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Spared the Technicolor

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Spared the Technicolor

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
University of New Orleans
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts
In
Creative Writing
Poetry

By

Peter Cole Friedman

B.A. CUNY Hunter College, 2011

December, 2015

To my family

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Vita

On a Poetry of Insecurity

So I don't sit down and write a poem. Was it Hemingway who insisted on standing while writing? Well, I sit, but I mean, I don't sit down and write a poem. I don't have an idea and then "poetrify" it, put pants on it or something. Why put pants on an idea? (If you have an idea, just let us know). Some poets have decided that they are on to. . .something. They look at this something squarely. They tell you how it is, but they dress it up.

Take Kay Ryan's poem, "The Fabric of Life," for example. In it the speaker—a real truth-teller—says (of life) "It is very stretchy. / We know that, even if / many details remain / sketchy."¹ Here the rhyme (*stretchy/sketchy*) and analogy (between life and a stretchy fabric) seem to "dress-up" a core idea; that is, that our discrete experiences of the world are woven into some greater, albeit elastic, unity.

Now, I have no way of knowing what Ryan's process was in writing this poem. I don't know if she stood up or sat down or did jumping jacks, let alone if she had an idea and then decided to make it into a poem. But I can feel a certainty in the posture of the address—i.e., the dictionary-like coolness of "life is _____" in the first line and the use of the sweeping pronoun "we"—which makes me assume the role of pupil when I read this poem. The poem's "I-got-this" delivery makes me read with the snagging sense that there is something to be learned. And I am happy that there are poets such as Kay Ryan who invite me to make assumptions, because sometimes, it is true, when I assume there is a distinct message in a poem—even if there is no distinct message—I actually feel more comfortable to explore and wander.

That's one way to go about truth, it's just not mine, right now. I'm a little too aware—or wary—of my own trembling, at least at age 25, to write a poem such as “The Fabric of Life.” I am a squirmy person and a squirmy person—this one, right now—needs a squirmy poem, a poem whose address falters or reneges, pivots or tapdances. A squirmy person—this one, right now—needs a poem that questions its own validity. So instead of saying the world is stretchy, I'm more inclined than a poet like Kay Ryan to want to experience that as so via the poem. In other words, if the language can only ever really sound off about other language, even if it works hard at capturing a “beyondness,” I think part of a poem's job is to acknowledge its own tragic “hereness,” to trip itself up. In the last few lines of “Typical Quiet American Night,” for example—“show me how to dress /since not everything agrees / in which case, rain is rain & / that's hard enough”—there are a couple of uncouplings. The first two lines seem to be referential; that is, they seem to refer to the difficulty of figuring out an identity in a world of differentiation. But the next line leads with an idiom (“in which case”) that sets up a causality which the latter part of the line turns back on: “rain is rain” is a perfect agreement, so the line mucks up the logic here. The last line in this group “that's hard enough” can either modify “rain” which would further confuse the referentiality (i.e. how can rain = something that is rain + something?) or return to the referential (i.e. “it's hard enough to identify rain as rain, no less a self as a self” or “the rain is coming down hard”). My goal here—I think, for this is a somewhat *ad hoc* goal, but one whose scent nonetheless wafted past me as I was writing—is to have the addressee grapple with, over the course of these lines, the tension evident in all duration, their own selfhood. How deciding what to wear might also have to do with the rain.

By using the word 'goal,' it's true, I've outed myself—I'm not a nihilist. I'm a committed agnostic. Truth, or Beauty, or some other Important Thing (I believe in Some Important Thing!), is somewhere way out there, or right here—I haven't decided—but either way, I've captured it so rarely and partially that I do feel like Lawrence Ferlinghetti's "little charleychaplin man / who may or may not catch / her fair eternal form."² One instinct I have, in honoring the impermanence of "I" and the interdependence of all things, is to have my poetry be as expansive as possible, just to be big in a literal way, the same way you might tell a goalie who's trying to stop a puck "get big!". Ferlinghetti and the other Beats were good at this, being big, drawing on the automatic writing of the surrealists. If the imagination, or a particular experience, can't really be captured or cupped, I think it's a good idea just to follow it.

Alice Notley--inheriting the inclusionary (as in, "try to include as much of yourself and your world in your poem as you can because you are it and it is you") poetics of the New York School, who themselves owe something to the Beats--wrote a romp of a poem called "Prophet" which I've always appreciated for its apparent commitment to the free-form rhythm of the mind. Free-form does not necessarily mean being formless. It does mean, however, that the joy of the poem will probably lie in our following its contour and not from my or your categorization of it as a square or a circle or a rhombus and then saying, "Wait, what does it mean that it's a rhombus?" Everyone knows a rhombus is working at becoming a square anyway. Notley's poem certainly seems to be poking fun at the notion of prophecy, but in my opinion it sprawls enough (13 pages) to avoid being reduced to that idea. From the aerial view, the poet uses declarative and imperative statements to lull you into the accepting posture of a student or an initiate and then tells you a variety of apparently obvious, useless, or absurd

things: "It's not a good idea to be a taxi driver if you don't drive/ at all well. However/ You can probably manage to do so for some months, before you/ finally quit,/ Without killing yourself or anyone else. It is not remarkable/ that you are/ Still alive since so far you have always been still alive./ It is not/ Psychologically significant that you nearly perished, & scared your/ customers shitless, dozens of times/ While driving cab. You were not self-destructive, you were sane/ & dumb."³ "It's not a good idea" carries the same epistemological bravado as Ryan's "we know that" but Notley's sentence ends with advice that is so practical, and possibly irrelevant to a given reader's individual circumstances (are we all planning on being taxi drivers?), that it has the ring of satire. If the poem spent all its effort undermining "knowing," I might get bored. But occasionally lines resonate sincerely with me. For instance, "It is not remarkable/ that you are/ Still alive since so far you have always been still alive." This is an absolute statement—about the ordinariness of one's existence—which I am suddenly less squeamish about accessing because of its light treatment, its interdependence with a kind of levity and nonchalance.

Many of the poems in "Spared the Technicolor" are psychological investigations. I don't want them to end at that, but many of them start out plumbing the imagination and then evolve from there. I want the opening lines of "Chamber Klezmer Punk Folk Waltz in A Minor," for instance, to be something like different parts of a pinball machine, throwing the ball of meaning back at each other unexpectedly: "I'm the kind of allergy that doesn't care. / If it's a happy thing, just pluralize it. / Literally millions of skies are forming in my mouth. / Obviously this is an act. / *Congea*l makes it sound planned, / like a small hummingbird weeping for everyone." My hope is that each of these lines gives every other a slightly different slant or ring. What I am interested in most in these poems—something that usually comes after rather than

before they begin—is a lack of control, and the anxiety that accompanies that. To what extent that they (the poems) "figure that out" will, of course, depend on the individual reader, though I hope I've provided an engaging deck of cards.

Sometimes I don't even feel like we're in the same trapeze act, to be honest, me and Truth, so I run all over the place as though I'm being chased, and even though it's tempting to tell them—whoever they are—about my time at Mineola Prep, most of these poems are intent on continuing. In his "Personism: A Manifesto," O'Hara writes: "You just go on your nerve. If someone's chasing you down the street with a knife you just run, you don't turn around and shout, "Give it up! I was a track star for Mineola Prep."⁴ The writing has to be running for me to find something. The interesting stuff always seems to be on the way to the finding out. So I don't sit down and write a poem, and standing doesn't suit me either.

O'Hara has taken some of my favorite jaunts. I love that one of his several poems called "poem," a brief 11-line stint, which starts with an eclectic list "light clarity avocado salad in the morning," ends with a serious meditation on love: "though a block away you feel distant the mere presence / changes everything like a chemical dropped on a paper/ and all thoughts disappear in a strange quiet excitement / I am sure of nothing but this, intensified by breathing." The two moments are never truly reconciled. But that is also their purpose. Both are fascinating. And to O'Hara, fascination is really all the narrative we need. Readers can piece the two together if they like. Or they can leave them as coincidents of a certain time that startled a certain person. They are already implicitly tied together in whatever way the self that attended to them is tied together.

In other words, I think there are different planes of narration. There is the narrative based on sequence and the narrative based on being itself, i.e. Some Important Thing. We live in a world of clocks that supply things with a precise piece of temporal real estate. On this measured plane we experience the past and future as concrete entities separate from now. Thing A happens before thing B, and the former might even be the direct cause of the latter. This is the plane of proper grammar, of character arc, of beginning-middle-end, of will and motivation. I experience much of my being on that plane, so my poems are pretty reflective of its features, "#Peaches" probably being the most true to them. But that kind of linear temporality is a construct in the same way a point is a mathematical symbol. Does time still exist if we don't count it? Yes, I think, but cyclically. And so how do you narrate that reality? I'd say juxtaposition, the choosing of what goes-with what, without their having an explicit causal relationship.

So when I start out on my run, I need both, a large expanse—what Robert Duncan called, "a place for all speech and all occasions thereof"⁵—and a map. And I usually think of Meredith Monk and her extended vocals, which make it difficult to perceive where a gap falls between one utterance/word and another⁶, or Stockhausen who told his orchestra to play as if they had infinite time and space, so that any doodle or scrap of sound, no matter how seemingly frivolous, was welcome.⁷ I need to let myself do anything, be reckless and curious, which is why I take Charles Olson with me on these jaunts. He yells the whole time, like my own amphetamine-popping personal trainer, "Get on with it, keep moving, keep in, speed, the nerves, their speed, the perceptions, theirs, the acts, the split second acts, the whole business, keep it moving as fast as you can, citizen."⁸ With Olson screaming beside me, the muscles, the

quads, the blood in and out, the wind, the ears, in, against face, the propulsion, the foot-force—I want to lose myself in the process. I want to forget about my watch. I want to call the process Truth or Beauty and—voilà—problem solved.

But not all process is created equal. Sometimes, I'll catch a glimpse, a spark, of something interesting in the language, and it's not only ok, but I think the more fruitful, if difficult, response to pause, to pull back for a moment, and to determine the resonance of what I've seen with the whole of my experience and learning. When I began to read contemporary poets such as Jenny Zhang and Ariana Reines, I was completely undone by the way a poem could be so free yet grounded—that is running but 'looking at something squarely'—at the same time. In Zhang's poem "The Universal Energy Is About to Intervene in Your Life," she is clearly seeking, but her search is compassed by a disgust with gender norms: "I am pure emotion and you must pour me/ into something pure I shall take what I want / including the faces of pretty women / this way the standards for beauty will be instantly changed / this way the standards for faces will want new standards / the nerves in each face will stand on innards / inside me is every pregnant belly/ and all the aborted children/ play in the same playground / they don't care that they were aborted / they don't care that the stars were not created for them / they don't care that they had selfish mothers."⁹ Her poems are sprawling but focused.

I'm still trying to work at striking that balance—of engaging explicitly with the political (as I do more in the "Look/Like" section) without flattening the totality of my experiences, however trivial, and at the same time, without trivializing the political. The two planes of narration need one another. A political poem needs imagination and a surrealist poem needs a zipcode, a job. I would feel dishonest pulling the material of my poems only from a timeless

place, because regardless they would be read on the plane of political circumstances, of blood and motivations, of desires and consequences. And that risks hurting people who are engaged seriously at that moment on that plane. Obversely I would feel dishonest pulling the material of my poems only from my specific situation and contact with the world, because that would be to render them at base uninvolved with anybody else's. This collection, which I probably wouldn't have—couldn't have—written now, represents the awkward beginning of that endeavor, to manage in my poetry as in my life a pleasant/painful wobbling of attention to the political, psychological, and spiritual. And though it is an endeavor which I hope has since gained dimension, it remains fundamentally insecure.

Notes

1. Ryan, Kay. "The Fabric of Life." *Poetry Foundation*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
2. Ferlinghetti, Lawrence. "Constantly Risking Absurdity (#15)." *Poetry Foundation*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
3. Notley, Alice. "The Prophet." *Grave of Light: New and Selected Poems, 1970-2005*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan UP, 2006. 94-106. Print.
4. O'Hara, Frank. "Personism: A Manifesto." *Poetry Foundation*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
5. Rodriguez, Johnette. "Free Speech: Robert Creeley talks about his substantial life." *Providence Phoenix*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
6. Monk, meredith. "Last Song." *YouTube*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
7. Stockhausen, Karleinz. "British Lectures." *UbuWeb*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
8. Olson, Charles. "Projective Verse." *Poetry Foundation*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.
9. Zhang, Jenny. "The Universal Energy Is About to Intervene in Your Life." *BOMB Magazine*. Web. 18 Oct. 2015.

Weekly Planner

Armloads/interstices

I change my bed sheets
and mind

and smooth them both down
at the same time

early morning
gypping our bodies of form

My dad asks
if a question sticks in the throat

but swerves the landing
the way the most NY conversation

concerns moving to LA
still today

is merely a loose handshake
talking back

to a belonging
pleasant thunder

barely in earshot
I wear and puzzle

at my own veins
like a neighbor's sleep

a secret enjoyment
I get to keep

between me
and only me

On the Way to the Vista

Throw enough hide in
the animal before it escapes, and watch it
escape. I awake after

dreaming about topaz faces, ice
in a glass from my childhood
sliding to its lip. I hold it

very nearly. A sleek head emerges
and somehow the eyes engage in wordplay
between me and how I see myself curdling

in the sip of years:
And now

a brief wind through my fingers, proving its point, asks
what do you do with mountain air?

Hunted, or...it's hard to pattern
the feeling without others, not even
a horizon to lust after here.

Typical Quiet American Night

1

“the moment’s passed”
-Andrew, 7, with such certainty

Enjoy
with
“as we age the truth might”

top 40 pop
song passing in a car
3 flights down
the minute I realize
it’s begun to rain
gives me the once over
over again

*

I’m one short
for these feelings
a share of melt
(think: sparkling more than it is)

2

somebody’s funeral
on tv
“C-list at best”
Fitz meows on the radiator
where holding something soft
we’re all trying to radiate
like the alphabet
like a breath
stay warm

put your good feeling on ice

*

those nitrogen tanks on the corner of first avenue

“have you seen the size of them?”

“like what is science doing there?”

I didn't notice

it's a typical quiet American night

on a too-loud futon

(1 cuddle for \$20 / 2 for \$39.50)

*

meanwhile inside I really want to dance

flutter in the greenery

the teachings of that famous trio

called not-yet-daylight

I'm close to photosynthesis

but later

they'll discover bloopers

in so many words

when the roof leaks

“it's crying” the delivery boy says

with our sadness

so now we start laughing

a share of melt

3

falling for myself again

leaves in a breeze

to the impersonal you

employee of the week

tomorrow

on the roof

doors @ 11:59 p.m.

I open myself

to the idea

and later despite

bad reception

spill

all my rain
to you

sparkling more than it is

*

“the difference between karate and rain
is rain falls”
-Andrew, 8, all grown up

“you could’ve married at 14!”
the delivery boy says
or “No, no, no, I’ve got it”

but there is a statute of limitations (diet idea)
I tip everything I have
including: the right idea
@ Baby’s All Right

*

love was later
water on the sill
in the downtime
just spiritual, not religious
a night of dancing
on first avenue

summer seems in between
selves
long gone
a car alarm goes off for hours
I can barely take
in the dark
show me how to dress
since not everything agrees

in which case rain is rain
& that’s hard enough
for a specialist like me

Obvious Ghost Story

there are many spots
on the body to kiss
places inside a radio
at this hour, the close,
which feels green and lonely
a pool of gas
leaking from my mouth
I only know
to sleep myself off
and even then I wake up
to a hole
in my comforter

early this morning
the day looked easy
the coffee dripped quick
eggs no dishes
I turn on
the news
and it is easy
all presence and gimmicks
and the presence
as of the cat
having just left the room
to chase static

Uplighting for Dummies

The TV spoke in a loop
of square fittings, as I
made sculptures
by sitting down
the wrong way. Those
were the days I was
just coming to believe
as I limped out
in nothing more
than a towel and a
limo of auras.

At first, the clouds looked
pretty similar, honestly, despite reports.
Eventually, heavy packages began to arrive
slowly, from the garden, like a
whistle, daily, though it was hard to know
on whose back, whose nickel.

Finally, they told me
you could just put your nose
to somebody's heart and tell.
Wiretap a deli and get the juice.
But by then I had long lost
any sense of contraption or grace
and the sound just snuck past me
into the nearest mall
like a mist.

One to Your Right

Got some sun in
my thoughts, stopped
screening my calls. There's no service like
no service. Beauty is slow, okay,
I know, but my attitude problem gave me major hate for that once, and now I'm on
The Kiss Cam,
a minute before I get lips. My mind on a date
is those people who stationary jog
when they get to a DON'T WALK—
clearly somewhere between feelings—NOT HERE
a license plate JAY KAYS. The neon

sign says SPIRITS on Metropolitan.
When I die, bury me in a rally hat. When I say I tried,
I mean, I put the fireplace on high.
As if we knew how many calories dying takes.
If the homophone is better, pretend. Look,

there goes Beauty again
crushing on me, gentle
as an electric car.

Stand Clear the Closing Doors

Another summer day walks back
and takes off its antlers.
You wish people would drive more slowly
for that kind of thing, limit their intake,
but I get it. I know what happens
when you hook up a ballet
to a supergenerator. The looseness
we aspire to, not forgetting
our daily skin or
limes in beers,
we may well mistake for volume,

but isn't it something more
like a waving palm
against the sun, the shadows derailing
into the ocean and the ocean itself into
the conductor's shortwinded memory of a train?

Neuronally-Speaking

On Holiday at the Grocery

That night, the cliff dwellers moved off toward what I mean. Meanwhile during the performance in the parking area, a small angel of light burrowed in a candy wrapper. The sound of a wrecked train coming unsnarled, telling its one joke, "Have you heard of the dictionary?" Each of their steps bent toward their noses, so that they endured tracklessly, like those days just slightly removed for which no proper mode of dress presents itself. But when you settle, well, that's *that*—blue dye in your hair and a partially rebuilt shopping plaza.

*

For instance, just a little while back, a businessman and something like a businessman (a coupon book?) sat on more used furniture than most. It seemed to go on forever. Hardly a moment later, on the corner of 23rd street, my concert piano could be heard far off, a delicate tragic plink, and I would hate to think that *that* happened inside me to no avail. So now I watch the faces as though part of a secret evacuation. Watch the powerlines dangle moodily, and say to myself, from the checkout, it must add up to murder. But the questions perfume brutally. And I cannot seem to French kiss mud, cannot pray sweetly enough.

Birdwatcher

just enough mess
to say mine
and forget

Chamber Klezmer Punk Folk Waltz in A Minor

I'm the kind of allergy that doesn't care.

If it's a happy thing, just pluralize it.
Literally millions of skies are forming in my mouth.
Obviously this is an act.

Congea! makes it sound planned,
like a small hummingbird weeping for everyone.

Birds can't cry in 3D.
I'm not that informationally sound.

For my birthday, give me my past.

I bleep myself constantly.
I have a jumbo feeling
that I'm on a menu but you're ordering
the number next to me.

I never got
that thorns & roses metaphor.
Big deal. Bleed. No, believe me,

as your unreliable narrator, I understand
totally. Literally kazillions of lollipops later
I still taste your saliva.

WE'RE ALL SO GROSS.

So how long does it take you
to call the hotel home?

No wonder the gloom.

*

You'd be surprised how many fossils you can buy
on eBay. I asked someone if I could get them
a strawberry milkshake
but they said 'strawberries are yucky you lose.'

Ah, to dwell next to your own synecdoche.

There is no redemption
in this life.

That was a question.

You're not wrong to ignore me.

Love comes with a warped shovel,
a bent rainbow.

*

You need only search
the answer key, but literally
millions of answer keys are forming
in my mouth. I hate

wide kissing.
A tessellation for your time.
A real ghost of a guy.

Frankly, his utensils all looked like hands
so he ate them.

Cannibalism, in my heart,
is a national treasure – but nothing's
official: I am the most
well-misread one
I know. Keep
those markups coming.

Wheelchair by Dior. Casket by Chanel.

I gave everyone in *Vogue* a mustache
except you. That was
a love poem.

*

The neural pathways are already so narrow
why make your poetry dance

even smaller?

Neuroscience is dead,
just a little pink balloon, so why should you
care? If it ends,
it's meaningless?

Anyway, death is a weak political position,
a worshipper of the oilspill of sunset.

I'm not following my autocorrects anymore.

Besides, sunsets are good for the environment
(a sunset revised as darkness).

It's not opposite day.

The hotel is always forgetting your name
and love is always

one plot over,
one plot ahead
and yet

*

My ex-lover is listening
to Patsy Cline on Spotify.

What could be sadder to me?

*Maybe it's not too late to make everyone
fall in love with my flaws*
I think in a problematic way.

I'm going to start stealing weapons
from action figures, little empowerments,
teach myself ESL.

Need vs. want is a false dichotomism (sp?).

A cloud for a cloud,
a cavity for a cavity.

Obviously I am an understudy. I only know
these brief excursions into the Montana of my heart

then the inevitable long-awaited premature ejaculation:
nothing but a few pieces of confetti
floating with the brio of dinosaurs.

The past tense is so fucking strong.
I mean, *Jesus*.

Exactly.

In the light of that, I'm still deciding if I want to be
spared the technicolor.

FYI the treadmill is running away
inducing people to exercise
as though they had just been unparalyzed.

11:11

I'm only an accent mark away
from another
language or blown
kiss you mis-
pronounce the future
in English with

so I get so scared
I eat
a quart of blueberries
smooshed bruises

falling asleep
post-haste
next to your best impression
of my better half

like the blur of a fan
an image can't touch

Neuralyzer

It was almost too easy to discount the bounce
castle, among so many cheaper splendors.
I look underneath the placemat, just to find myself
revisiting the twitchy philosophy of my smallest
hairs, things only a lover might count.
Memory's a waiter

and, wait, nobody's ordered yet, not even the antipasti.
Something departs your brain, a familiar alien
from *Men In Black*, maybe, or your daydream's
third ear, calling you in to a bit of room within
your own. But the trendsters have already gotten wind of the pilled story.

However long your imagined hibernation, the little pixie stick
sticks out. Like grass in a neighborhood.

Matinee

We say we
like a dress

we can't hold
so you'll probably correct me

later when the lights
come up

with a kiss or knife
to say

I've missed the point
trying

Post-Minimalist Sonata in D – No Actually – Mazurka in F# (with a Rhythm Egg)

Congratulations, we'd like formally to accept this sentence into its place. More simple affirmations, please: Like liking one plain smiley on Facebook. Yum.
Like if I do it right, make a good sound, k thx.

Dearrrrrrr God,
give me all the gold stars.
-yr little constricted pupil

One wisp of the apocalypse at a time. The way wind makes you want to stay in its hair.
The way wind doesn't have hair but it could cause it's a toss-up. *Eh, I'll find my way*, I say, like a lost cause. Statistically-speaking, humans are the fucking worst at massage.

* * *

I is disembodied/hybrid. So we beat the dead horse, copycat, so we beat the dead horse. Oops! I lied. Maybe: Oil me up before *ow* fades. Give me back the switch of me that lights the whole night on fire. Slick trick. My fugitive touch all over everything. One big fingerprint.

Smile with me for the camera
enough times so that we can stop-motion our feelings into this bad method actor of the real.

* * *

It'll be summer soon,
don't you know, and we'll want to take off
and let our bodies do
unthinkable things with the germy water. Just don't drink it.

You're so prettydoing nothing I want to cry
a secluded beach. I'd write about it, but then I'd have to kill the second person.

No cause- the language is fucked. No cause- the language is trying
to cuddle randomness into agoraphobia, into never leaving.
In the waiting room, I can't stop looking at the polka-dotted fish,
unexpected gift bags — how useless they are and that kinda sorta means
the world to me.

Four Legs and a Diner

*Nothing mindblowing is going to happen
at a furniture store, he thought, not with the woods
so close.* So he began boringly to christen
otherwise fun cocktails. Pulling a few dusty atlases, he X-Acto'd bodies
of whatever water and tried to improvise
but other people seemed to have the better libraries,
all their tortilla chips shaped like holy cups. Despite
a very detailed prayer, not much of him bled out.

And sincerity it turns out appears vital,
a lemon in a desert hard for either team to choose. So he said grace
double and bottled compulsively, but still, in hiding, faced plenty
of special effects, ways a mirror could behave lightly.

Being invisible, however, was not among them.
Not even in spirit.

Sarabande without a Key

This used to be a big no-no. Just playing.
Prioritize your pre-invention, Camp Counselor,
out-gymnasticizing everything.

I moonlight in a proverbial band. So. Sorry,
lip-synched the earth before, but you *already* know
everyone. Breathe a second. Oh. I'll starve
already. (How the language was just dumb volume again.)

I ooze famine. Then I'll blow
the erasure of how sorry I've grown.

*

Everything has a hotel,
which is how you got to stay here, no point. The party
favor of a lifetime. The direction
"corner shop" gets us nowhere, remember?

We are there yet and we are
there yet. The same pool, five palms,
a spitting lion. Identify the body. How long
before Hawaii is just a shirt?

My skin smuggles one big drug.
Every governing body needs to catch
some shut-eye.

*

The transformations reach
pornographic proportions. I no longer DD

just try to "pretend" I'm "on the other line."
We change perfect. Yet most people want
to wear loafers, to be the heaviest things
on the planet, if only for a minute's spin.

*

Right now, on the porch, I'm so vague.
Space eats my space away all night,
all the live long. I want to grow grow grow
but I don't understand the question.

Why finish everything
so fast? The birds, no, I mean the
birds, rather, the birds, sometimes,
just fuck mid-air.

Look/Like

#Peaches

Two days after she has died, Peaches Honeyblossom Geldof turns to *The Star* reporter in her coffin. His puffy face is visible to her via an iPad which has been positioned opposite her head. The outside of her coffin is painted sky blue, with clouds and flowers along one side, a picture of the entire Geldof family at the back. Inside it is lined with red velvet but no flowers. The reporter jumps when she moves. Her arms are *thin* thin, her veins almost lavender. She's wearing Google Glass (custom, monogrammed). The reporter clicks his mouse violently and reopens a minimized Twitter window, where a draft he has written earlier awaits him.

From inside, Peaches can hear the reporter's click come through the iPad. It has been otherwise silent in the coffin until now. He considers pressing "tweet," but stops. Peaches notices a small red blip of light at the upper right corner of her "ceiling." She extends a painted fingernail. The reporter's mouth opens involuntarily. He goes slightly numb, tilting to follow the fingernail. A popup covers his desktop ~~*HOTT SEXII BABES IN YOUR AREA XXX LIVE CAMS WAITING WATCH NOW FREE*~~ but he X's it out with an aggressive finger.

Peaches reaches for the Google Glass. "Fuck," the reporter mutters to himself. Peaches' swollen fingers don't have enough strength to lift the Google Glass from her nose. "Breaking news from @TheStar: #PeachesGeldof #ghost #selfie!" 81 characters long. The reporter shakes his head. He revises the exclamation mark to a question mark and clicks "tweet." He closes his puffy eyes to listen for notifications. The sound of retweets fills the space around Peaches. At some point, she lowers her hands. Inside, the velvet looks black. Her battery blinks red.

friends

nila says the moon is freakishly large tonight
everything is more subversive than it initially appears
in the episode where mike almost proposes
to phoebe at a basketball game the extra sitting
next to them is holding a huge portion of cheese fries
jay commented on this and liked it
jay is an extra in my sitcom
we are quote friends
the weekend is a suggested post
12 new stories part of an infinite
loop the new
coen brothers movie for instance
lana commented on this
i have some googling to do
but i don't need to know
i like what
they like
it is safe
i scroll
goodnight moon
is my status
when they are silent
the cheese fries smell dangerous
i know they are
not all sleeping
that is a picture of connor's cat
uploaded 3 seconds ago

last tuesday

think tanks paid for an attack to my left earhole.
some of them said things
like, *equal blah blah blah under equal blah blah blah*,
with a poker-twitch. others just tried to make
noise: cash registers, fireworks, pop
music. iTried to focus on my right ear, but
a White Representative Dude busted in through my front
door and, pew pew, removed my right ear
with a laser-eye. gladware'd it. *plastic surgery*,
he whispered. he was loudly dressed, like a secret.
he did a heel-click, and more White
Representative Dudes busted in, like secrets,
through the already-open door. they all had laser-eyes.
it was an illegal feeling. iSaid, *this is
illegal feeling*, but my voice was the voice
of a news anchor on tv, crisply empty. they briefly mistook me
for a supreme court judge. iWorried for my left ear,
but they seemed to have a special interest
in its survival. *iT's aged well*, they said, at conflicting
primetimes. as teleprompted, iGave the weather forecast.
iPointed to the swirly graphics. iBecame one of the fake
pixelated hurricanes. iSpun with the ceiling fan. iWatched
from above as they outlined their iNterpretation of my body
in chalk. *don't move*, they said. they were running
out of chalk, so they had to ration iT. instead of drawing my head,
they gave me a slightly larger butt, which they admired
for its exoticism, which made them feel exotic.
then they looked at each other and agreed to the death about
proper viewing procedures, which is currently
still in progress.

Successfully Marketed Lives

It's a matter of traction. At first,
give it away—the meat, the e-
book, the plenary addresses—

FOR FREE

and the blood will start circulating
in mom 'n' pop, in YouTube ©,
even in Walmart © entrances. But

DON'T SPAM YOUR AUDIENCE,

give them what they are coming for—you,
your twerk, your ukulele skills, your

TALKING TURTLE...

next to an aisle of

ONLY POTATOES THIS ROW.

At that moment, then you'll want to decide,
are you a single mother from Antarctica
with only one left foot but TWO right shoes?
Or her child who grew up eating frozen
seal-meat mostly by herself in an igloo
WITHOUT internet? Or the guy
from Jersey who (left the continent, ma)
rescued them both
and fed them on SPRINGSTEEN©
and turnpike air until they were healthy again?

Then apply the metrics.

WHO IS BUYING YOU?
WHERE DOES SHE LIVE?
DOES SHE HAVE FRIENDS?
HOW MANY?
ARE THEY SEALS?
IS IT YOUR MOM?
IF SHE HAS THAT MUCH MONEY

WHY ARE YOU EVEN DOING THIS?

Prom

Even though I'm not really in a clique, today a kind of derivative promness swirls about me, walking to McCarren Park, the sun liminal in a cruel way, the promise of dancing sexily to Katy Perry, the promise of summer like a bowl of punch people slurp like true love. The promise of being crowned Prom Queen which, strut as I might with a stretch Hummer purpose, a Jergens Natural Glow, is only the ghost of some euphoria I doubt I've ever had, or wanted to have,

but here it comes, the wanting. My tiara is not the only tiara, I remind myself, smeyesing for the sky, and so the sky barely notices. My Gaga is not your Gaga, sure, but that just makes the walk feel like an uncoupling.

The real Prom Queen, the sun, whose gaze high school taught us not to meet, is shining on the jocks playing football because all jocks are men and all men, if asked, *Meat, chicken, vegetarian*, know to choose *meat*. Know how to fill up until they don't.

I see some other spectators, too—pretty wispy to be men—and we gather at a bench. We paint our nails, put on glitter, arrange an after-party, get up-dos, take group photos in the grass, pre-game, talk about all the people we might kiss, and then, suddenly, it grows dark—the Prom Queen receding into the sky, where the lesser lights scatter, too. Brooklyn slinks away to an after-party without us, without *me*, I want to say, though maybe it's time I shed that binding separation.

Derrick suggests we all go to his house, which at least has a pool and full bottle of half-water-half-whiskey, but Derrick isn't the name of anybody I know. Derrick is the dark sky looking back at me, saying, *Tomorrow, your prom is tomorrow.*

Vita

Peter Cole Friedman was born in New York a little over 26 years ago. He received his BA in Interdisciplinary Honors from CUNY Hunter College in 2011 and, in 2013, began pursuing an MFA in poetry through the University of New Orleans. He still lives in New York, where he works as an assistant preschool teacher and co-edits the virtual literary and arts publication *glitterMOB*.