alive, and on the role that language plays in that survival.

Because the brief reading I’ll offer aligns with two of the book’s epigraphs, I begin there. The epigraph that introduces part one is from H. G. Wells and reads: “I want to go ahead of Father Time with a scythe of my own.” Wells’s image of the writer as the harbinger of death is partly an announcement of subject matter; it signals that this opening section of Sims’s volume will sketch numerous possible scenarios for the ending of, if not *the* world, then at least *our* world, life as industrialized humans in the West have known it. Additionally, the quotation announces the desire for proleptic power enacted by the writer who attempts to depict future catastrophe, who dares to describe the world’s end “ahead of ... Time.” Citing a fiction writer, it acknowledges that the primary force animating Sims’s look into the future is not so much scientific information about ongoing global transformations as it is the imagination, and faith in the imagination’s truth.

The imagination, fundamental to the creation not only of a society’s stories but more sweepingly of culture, is crucial to my interpretation of the epigraph to the book’s third and final section of poems. This quotation from Rebecca Solnit reads: “He ceased to be lost not by returning but by turning into something else.” As I understand Sims’s elusive text, she is much concerned with how our survival will rest on our ability to re-purpose whatever we salvage from past culture. The elliptical character of these poems suggests that our culture’s resources may be woefully inadequate now to confront what is coming, and they will be even more mismatched to the post-apocalyptic future. Nonetheless, they will constitute the available materials with which survivors’ imaginations can build “something else.” The future scenarios in *Staying Alive* derive from what has already happened or already been represented in literature. This is made explicit in the

author's note at the back, where Sims acknowledges that much of the book is composed of "words, lines, images and ideas ... informed by and/or appropriated from" varied books, articles, films, and TV shows. She provides there a list of more than twenty sources, ranging from classic works of science fiction, Arthur C. Clarke's *Childhood's End* and H. G. Wells's *The War of the Worlds*, to Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel, *The Road*; from explorations of ancient cultures such as Warner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* or a study of the ancient Maya to contemporary survival guides like *How to Stay Alive in the Woods*; from a book on climate change and the new geography of violence to Laura Ingalls Wilder's children's classic, *Little House on the Prairie*; from Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* to an oral history of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

How heavily the poems rely on received words and images becomes particularly evident in the book's extended "Afterword," which opens with a passage from *The Road*, a novel that Sims explains initially haunted her for its frightening vision of humankind's future, but which she came to appreciate as "focused on the survival, however fraught and tenuous, of humankind."¹ The passage is one she came to understand as being about how people in a disaster respond to the anxieties of parenthood, of ignorance about what is happening, and of sudden, unexpected helplessness. These anxieties, we infer, are essential drivers for the book. In the rest of the "Afterword" the reader learns the specific sources for many of the poems' lines and images in particular books Sims read as well as in her memories and dreams. By drawing so frankly and so heavily on preexisting works of literature, Sims suggests that the primary tools we have with which not only to imagine the future but also to experience and respond to it inevitably come from what we have already seen and imagined, perhaps particularly from what we have already put into words. Well before the reader reaches the "Afterword" or the "Author's Note" at the end of *Staying Alive*, the familiarity of the poems' visions of catastrophe makes clear that where we are going is some version of where we have been.

Sims's procedure of using depictions from the past to convey the future also suggests that she understands time as a medium in which past, present, and future are thoroughly entangled. Of course, temporal tangles are characteristic of apocalyptic writing, since it often describes what has not yet happened as if already determined, as if it were the past seen by someone in the future. But, as Sims's title suggests, *Staying Alive* is interested

not just in the end but in what lies beyond it. Consequently, the book's treatment of time may be fruitfully linked to the notion of temporal polyphony Anna Tsing introduces in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*— a book that takes the way people live in relation to matsutake mushrooms that grow in blasted landscapes as a guide to survival when the controlled world we thought we had fails. Tsing is interested in assemblages that are part of what she calls “third nature,” what manages to live despite and on the fringes of capitalism: “To even notice third nature,” Tsing writes, “we must evade assumptions that the future is that singular direction ahead. Like virtual particles in a quantum field, multiple futures pop in and out of possibility; third nature emerges within such temporal polyphony.”² Correspondingly, Laura Sims sketches multiple possible post-capitalist futures, some of which are urban, some heavily mechanized, some wild and stereotypically primitive, and the temporal rhythms they suggest vary significantly. As I've noted, these futures are constructed from cultural remnants, from what has come to survivors, in one poem's words, “when the culture passed over.” It as if what Sims foresees is the cultural equivalent of radioactive or particulate fallout; survivors have little choice but to make do with whatever descends on them from the pulverized past.

To demonstrate how the past becomes the future in this book, here's a page from the first section that offers different visions of world-altering catastrophe, recounted sometimes as if they have already taken place, sometimes as if they are currently unfolding:

The present sheared

Asunder from its parent cliffs and all the past was just

The sound of metal

Warming

At the edge of space

At dawn. Every blasted city

Stilled —

The light! It came from *underneath*— inside the earth—
And shining upward, through
The rocks, the ground, and everything (12)

The end-of-world cataclysm that stills every city, perhaps a nuclear holocaust, is presented as a severing of the present from the past. Yet the last lines could well derive from the oral history of the Chernobyl disaster Sims named in her author's note—that is, from our past. Drawing upon past testimony suggests that even while what is to come is in some ways unprecedented, at the same time we have already seen the end of the world — and not just in Chernobyl in 1986, but in other places and times where people present might have had such visions of light erupting from within the earth: for instance, in the Bikini Atoll where 23 nuclear devices were exploded in the late 1940s and the 1950s, or the Nevada Test Site where more than 928 nuclear weapons have been detonated, 828 of them underground. At the same time, other possibilities for the nature of the world-altering catastrophe are also evoked: the word “Warming,” set alone on its own line, points to a less localized and more gradual way in which industrialized humans are destroying life as our species has known it, through the consumption of fossil fuels that is producing increasingly rapid global warming. Moving onto the facing page, the reader encounters additional versions of catastrophic threat; the anxious governing question, “What is that,” suggests that those present do not know exactly what is happening even as it unfolds:

What is that
Flicker in the sky
That swift liquefaction
That masked and expectant
Black muzzle
That overhead the dawn
That limbs and tentacles, followed by

Night

And a devil of a row (13)

Here again, some of the means of destruction introduced by “that” are familiar, if only from lousy Hollywood horror films, where, for instance, cities may be engulfed by a tentacled sea monster. Possibilities proliferate: is that black muzzle the masked face of a terrorist, the visage of some beast, the barrel of a gun? Each possibility draws on some pre-existing cataclysmic scenarios. Some of the listed threats seem half joking, like the sea creature, but a phrase like “that swift liquefaction” suggests truly terrifying prospects: the earth behaving as a liquid under the impact of quakes or bombs, and perhaps also the liquefying of bodies that could result from an “engineered virus” (72) introduced through bioterrorism.

As Sims allows possibilities to multiply and does so by drawing on earlier representations, she makes two obvious points: first, with so many threats to civilization, its end is overdetermined, inevitable; and second, people have already represented those threats in all sorts of cultural productions, perhaps because we have long suspected ourselves doomed. Recalling Sun Ra, it’s after the end of the world — and we have known it for a while.

Yet, however much Sims’s readers may live in a state of ongoing crisis and pervasive risk, in fact we haven’t experienced all-out apocalypse, and that horror remains in many ways beyond our imagining. Sims acknowledges this through the fragmented, minimalist character of her text. The few words she employs, often in asyntactic units, sketch only the barest outlines of events, while the predominance on her pages of space and its silence suggests all that is beyond our current perception. Relying on severed bits of the versions of destruction we have already known or imagined, Sims only gestures toward the world-ending catastrophe which she cannot presume to imagine fully. In her book, what we know, which comes from what we have known, proves extremely partial — like that elusive “flicker in the sky.” Linguistic tatters are all we have to describe the ruins and to communicate within them.

The vision of post-cataclysmic survival she outlines is both outside our experience and disturbingly familiar. On the one hand, she suggests a level of social and cultural disruption that most people in the West have not yet

known, as in this page: “A prolonged ululation: pantry vessels / Ring and shift as the social body // Is // Guttled, slashed / And gutted” (14). Another passage suggesting pervasive toxicity announces having to abandon key infrastructures: “We’ll bury the headquarters, schools, and the baths // And the water main” (45). But if those pages suggest disasters that are for the most part unprecedented in the West, other pages depict phenomena we already know all too well, especially mass movements of miserable displaced or evacuated populations, and people behaving with seemingly inhuman cruelty or lack of compassion: “I slew / The last curate whose wailing / Possessed me” (23); or “I became / One of them, leaning over the railing /// And no one would help / The humans left // Not even the humans” (20).

The countering hopeful aspect of Laura Sims’s varied depictions of the situation of those “grim set on living,” lies in her insistence on the possibility of positive transformation that may occur through the repurposing of remnants. Take, for instance, this page:

Astonishment

Turned

Into something

Wet leather

Where men

Had stood for a moment, a moment ago (17)

Admittedly, one might read this only as recording horrors: the melting of human bodies, perhaps from contact with some kind of chemical toxin, into something resembling wet leather, the eradication of survivors. Or perhaps leather here suggests gay leather culture and men who died of AIDS. Nonetheless, I think the notion of astonishment turning into something is a crucial one in terms of survival. Wet leather might even be

an image for this kind of necessary transformation of one's orientation, a crucial repurposing of whatever remains: Not designed for use in rain, leather jackets are heavy and clammy when wet, but they nonetheless provide protection from the elements. One might also think of wet leather as the toughened skin of those who have adapted to living and working outdoors. These lines may suggest the kind of resourcefulness that Tsing explores, as they bring to mind Solnit's line, "He ceased to be lost not by returning but by turning into something else." There is no going back, but it may be possible to remake what remains of the past into something that serves future survival.

To close, I'll introduce a more skeptical note by reconsidering the passage in which Sims mentions the culture passing over: "When the culture passed over / We bathed in its light in its fear in its / Mountain stream" (36). That last phrase is one of many in *Staying Alive* that point toward stories of the frontier and wilderness, of survival in and through the wild, as among the materials to be repurposed. Here's an example:

The land. The grass. The wagon. The wind. The land. The road.

The trees.
The sound.
The water.

The rider.

Wild

Animals. The trace. The wheels. The fire. Space. The bowl.
(54)

Although Sims in her "Afterword" admits that our narratives of survival by returning "to the forest, meadows, lakes and mountain streams" are "pure hokum and fantasy," still, the vision of a pioneer life, which involves

hardship and unrelenting labor but also “a fresh world, a clean slate,” is something, she writes, “Hard not to long for, even if it never existed, and never could, in the wake of whatever may come” (71). That her book’s vision of the post-apocalyptic world includes tall trees, star-filled skies, “wild / Grasses,” and sap rising, and evokes the westward movement we associate with manifest destiny and masculinist primitivism may indicate an unwillingness to give up the possibility that even those mythologies — which were destructive to the continent’s indigenous peoples and fostered Americans’ destructive relation to the natural world — may offer some salvageable resource for those who remain alive when the world as we know it ends.

But perhaps, less optimistically, the inclusion of this material acknowledges how much the human imagination leans toward nostalgia, toward returning, rather than toward that needed turning-into-something-else. Given the pain that’s generated by contemplating the scale of the losses, deaths, and extinctions promised by ongoing planetary degradation, such soothing nostalgic gestures — gestures we might associate with early environmentalism — may well prove durable threads in the fabric of post-apocalyptic survival, part of its temporal polyphony.

However we read Sims’s invocation of frontier myths linked to ideas that have fostered violence toward humans and nonhumans alike, her having constructed *Staying Alive* so that it relies heavily on inherited fragments of language and culture set in empty spaces makes her book a part of what she identifies as the project of the future: a repurposing of cultural and linguistic remains in order to move on and survive the end of the world. Her process of creation suggests that the challenges facing survivors in the future are also the challenges we confront right now.

NOTES

1. Laura Sims, *Staying Alive* (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2016), 65. Subsequent numbers in parentheses refer to pages in this book.

2. Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), viii.

klipschutz

Gasp

They're

deleting the trees
to make room to raise cheese
burgers down in the Amazon
rainforest.

They're

eating up the atmosphere —
I hope your children's children
don't like air. (Can't miss
what you never had.)

They're

growing buildings
miles high, full of people
eating burgers raised in
vanished forests.

They're

magicians who make trees
and air disappear. Maybe
trees and air are reunited
with the *desaparecidos*.

When

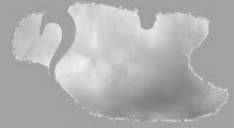
air is sealed and labeled,
guess who will be selling
the bottles?

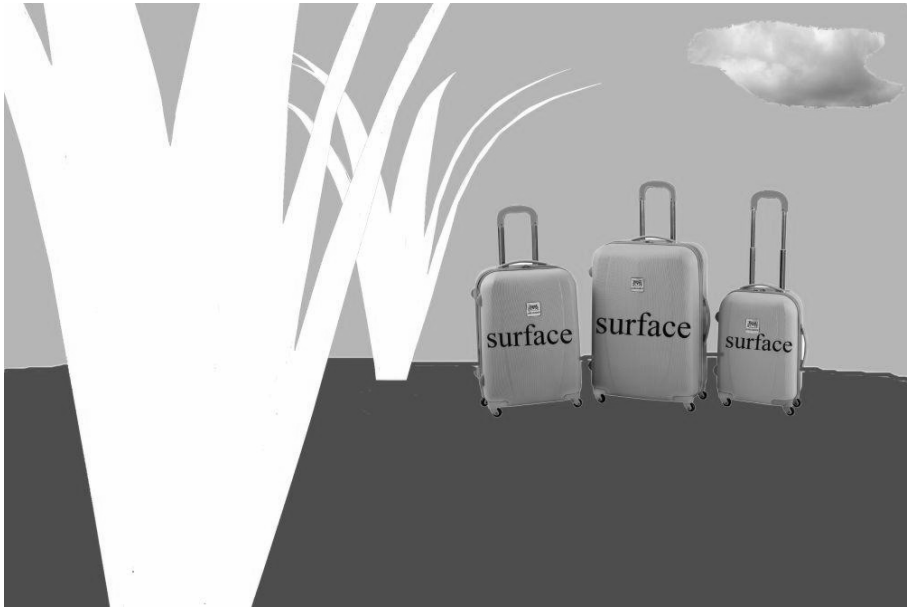
Márton Koppány

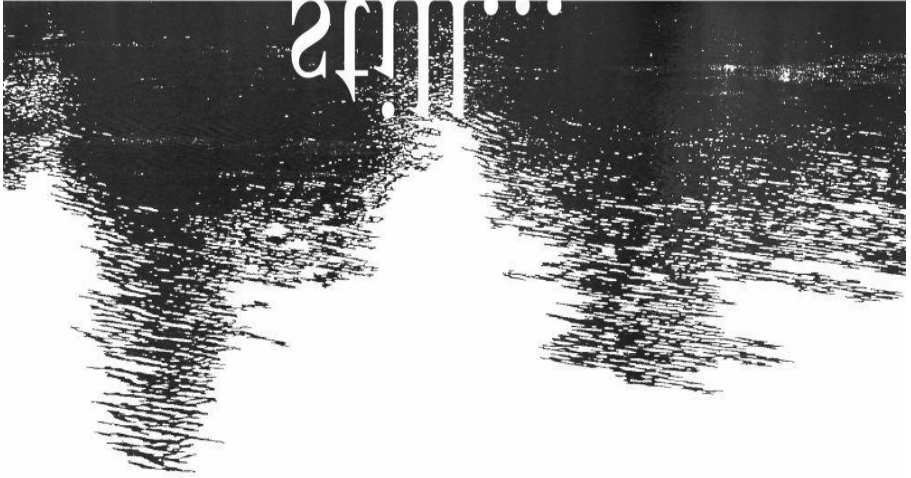
**The Mist
almost a question
Packing
still**
from **The Adventures of Baron Munchausen**

[Please see following pages]









Handwritten signature or scribble.



The Last Ellipsis

The Hungarian government has drafted new laws to criminalise those who help irregular migrants seeking asylum.

1 glass of water = 1 year

1/2 glass of water = 1/2 year

.

.

.

[There are hardly any refugees in Hungary.]

THE PROMPT

It is indisputable that human beings have pumped so much greenhouse gas into the atmosphere that we have fucked up the climate for god knows how long. We've poisoned the seas with fertilizer runoffs, petroleum, plastics and pharmaceuticals. We have destabilized fish stocks to the point of collapse by industrial scale fishing and our staple food crops by mono-culturing them. We've clear-cut whole forests, killed off most large mammals, waged chemical war with insects and unwanted plants. Our wars with ourselves and with "nature" have and will continue to have long lasting effects on earth's delicate ecosystems. We haven't even mentioned melted down reactors and radioactive waste. Though predicting the future is a risky business, the only futures we can imagine for most living things on this planet appear to be grim. And that this grimness may well last many thousands of years.

And yet (and yet?), we continue to make what may as well be called, however reluctantly or enthusiastically, art.

How does what we've done, what we continue to do, to our only planet affect what you make?

When you think about the future, and a potential audience, or the lack of same, how does that affect what you make?

Under these circumstances, do you ever wonder why you continue to make art?

How does all this make you feel? What keeps you going? Your response can take any form or shape you like ...

Moria Books

