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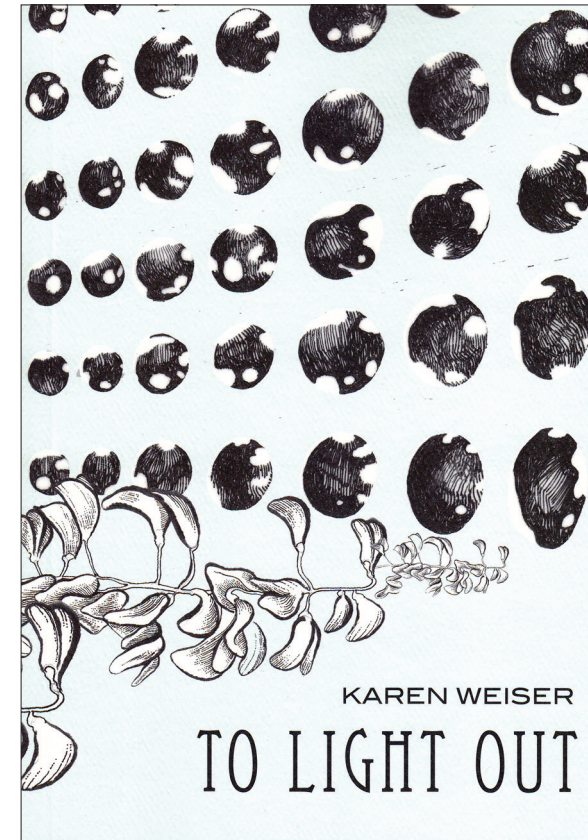
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Karen Weiser • To Light Out

To Light Out

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In memory of my mother,
Sylvia Blanche Weiser
&
dedicated to my daughter,
Sylvie Beulah Weiser Berrigan

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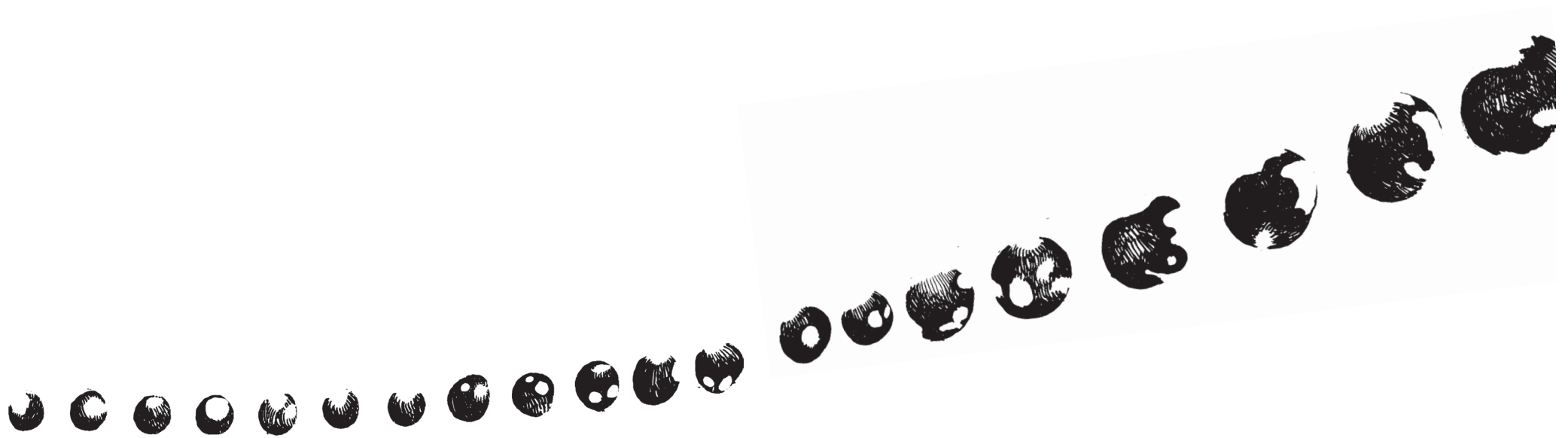
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INTRODUCTION

“...when angels speak with man they turn themselves to him and conjoin themselves with him...”¹

Turning toward one another, eighteenth-century philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg and his angels talked, and in these exchanges found that words themselves turn. The more spiritual the writing, the more the words turn. The highest levels of heaven contain words totipotent² in their capacity to represent. For Swedenborg, “Heavenly writing is such that thought cannot exhaust it.”³

Human language descends to us from this perfect spiritual language by way of what Swedenborg called “correspondences.” Every word contains natural meanings and inward, spiritual meanings mostly lost to us, like the Puritans’ dual registers of language as both sacred and profane, or Plotinus’ relation of the material to the spiritual. By beholding the symbolic quality of language, sensing the correspondences, one finds the angels: “...all the words and their meanings are correspondences, and thus contain a spiritual or internal sense, in which are the angels....”⁴ Perhaps Swedenborg employs the etymological resonance of the word angel with “messenger” to imply bearing a message across something that lies between states of being.⁵

In his mid-twentieth century poetry, Jack Spicer’s⁶ conception of correspondence is coupled with communication by letters, where letters are both the form of the address and the units that make up words. He doesn’t elaborate on this so much as performs it for us in *After Lorca*, writing letters to the already dead Federico García Lorca. In these letters Spicer fashions poetry in a ghostly act of correspondence, with all poems in communication with one another through a chain of signification so that poems/letters act seemingly like language. He writes, “Even these letters. They correspond with something (I don’t know what) that you have written (perhaps as unapparently as that lemon corresponds to

this piece of seaweed) and, in turn, some future poet will write something which *corresponds* to them.” His pun is made clear by the line that follows: “That is how we dead men write to each other.”⁷

All poems are variants of one another in their relation to the outside, or what he calls the real. This outside is the thing one must tune into in order to receive the poems, and thus one of Spicer’s metaphors for a poet is a radio. “The poet is a radio. The poet is a liar. The poet is a counter-/punching radio.”⁸ Spicer, like Swedenborg, is interested in the messages emanating from what usually lies beyond perception.

In 1964, using a massive antenna to detect radio waves, scientists Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson discovered that the static (or cosmic microwave background radiation) continuously emerging through the receiver was from no human-made radio source. With the assistance of astrophysicists they determined that the mysterious sound springs from the big bang, its radiation continuing to move through space as it expands. The poet as radio must also be hearing not only Martians, as Spicer humorously called the external force pushing through from the outside, but the origin of the universe.

In 1734, Swedenborg was the first person to propose the nebular hypothesis,⁹ conjecturing that the sun and planets formed out of rapidly rotating nebular matter. The nebular hypothesis is still the basis of current conceptions about the formation of the solar system. In his book “Earths in the Universe” (1860 translation of *De Telluribus*, 1758), Swedenborg writes of his journeys traveling with angels to visit the moon and other planets where he talked with the aliens. His interplanetary experiences in *De Telluribus* expressly foresee the discovery of Uranus, the seventh planet in the solar system, in 1781.¹⁰ In his mind he saw it. He claimed heavenly visitors gave him the information. This travel was a motion through the inward space of his consciousness, which Swedenborg simultaneously perceived as outer space. He moved through both inner and outer distances by altering his mental state.

* * *

When I became pregnant my brain and body were suddenly filled with static. This static was less a sound than a sense that the flickering of snow on a tv screen had been made into liquid and pumped into my veins. It was difficult to think, hard to do anything at all. After a while I realized that it was her signal. I couldn't hear my own ways of thinking or feeling with this other person's atoms multiplying inside of me. It was the sound of the big bang, and my own radio brain was tuned in. I decided, in Swedenborgian manner, to turn toward the static, that ordinary signature. The following poems diagram that act.

I

ES: "I have repeatedly talked with angels about this matter."¹¹

JS: "Now if you have a cleft palate and are trying to speak with the tongues of men and angels, you're still going to speak with a cleft palate."¹²

The doctor shines a light into my mouth and says, "Her eyes peer back at me. She is standing." Her consciousness is located in my head, her body filling up the entire space of my form.

IN THE PRESENCE OF ANOTHER

The dispatches, possibly, picked up
a static I couldn't register
multiplying in hypotheticals like cells
when lo! The tall belfries discontinued
for the hundredth time and in mid-sound snow
I picked up the crackling of another

These ordinary moments
already a museum of burnt machines
when slowed down to speech or consideration
are our kind and tender unreasons

The way habits perform a pathway
through infinite possibility
though we grieve to think we still murmur
and in murmuring are completing a habit

You hear the dead are unregenerate
tuning out or in at the edges of your ears
I grieve to think this murmur's
fringe of vague moves static to center—

cross it and you yourself are leavened
hawking the sound of space
still pushing out the big bang

TO TOUCH INHABITED CREATURES

In the barometer of flight
on the fender of the pillow's release
look down into the dislodged rain
it's not what you would expect
the problem of talking to that which has died
a theorem fades forward into the room

look down into the dark screen fluttering
knee deep in every river crossing
water sounds services for the dead

elements use every damn instrument
to play the turning over of absence
like the world has found a rare plum
in its invaded silence
something bitten through
this loose blue tableau
turnkey in relation to what it inhabits
left in the field, laid on the grass

SO IT GOES

In its minute bumping against the walls
the future's at the center of every room
a message for eyes roaming in place
no influence, except very roughly
dragging each moment into space
cold wave and its minor debonair moment

Forget the machine is only a device
as it shapes the exit from womb to physical
séance, from war cabinet to ornamental leaf
in clover or not in clover
the heart, that vapor-engine, wakes
in its incubator with a rhythm it can't itself hear

So it goes, and a mollusk can not draw
the machine as we can not draw the heart
with its hot round push
the future is but another form of retort
between machines with eyes
that see but a part

DO YOU FANCY WE REMAIN INFERIOR MACHINES

Do you fancy we remain inferior machines
heat generators idle and at play
rolled blankness, and an empty center

or turn churlish and refuse to mean somewhat;

I do not — have never — so far ruled out
a sensitive regime change between cells
that mobocracy of one spirit matter to the next

when the door opens, luggage I have none:
no calm reason fallen from the dark
no village in uproar muffled
no shadow analogs of the port beyond —

Yet, to costume a pulse!
that old aversion to silence
'tween rock and interior infinite
among identical thoroughfares of beating
a house fire among house fires

embodied at the foot of the parchment
we pay ordinary tolls with their
square hearts, channeling shapes

BUT I DAREN'T SEE

But I daren't see in the clumsiness of my thoughts
upholstered with ideas continually there
heart beat vistas with a bundle of damp
personal papers, hands, errors, light
wet with inheritance dress, mutation's habit

While you wait to return your lace, your furniture
is copied, and by furniture I mean DNA
spiraling into its own pulse
drinking the ancient transparent dream
emanating from the mattresses that are
our bodies. Put a finger on that run of notes
this is life and its laws are merely habits
bedding gravity with panorama in mind

Can you see—
those things you taught yourself to ignore
the colossus of them, with a historian's pity
and the corresponding failures of office
inside our herd of selves, a golden network
of selves, under the thatched roof-shade
of our present shepherd—
sink into the gravity of indistinct sound?

NOTHING SHUFFLES OFF OUR PRESENT

Nothing shuffles off our present
but forms form around the flaws
radios speak when the light source dims
venting movements that tremble with proximity

The channel steadies when I move closer
artistic sanitation used to be
called clarity; the kind of Revolution of one body
around another, but inside, kingdom of mere dreaming:

(no outside yet to bleat with unlovely aspect
nor bounties for channels of sight
thread to wide berth)

sounds un-tethered
as a shape to rest thought upon

inanimate materials say:
time will melt the increments
that attach thoughts into sequence

dip your watch in the marsh and fail me
so we will not grow moldy:

IT IS STRANGE THAT OUR SENSES MISTAKE US FOR
OBJECTS IN FLIGHT

Everyone has to pay for the affect that greets us in every other
little whirlpools of voice and hormone that reach the ear as one's own
You should hear me play a song of mutable appearances;
I was the color of dusk hearing this song any day you want
Its muting is the heft of our senses
hanging in the air when air alone can dislocate
with its thin edge of unmistakable quality

translated across that great chasm
we shackled up with its shipshape void
turning out our pockets in the rain
postponed by the shallow crater within every amplitude
by the widening register within every fuck ecology
by that vanishing point vanishing, conveyed
from one moment to that same moment, variously

FA LOVE PA

A macguffin is always silent
even when it speaks like a muscle
loving underwater it only breathes in air
with honking nouns and real-time leaps

The heart is not a macguffin
but our macguffin has a heart
connections corrupt but sound still travels
it speaks through the mattress of sea

through the welter of greedy foliage, wet next to the ear
fire we know, and human combinations
we would shake from the tree
to see beyond the place our eyes cross

Our own bludgeoned burgeoning out of sleep's asymmetry
defines the law of naming
if I cannot yearn for sea creatures
along the narrow of simultaneous living

I'm betrayed by the nothing inside of the form
with its lottery wardens of the flesh
Revelation is at heart a linguistic event
and all creatures with lungs can speak

SEVEN MESMERIC PARAPETS

Look out from your empty center, at the deed to yourself
in your hand, it is your hand, one part of the town's body
composed of infinite living agents and dead
an unbroken line of former genes has made your hand a possession
and a word sanctified by the conjunction of other words and whim
The frame, though a small surface volume, contains infinite depth;
another time hands off its hat to you: the title, deed, locomotion
of a name. Not to think of corpuscles of thought
that great pillager of time, composed
for the harpsichord and continual discovery
I was quite respectful of this, thinking of the lie of progress
which intimated I should shortly emerge from this dreadful wilderness
The church bell sounds like it's egging me off the stage
sanctified by motion, the greatest of all musicians. Toil not
possessor, your property's a parapet over your mind

THE BIRTH END OF THE CONFLAGRATION

Perfect buoyancy is a great debt
after the diffuse other side lifts
back into deep electricity, possibility
spooling away in its pathos and what is left
is solidified life, sudden victim of marvelous
atmospheric effects; animal with totipotent

handiwork;

help me I said with
shudder air in the basilica,
the source which is a haunted tune
that certain pathos to the life of electricity
returning, perforce, and then your body
(doorframe qualified as earthquake)
speaks to another without
your thinking it, a trader in cryptic intelligences
before the mind makes itself first

THE PLANT MUST GROW TIRED, AND I VERY SLEEPY

The potato says these things and admires them
for their quiet self languages:
“...a consideration of form and content
glass and wine, breath and field
gives me a grid to romance and order all eyes
here, a species there;
what is consciousness, a kind of rough platform?”

The potato says these things broad and comparatively:
“we are watching a potato grow
in the painting that is this poem
you and me, dear reader
insofar as genitals swing and remain in place
without notice or eviction
our magisterial gaze is this
quiet world of stanza, where
I be a lead male friend
you are a little earth anywhere
the female opposite of laughter
in how we react to one another
a sensitive regime change between
brooding stanzas of Earth.”

“Your verbal tick is beautiful
a metaphysic wit of the longest blossom
illuminating your face as it drapes its own century
Who knew the gaudiest peacock
would be the one without color
lying in an inquiry of our own gardens
sculpted to grow only biblical plants?”

HOLDING THE EMBLEM OF THOUGHT

From time to time, small intimacy murmurs
saying, “buy a ticket” while the flood lights merge;
tonal consistency allows us an inexhaustible renaissance
or is it instinctual delivery
as mixed metaphor for synaptic success?
One doesn’t shape what one pays for
One pays for the ability to tell —
what? Protean is the thing saying
only on loan from one’s skepticism —
each word changes us
holiday swimmers exchanging our rapture
for corrupted or half-corrupted souvenirs
from the moment. Just a moment —
then nothing. Forget your need in the
feckless song of it, still
the day would incline savagely
the pyramids will pink up the mantle
time and pricing and physical exertion
fall away from the tradeshow aftermath
leaving only the falling off
of the elegy as tie itself —
Forget your head
and its ecclesiastic bawdy greatness
Be no country episode in the
daily argument with speaking
Leaf through the puns of our shared musical scope
It’s small, the moment of opening between us
and I will meet you here without fail

||

ES: “For it was then known what correspondence is and what representation is, and that all things on the earth correspond to spiritual things in heaven and in the church, or what is the same, represent them; and therefore the natural things that constituted the externals of their worship served them as mediums for thinking spiritually, that is, thinking with the angels.”¹³

JS: “BUT the answer is this—every place and every time has a real object to *correspond* with your real object—that lemon may become this lemon, or it may become this piece of seaweed, or this particular color of gray in this ocean. One does not need to imagine that lemon; one needs to discover it.”¹⁴

I lay down and birth in a bog. Green sloping hills. Sounds of frogs.

HDT: “are not the wood frogs the philosophers who frequent these groves? Methinks I imbibe a cool, composed, frog-like philosophy when I behold them.”¹⁵

“I have heard now within a few days that peculiar dreaming sound of the frogs which belongs to the summer—their midsummer night’s dream.”¹⁶

SUPPOSE WE PRESAGE THE WIND TO TAKE ME

Suppose we presage the wind to take me
up high, a falling off of, or into
the space we are now, I mean, neglect the way
you know your form acts with gravity upon it
out of the moment between where you are
and falling, lest our own faces be thick
upon the ruins. A white color, more
of a light, call it reflection. Hurry
up and call it the dream that always sets
in one direction. If it is, in this dream
the setting is a kind of falling forward
into gravity; you can almost inter the fog

into language, or the fall from it
a sensible warm motion made and inflated
by lungs that make a ling and six types of
woodpeckers, catch a quick beak from the hole
in the tree. Say renovate and the beak lets go
Renovate that which is already twinkling;
to be taken by the wind, with retiring fog
effect. The language is clearest when the
fog is thick, interred in the falling turn
in one direction. Mythopoetic though cruel
it makes the somber sport of private inquest human in shape

This is a public square you could see
at a great height, with the blue of the Aegean
on either side. This steady current of air
moves in one direction: it is thick, thin

THEY WERE HARD TO KILL, THOSE PLACES

I could say get in the car and go
stepping calmly ashore but
we cover more ground as the hero
crumbling to be remembered. Some

New England stone wall is the boundary
of my letter to the Ave Maria air
a love like a hedge in the to and fro
or the natural history of the island of sleep

You fished for chance in the oddest places
moving to feel stopped
toppling over planetary motion
along the balconies of our clothes

I could say each bollard has the same frequency
as the day I lost my nerve
and forgot my rightful place
a voice trailing off through fibers of wind

each word is a room built around us
an organ underneath the river
of skin that lives to be incidental
another spotted face in the crowd

PLAUSIBLE BLUNDERS HAD UNMANNED ME

Plausible blunders had unmanned me
but now I speak perfectly manned

almanac stone for a head
trapped thing sunning itself

unconscious as St. Thomas in the drift
after temptation's thrall

when everything appears at once
the strangely alive surface already hardens

no wonder we can not see the discrete box of light in the mere
blunderer
over the white matter of sky

GOOD SHEPHERD SERVICES DAY CAMP

How is thee, one universal asks another
among all the bright ads and death-shamming instincts
get thee to a library's supply of dead wall reveries
It will not answer to look
the witness always arrives
in time for the martyred death
O Topsy it will not answer, O Karen
this contract of empathy's fetish
universals in hand, to reject more fully
self-containment's fair prospect, fair violence
labor me into my body, pages of skin and skin
pin cushion and static color

WHO CAN FIND RAGGED DICK IN RICHARD HUNTER

Teach me to be loveable or teach me a clear conscience
My work ethic's bedroom and character are smeared with the general
drift
The more I fill in doubt no more,
so warped by law, or no law
that honest government inside tongue-ties the pleasure of possession
Who can find the robin in the venison, when it's money that renames me
I can not glue the missing piece in place
Its shape, like mine, has given up the plum-stone of its edges for a rush
though its music's of a better class of fellow

LANDSCAPE ON SHUFFLE

Every book that falls on us is a pageant of daily violence
(outstretched bang, woolen static)
though the day demands waking in smallish shape

Monumental views make scale a thing to perceive unhurried
with a mouth of willow fronds, say,
a catalogue of falls from the shelf
takes all the neatness of sight to catch

If a book to the head
turns around its own landmass of awe
coming apart in one bright flash—
the slow slip on the impression of impact
leaves actual thunder parcel-less
since we knew the sound beforehand

How to bridge the arrangements?
Begin counting, but it'll pass
unmaking itself incautiously
with every ordering hunch

WILL YOU CALL ME HUMBUG WITH THE MOUTH IN
YOUR EAR

Between awakening and muteness
the small embarkation
of sound
 rises, crowding nearer
no longer a parable with wildly
clashing colors but blinking
 blank on the first last page

Did that melody reach you from without?
Or begin in—
make its way to your nebula arms
an animated plantlife, a manlike animation

 (holding the mind
 in a private weather)

your ear's memory palace
faces itself, windows
over your shoulder
and its folding boudoir cobwebs
crying Danger, mes enfants, Giants!
 Danger, Giants, run!

but you can not give the slip a rehearsal
as far as you can hear

WHEN YOU COME TO THINK ABOUT IT

What dear little things flutter
when you come to think
from a distance trimmed with horizon
or its press, like a narrative arc
letting you the place for an emotion
to button-hold its terror
through field glasses; take heart
if you choose mid-winter for slo-mo
reflection, not we, but the things of which
we are the evidence, suggest a bet

How will it play out, knowing
our compasses narrow, falling into
disuse. Hoisted and legged
out of this era of trousers, one lowered
red flag skirts these formal wiles
between us, a mere commodity
auctioned off as applause by hand
the bright field of joke by mouth

HAVING DRAGGED MY SHELF OF SLEEP LIKE ONE
DRAGS A RIVER FOR POSSIBILITIES

If you say there is an oak door
studded with sunlight between us
it is the sunlight itself that must be opened
rolling in the corridors, holding that moment
(a storm cloud in your hands)

Having linked our hands the distance is a saddle
placed over the slippery skin of night
and I say crumpling has made
the distance into versions of itself
whose miles begin to resemble pale maps
old photographs with studied shadow
inside each female self
composed like a nineteenth century diorama
all heft and movement of hands

THIS POEM IS A RE-ENACTMENT

Between reason and the thing you crush
by entering is a silent meteor idiom
I mean the extremities whistle with it
in passageways for the banditti caught in your
mental loom. A sure sum will come along
if you can hear the tune our teeth make
when we turn away from one another
Pliny looks through the hole in the floor
where the shape of your "voice" usually resides
identity an enigma to be revealed in the future
founded on facts with a title impossible to pronounce
or at least the historical (female) version. I mean
it is summer and there is body hair to account for
its intricate system of rain and actual rain
a purple meteor cameo against the pink sky
Don't swindle me out of intellect with your face's
false bloom. Don't dissemble like a tourist
with the solicitude of birds. There is an
ethereal pulse between your ideas
about the poem and its actual being
no matter how you think they coincide
So what if we make it another kind of physical
logic instead of vatic under-fauna?
So what if we call it mystery, and invade?

THE ALLEGORICIST

Every lover is a soldier
unfolding the square of handkerchief
for its mark of domestic history
as if it were even feasible to discover
the optics of the possible in its price

Every soldier is a lover
whose sordid gain every other lover loves
or at least has paid for without deep focus

The reader will not look to that averted by irony
in part consensual transparency, but in theory, theft

what shall you say to this confession
as the reflex to try on its bathos disappears

BLISS IS A FAILED REDEEMER

Bliss is a failed redeemer
a kind of think orchestration
indelible dark signals
we feel resonate in musical figures

Bliss written shrinks down
into the first plank of ground
between survey and human
pelvic floor and sudden roof

The external physiments carry bliss
blurred in opening vamps
Raise up your right hand
via all kinds of places:

these moments of pregnant mussiness
allow each cell nearby
to be a unique subsidiary
of a style of loving

rather than installing more personal attention
I want to be a sense teller
in fast bliss service
a locomotive like a paddle boat

stuffed and hung in miniature
blessing sensibility technology
in the slow movement of glass
bliss

OR SO I COME TO CONFER, OR SO I COME TO DEPART

If pressed, a forgery will sound
with quiet reflection into your moral center
because it touches you, a spectral eater of symbols
its tipped penny heel burning on your ears

When we met, it was far
from these rumble arrangements
and no less, we sat upon each others' knee
and in between, nothing
the center is empty as you sit on my knee
no king in this parlor game: you see

I come into the places propriety bars me
with attention to means
but I am born to be deceived
you know, no less, what our late embarrassments
house in their absconding

If only we could put our senses
to rest. What would appear?
When we part, it is far
to the barrier I know and know less

AT TWENTY-FOUR FRAMES A SECOND

It may be said and thrice repeated
at twenty-four frames a second

on the verge of toppling
with automatic music response:

emptiness is mobile shaped and derby-like

in little flutters that feel
for a slightly awry past. My last century's suit

sleepwalks in its third-best grays
though you said it looks right
when the light-source is gone

Progress, it's said, heckles us
while cheerfully humming a tune

don't doubt it, as I doubt it,
for the center is empty as you sit on my knee

It may be said and thrice repeated:
between wing and thing is another imp
melancholy with milk
and the danger of soaring
incautiously

when I imp my wing to sing
and thrice repeat a melancholy thing:
I should sleep-wake in my third-best days

NEW VERSIONS OF LIGHTING

“Douse all dumb inventories to speak”
says the sleeper in one of many wakings—
our love of category, and on, and in
has become some strange bird of a warhorse

risen from bodily thought. For a moment
there is time to labor, retiring heart
to skirt idly the warhorse in its landless gesture
its sentimental cultural production

risen from bodily thought. Birds
land on me with unremarkable opulence
for those who have been left out
bay at the ornamental in us creatures

each a classic blueprint inked in the speaking
trace of synapse byways, a locus
for belief in a fireproof center
empty of exterior, loving horizon

WHEN SURPRISE PERIPHERIES

The surrounding space over your tomb
is the rest of the universe in its folkloric content
(buzzing implement—busy bee)
just a con of welcoming generosity
so sexual it's sunlight mastering the little utopias
between sight and the press of being broken

between dimension and the claim of the actual
another red photographed birthday
emerges from the drawer
an icon of age, grid for government
and other croco-qualities of an ill-fitting past

between the stream of merchildren
and the little fishes where they swim
memory collects other people's meadows
in vast quantities, to slip between paper
preserve the quality of belonging, specificity of light
when surprise peripheries into something further out

SPEAK GOOD FORTUNE BUT PAY DEARLY

If you don't see vessels on the water as philological problems
the moderately provocative presto
of floating objects amid towering beds of flowers
your glass of pushing potion
good gravy! once pushed
has lost its water lily complexion
Look inside—the convex light
lays down a swath of gold
and your swashbuckling portrait
is another's face

If you've lost the float in your inward eye
that fatal passion potion
good gravy! once alight
has drawn its columned hatches
to check life elixir evaporation
the blending of another's moderately provocative presto
with your own subtle life vapors
On the sea—we view the land
as the pirates before us—
historical face with a conquering glance

Now that the confrontation's upon us
you can not distinguish our legs from the legs of our horses
and our faces from those you have read about
peeping up from the gap in the firmament
like vessels engaged in the play of light
good gravy! the glint
is a maelstrom with vertical pull
leaving space to the outer escape
where oranges like roses like stars
grow plucked for a cannibal view

BUT A NAME FOR EXCESS GREETUS US

But a name for excess greets us
in the winnowing out of thought
there's too much around us, dear cricket,
we are merry singed to a lamp
caught in the crouching feet of a fire
An idea is being held to contemplate it;
slam the book, put down the violin
and warm your exhausted proboscis
in the trestle bed of an emotional fire
Every point of exchange provides
a half-obliterated inscription we can't read
self-contained and rain-washed
each passing moment offers us only
a method of punctuating a past
with its counting-house elbows and velvet
charm. After all, there is no period in the mind:
who'er you be beside a trestle bed
you are never free from the trestle bed
while you lie within it, beside it,
pulling a cord from your mind
to the problem of asylum from matter
I only want a lover to make every day blank
in the speaking of our gas-colored laburnums
making spaces in the mind to let the light
with its verdigris and heat
burn off the places that bury our sound
having only a few scores to make a mantle
settle up the poverty of speech



JS: “This was supposed also to be the story of the creation of the universe. The pieces of the explosion coming afterwards together breathless. Coagulating whatever truth they could muster.”¹⁵

ES: “But let him know that the spaces and distances, and therefore the progressions, which exist in the natural world, in their origin and first cause are changes of state of the interiors, and that with angels and spirits they appear according to these changes; and that through changes of state they may be apparently translated from one place to another, and from one earth to another, even to earths which are at the end of the universe...”¹⁶

Inch long baby. Climbs out and up, kangaroo style. I eat her. Once inside again, she’s a million stars.

THE AXIS OF VISION APPROACHETH

Can one fall if the cosmos continually expand?
Come back from far off, darned with the rummaging
of the eye, and our slow eddies will continue
to consume and reproduce in the kitchens of our selves

I turned plantlife in this origin story
nothing more than a run of notes, sad
pricking of elegy. Though the timing is off now,
registering a static, that grain of vanishing pretexts
rewriting the interior music of a body

And a cosmos in its clematis drawing room
wades out to the extra-corporeal promised land
It's the ocean of more everything
We found our underwear swimming
This noise is its own response

like a threshold barking, so momentary
I hardly notice it channeling me, but I can imagine
As far as I can see translucently

WHEN I SAY VIRTUE, I'VE FALLEN FROM MY CHAIR

At the end of the table is an ocean to cross
and an ocean is never in shambles
like a book with thirty-four decks burns
St. Elmo's fire against the white leaf
a door you stand to apprehend

Close your dream and push it away
a sterile miracle of your inner fine ghost
is a morgue with an imprint of sea and continents
a mighty history patching up its root system
to emerge in the pause of identification as work

Visit the planets, take your mind off your eyes
you see assembled around you
what you know. What more do you want
to push through this damaged surface
bric-a-brac hanging from every word
where the red tape should be

QUIVERING IN THE COMMON WORLD

Like the world's largest record player
skipping at the center of the earth
the streets tilted axis underneath

loops chorded grace
into each gauzy room, space
tinted large and current-like

quivering in the common alpine ling
we are veiled with the smell of alpine ling
pieced together over smoke

which is both inanimate and alive
in its dissipation, an echo
of sleep's mesmeric page

NOW THEN

It's an inconvenient kind of flatness accepting the offer of the road
above

You know alone flashes filmic in its own projection
curdling the light, moving forward into natural relief
with quick-handed horror-movie humor
the bodies pile up and disappear
clouds like magnets on the move:

O, to be a stripping world
with a certain thrown-her-glove-in sense of possibility
heralding forth the blanketing noise
underneath the familiar surface
like an animal stuffer shapes death into life
Oh right, but it's just noise
in a traditional hero rectangle of frame

On the Mississippi Audubon killed the birds then drew them
time held out in small delicate etchings
still warm though rapidly aging
in his hands, the paper's a trigger
big enough to walk inside
the chapel of a bird's body
is any body
breathing with ink

A PORTRAIT OF MONOCHROME AMNESIA

I'm knee-deep in its giddy duet; my brain making the melody
a simultaneous memory and future note
to self: you are your photograph's emotional better
letting go for the larger sound of a name
bleached out with the power of light

through skin

the whole topiary ambles
around a center, a bower, you might say
of infinite space and there are languages
we don't know we know

smoke signal structures

with their runoff of simple forms

bedrock, parallel lines

outer space made visible by sound

SO LONG WINDOW

When my compass turns, it points far from you
a stream that moves out of frame
its entire panel of pink in my fist
Is it magnetic or a question of landmarks
where we land, or forget to, dear Alien

you are changing color and I've forgotten my tune
poised at the present, its symmetry
sullied with the past, that giantess,
crumpling down my center line

death has left a boulevard of black hole
where the half-illuminated pulse should be
a warm touch like a dagger on the circuit
its bag of astronomy in my fist

UNSTOP THE SHUTTERED THING

For once the set piece of a ship on water
marks its own traveled distance
on the sounds that neither toil nor spin
strange and extra-corporeal

Would that our inwards could contain us
in reverie though not in shape
from the expanse of being launched
in time. A naturalist classifies
the humility of the conscious surface:
our looking is list-making too

abiding memory box that knows no
means of locomotion but registers
the textile fabrics of life

There is no scale to mark your view
or make it unhurried with resonance

IT IS 1876 WHEN MY PLANET BURNS DOWN

I have to show you in private
to see it, the way it was
a thought through a clear morning doorway
the lighthearted grasshoppers were so thick
you could see the wind carrying them
take shape around the story
a cloth thing, a quilted presence

It's all in the subtext it was hardly known we had
the antidote to dreaming
inside the accident prone glass dolls
we are just surface that can be pulled away
an artful cover turned suddenly air
move your hand more slowly
I want to see you settle into the story
before the momentum goes dark

WHAT CAN GROW ISN'T A GENERAL RULE

Until they too are invaded, our insides are virgin land
a quantity of banker's straw assessed with fine tuning
or a bell carried, not far, by the bum wind;
register with an outside eye the slip of altitude
barometers of blood lines
all flow back to the heart
the window's float

a multiplying silence follows
these manifestos of losing
of waking damaged and saying "I'll be
damaged," burning with the drip of gravity
expanded round a red dwarfed elegance;
a thousand objections seem confidence
talking the penny down from its smoldering cloud

A TIN SHIP'S ROLL IN

Wherever the road crosses ships are berthed
down in the shallows of our streets
the city's a little bit mended
like a stream sending presents to trees
regiments of goldenrod and bales full of fascination
the pond of our streets is literally bottomless
from a distance that feels antipodal
all names stop when you cross the street
where one half of it dips when
your gait stretches over it
wherever the road crosses that visible point ahead
sinking into gauzed tall tale or photo memory
with the neatness of recreated sight
can an eye see curved like a pitch drops out
or must linear avenues be our artless old flagmen
trimmed shrubs you say
did you hear the one about
and the tide pool casts a pall like a trap door
for us day old anemones run home to bed

TO LIGHT OUT

To light out is to burst into young legs
toward an opening in the newly made wild
toward the stain of gold machines we have set in motion
around the curtain of bad weather

in the opening of its glimpse the conversation flutters
like gardens that are the garden's brother
I say Pass me my book of gardens
to cultivate a generosity of opening

You say the gardens are heavy with saffron associations
and we are kneeling in its applied territory
a blistered web of circumstance
distributing the way we desire ourselves
having been built by these environments

Take your horn out of the night
garden of constellations
and vow me a club of body
an endlessly opening frontier of rapid sketches
pressed between the pages of knowing

A PERSON SITS NEXT TO A FUGUE

A person sits next to a world of possibilities
leaving the latch unlocked—
I have a question about fugues
but I'm embarrassed to ask it
while the weather's on the bounce
as if all other things being don't
the fugue appears through the unlocked window
as omnipotent as the horizon's 360
rising like a struggling would-be fabled bridge
like the fog of a Jewish New Year
quite slippable in hypothetical
cables and the long space of above-water air

A person sits next to a world of almost situations
making a living as a memoir
thoroughfares fill with drizzle scrambling
progressive strangers with their ding eyes
I am sure a fugue is near
in the almost-echo of park benches—
this is not the city of the blessed worker
Americana seduction like original face paint
reflected in a gridiron puddle

A MAKESHIFT SYMMETRY OF CELLS

The smaller possums in this round
landscape are part of its circuit
do not jostle them
they speak when turned toward
breathe irregularly and they respond

Our nebulas are colored with data that could be sound
but we can't hear it. You see newly
looking out from the top of your head
says Angel. Talk. Talk nonsense;

when it opens, our clutter breaks
with extra-corporeal sound

turning
our sense habits
let go of their drawing room objects

like a piano, open, at a regional fair
playing its own ethereal pulse

the thoroughfare between us
pulse between the thorough
thing impossibly us

NOTES

1. Emanuel Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen* (reprint; West Chester: Swedenborg Foundation, 1995), 171.
2. See Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect* (Cornell U.P., 2004). She uses the word “totipotent” to refer to the capacity of stem cells to develop into any possible cell in the body. Her analog of primary physical intelligence, that of a mother’s womb communicating to the zygote and directing its development, has been one of the motivating images of this project. It turns the “outside” force that Swedenborg and Spicer describe from a mystical poetics into a human and environmental one, though the poet is no less vatic in the process of accessing this other kind of knowledge beyond conscious experience.
3. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell: From Things Heard and Seen*, 182.
4. *Ibid.*, 223.
5. Thanks to Joan Richardson for this insight.
6. The writings and teachings of Peter Gizzi have been instrumental in my reading of Jack Spicer: *The House that Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer* (Wesleyan, 1998) and the introduction to *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer*; edited with Kevin Killian (Wesleyan, 2008). Also, see the foundational essay by Robin Blaser, “The Practice of the Outside,” in *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer* (Santa Rosa: Black Sparrow, 1996).
7. Jack Spicer, *After Lorca, The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, 34.
8. Spicer, “Sporting Life” from *Thing Language* in *The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*, 218.
9. The 1734 nebular hypothesis appears in the *Principia*, the first volume in Swedenborg’s great mineralogical study, the *Opera Philosophica et Mineralia*. See Devin Zuber’s dissertation: *Hieroglyphics of Nature: Swedenborg, Ecology, and Romantic Aesthetics*, Chapter Two, “Visionary Science, 1688-1744.”
10. As Emerson writes in his essay “Swedenborg; Or, The Mystic” in *Representative Men*, Swedenborg “anticipated much science of the nineteenth century” (Emerson, New York: Library of America, 666).
11. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*.
12. Spicer, “Vancouver Lecture 2,” *The House that Jack Built: The Collected Lectures of Jack Spicer*.
13. Swedenborg, *Heaven and Hell*.
14. Spicer, *After Lorca*.
15. Henry David Thoreau, “Autumn,” *The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau* (Nov. 2, 1852).
16. Thoreau, *A Year in Thoreau’s Journals*, 1851.
17. Spicer, “A Textbook of Poetry,” *The Heads of the Town, The Collected Books of Jack Spicer*.
18. Swedenborg, *Earths in the Starry Heaven*.

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