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## the even passage of the sun

Terrence Suraj Arjoon  
Bard College, [ta5275@bard.edu](mailto:ta5275@bard.edu)

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Bard

# the even passage of the sun

a senior project submitted to

The Division of Languages and Literature of Bard College

by Terrence Arjoon

Annandale-On-Hudson, NY

May 2017



*Such tenderness, those afternoons and evenings,  
saying blackberry, blackberry, blackberry.*

Robert Hass, Meditation at Lagunitas



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Thanks to the sun, who taught me language, and the moon, who taught me silence.



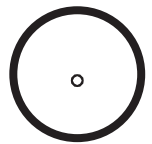
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**the even passage of the sun**





## the even passage of the sun

my fingers become nouns:  
Juliet's memory jar

flowers  
blue tile

roots  
candles

we walk  
in a dusty city

I want to ask  
her about dews

the habits of trees  
but my voice quavers

words dissolve  
in milky clouds

into the hem  
of an approaching storm

the mind fades  
the dead cry out

from my bones  
rising into the purple sky

the sun will rise  
the birds will whirl

**moss temple**

tomorrow I weave cherry sprays  
in my hair and on my forehead  
at the moss temple in Kyoto

an unpunctuated book written  
by centuries into a compressed garden of decay  
calls to mind the red sky

and a bird plucking berries  
from the fire  
the weight of the air the way the future uses up light

**preincarnation**

there is no such thing as the pomegranate tree  
there is only the ocean  
brackish water seeping up through the gray sand  
the spring is late this year, the wind is still

a structure on the horizon  
floating over the waves like a blinking text cursor  
darkens the consonance of colors  
in chance array over the ocean

I don't remember my name  
but the train is still in the station  
dreaming that it is moving  
like water through the source of memory

## Sagrada Familia

the first time you wept like a wooden boat  
the arches of the church collapsed  
in a winding fiction

I was in the square  
shadowboxing with blackbirds  
doodling in the Spanish man's notebooks  
drawing turbot, a winged bull, a sugar loaf  
carving a path into the garden of your idea

we enter the basilica  
a fire growing in the shadow of the transept  
mutates into the sudden slowness  
of construction

## Roden Crater

here I am again at the volcano in Arizona  
thinking of all the tangerines you'll peel and eat

and offer me nothing but a blasé palm over the eyes  
treating color as a thing I'm receiving

checking the flow of light  
and putting bars over the windows

you lead me over to the crater's eye  
the droopy stars fall towards the earth

which gives me the thought of sleep as information  
the cinder cone a momentary lapse in flame

you enact the lenience of the lemon blue sky  
or the exactness of roots scraping in the sand



**the bull**

we build a temple right here in my backyard  
for a wedding-bed

where on one side the grass slopes towards the river  
on the other to the lightning hole

doomdrums flare up in a syncopated nightmare  
torch, whip, robes

history curves in a panorama  
a rock cracks open like a fat egg

tauroctonian remnants in the center  
outside people fall out of a windows, trees collapse

the sun tracks in dispassioned streaks  
inside a vermillion nothingness

we feast on tuna, mullet, fava beans and bread  
divine the bovine leftovers

love striking water from a stone  
in the cave of the deathless auroch

## RAM

ended my love affair with the microchip yesterday  
now learning to store things in different places  
jars, accumulation of time in walls...  
cigar boxes, etc

embedding memories in air plants  
which release new clocks  
to store my writing in

I take my necklace off and lay it in the sand  
face contorted into a naked sneer  
my neurosignals wane  
the drowning trees and my infinite eyelids  
the hour has disappeared through the window

**rain-condensor**

two older ladies from a local horticulture organ engage in shoptalk  
they spread a thin layer of hibiscus jam on the floor  
I look at the screen on the wall  
common rural sadness now reflected in JavaScript  
a storm is approaching  
I leave the shop and come upon a rain condenser in the shape of Richard  
he forms an elaborate geometry of ovoids over the marble arches  
effectively killing the pastoral  
pulling the bodies from the Seine  
dousing the local fires

**radiesthesia**

my knees hurt

I walked backwards for two years to see the future  
already, I know this venture is foolish, purple  
now I can't sleep

I drink a gallon of horse tranquilizer a day  
the future is still there I'm sure  
that's why I became a doctor  
a luxorthochronologist  
a light, bones, and time doctor  
to heal the sickness of the rising sun

**for Penelope Spheeris**

I bare my mitochondria  
another fit of emotional exhibitionism  
speaking in crash-tense again  
roads sidwinding from my mouth  
violets fall in my lap  
I stop talking  
you've been mute ever since you caught me  
cos-playing the decline of western civilization  
wearing nothing but an exit mask  
and a baby grand piano

**figures at the base of a crucifixion**

I'll go with you as far as Golgotha  
the gaudy vomitorium appears over the horizon  
skullcap grinning white  
ravished from the lonely shore  
I stop in my tracks, neck craned upwards  
dust motes floating to the top of the hill  
what about the spores' point of view?  
a couple thousand years ago  
floating by the first drug bust ever:  
another Garden of Eden

## vertical service code

a phone call

I hang up planning an exit from History

I fling scraps at the vertical display  
which loops dark-spiced branches

on my bedroom wall, nature speeding past  
my sensorium diminished to a thin oxide layer

which spirals around my pupils  
my limbs useless and weakened

the remote is located anterior to the comforter  
my neck is stiff, I rotate my entire body to the left

the remote is on the floor  
with a great shrug I roll out of bed

the waters at the edge of History dredge auburn  
the total past felt nothing when destroyed

**apophenia**

lying beside the universe  
dirty from ash showers  
wizened and arrested by forgetting  
I sit up in a coil of rope and read

books are savage traps  
now I am reading shadows  
now I am reading the anguish I knew in the cave  
and the fear I know now

the golden roots of the universe  
shoot through my mouth  
wood now dispersed through my brain

into the belligerent hologram  
where people accelerate into slow comets  
and poppies drift up over the lawn



**readymades**

a ball of twine  
reverberates with hidden noise  
by the juicing machine

immortal dust  
in the lemon grove industrial

we siphon some juice  
go down to Panama

where we plan to meet Aboubacar  
for *assemblage*

he lives in a condo with the brahman  
that eternal darkness inside your simulator

the universe has been outmaneuvered  
drenched in its internal alexandrines

**eigengrau**

direct control of my retinal field

in 3,2,1...

confession time:

I talk in my sleep

to the sun

news:

there are no more years

fact:

the attitudes of the body

are the categories of the spirit

that is why I joined the harissa cult

for the great views

spiritual detritus, the man, the street

## ekphrasis

I tried to paint a portrait of you and painted a map of 17th century Europe  
 It's hard to believe people thought it looked that way  
 this poem is an ekphrasis of you, the subject of my painting  
 and because I cannot remember what you look like  
 it is an ekphrasis of me

what began in confusion ended in a thick black beard  
 in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey  
 across America in tears to my cottage in the West  
 nudging soil from the pasture slope  
 you will think we have been married for years

back when this place was a large bee-garden  
 you dark lady of the chateau, born during nemontemi  
 when J had a brain aneurysm in Sicily you cried for a week  
 which gave me time to lie in bed and slip slowly into madness  
 eventually washing up on your lakeshores

around the time of the London bombings and the Oregon Militia  
 I made this painting through a thick temporal mist  
 I lost my left eye three years ago to a skinny carpenter  
 the new eye is a lighter shade of brown with a snug fit  
 it only sees into the past

so living and painting are like driving  
 keeping an eye on the rear view mirror  
 licking the salt from my eyesockets  
 you are on the patio out back and hand me the rose  
 recommending its thorns

the auditor at stage left puts their mask on  
 your teeth bared, you curl around the Atlantic  
 the fermented juice boiling over to the shore  
 twisting locks in your backyard  
 the garden behind you is the hologram of all holograms

**petrified forest**

crawling through the sand  
rocks at foot and elbow  
lost in the transept of america  
resting on chords for brief respite

sand-blind  
cold as night  
permineralized and moving fast  
no water for days  
dreaming of an oasis

and bubbles in quartz  
kneeling in the desert sacristy  
tears invading solitude  
a lonely vow

beaten by the sun  
guzzling bright silica  
lay down  
and will myself to harden

**ruin-quench**

having been made aware of the detrimental effects  
it would incur on the New York psychosphere  
I cease production of my dream machine

no birds, no bugs in the sky  
a mysterious mist creeps from the edge  
of everyone who minds his dog

the one animal moving on the street  
for whom the traffic lights  
have instilled a celestial vortex  
in the justice of my punishment

**immolation-spell**

you are buried in the hot tar of the arcade  
cars rumbling overhead  
remind you of the monk you saw on tv  
dividing your passions into units

you vowed your funeral would last a hundred years  
lengthened by many eulogies  
and the deaf raspings of branch upon branch  
as your dream penetrates through layers of concrete  
seperating you from the birds

I will learn to see the wind and the gods  
I will be as wise as mist  
you will winter over to me  
across the plectrum of the garden

from the freezer of discontent  
rose-buds crinkling under your step  
will jingle in the morning air

**restoration**

he comes in like always  
martyred feet and cindered mouth  
his inescapable gaze scours the earth  
you can hear it turning if you listen  
a soft whirr  
a grind skittering across black space  
celestial vibrations in planetary teeth

he stops the turning  
bees bloom one last time  
the hyacinths wave to the wind  
a secret tether which connects all things  
you know, because they all go around  
the wrist, the neck, the abattoir

**carmen**

every image is a sleep in itself  
by virtue of my smile

all things are glass-backed  
like vapors rising over the earth

in a seasick nightmare  
or red dye along a flaw

in the letter-knife in my back  
forever birds wheel contemplating arthritis

a purgatorial plinth has broken  
causing brain fog

to vivisect the avenues  
and the coffee cups



**area denial services**

being born is like this  
on a journey to the west  
my dream goes wandering  
over withered fields

each flower  
each blade of grass  
is violently torn into life  
and behind my feet flowers grow  
where before there were none

I know I am on a journey to find something  
a flower perhaps, or a relic  
but I do not remember

the sun lies low over the mountains  
like a cherry blossom, glistening

# post-edenic

a poem in 6 parts





## I

I wrote about you  
la luna, regina  
the moon appeared before you  
like it appears behind my father  
pulling a sword from the scabbard  
the moon glinting off the blade  
until, suddenly, 35 minutes ago  
it was black  
like those dreams  
where you are falling.  
I lie down face up and began singing  
children drift in like water  
I had dreamed it was you in that ditch-car  
but since it was not  
I'll tell you  
without any fear of infamy

## II

he had made laurels of his anxieties from eucalyptus  
for memory, the act of forgetting is the act of atonement  
but the cat-scratched fronds don't help  
but as the swamp overflows, so does 1901  
1902,1903, etc  
into now, the past  
even two days later  
I cannot help but wonder why the swamp-water  
was gray, like underbaked concrete  
and the palm fronds of then, for memory  
sweeping behind our footsteps  
and those also of the frog, the vita nuova progenitor  
angry because he called Mary's belly  
a womb

**III**

1814, 1511

10 generations of slaves

on cherry plantations

Black Bush Polder

would call to tell of the power

the might, to scare caimans

back into their ditches

“want to see my gun...”

my gun is a blackbird

Noah shot right through this jacket

right here

almost hit me too

## IV

My father called a locksmith when he needed a priest  
this was a misunderstanding on his part  
your message:  
at the periplum monoplex  
sugar, bauxite, arapaima  
butterflies, mint, and Lesbia's sparrows  
I've erased my culture  
desolate is the tree  
the roof on which we sat  
Allegra, Diane, Kimberly  
what was her name?  
my father knows her name  
darkness descends

## V

oh Padma of the seven griefs who has entered the lotus  
moon, cloud, tower, a patch of light on the Casa Battlo  
sulfur pile as per long island Islip  
where we vacationed  
chatting with the dying Cato  
she came down the stairs in a Céline dress  
I like a certain number of shades in my landscape, unlike Mondrian-  
you being one of them  
why are your feet bare? Was not death to come?  
why is he not here? What summer have you broken from?  
“Donna! Fetch mi ma wine-skin”  
the Arno is still  
the plum trees are in blossom

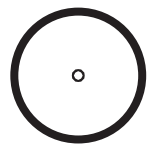


## VI

I drop to the floor and kiss the earth  
the crowd thinks I have fallen  
the puja of marigolds and goat's milk  
continues to be passed around  
in a clock-wise fashion  
the tabla player is crying  
Lakshmi, her sari falling off her shoulder  
drops a marigold into my lap  
petals lighter than sea-foam

# Decknamen

a sonnet corona





## Decknamen I

You could read it in the air, scaly and sun-choked.  
The sky is nervous and it strikes nerves in my teeth  
like a stairwell full of birds or a klieg-light pointed at my mouth.  
The cobwebs console an eternity within limits, like an ore.  
And we will pick up our work again: clothing ourselves in fire,  
concealing ourselves in tin and copper.  
We hide our breath in the bellows, our cries in the chalk-traces  
on the wall in the city below. Ash raining down some night-sickness.  
Written into every clock face is desire to see green again,  
the sulfurous wallpaper nuzzling our shoulders.  
In this house occupants are instructed to look inward from the bog,  
down from the cordoned-off air upstairs.  
Now we commit radical sleep acts and research on metals;  
we destroy dream fibers for fuel.

## Decknamen II

We destroy dream fibers for fuel,  
producing metals to use in our machines.  
One renders clouds, another ontologies,  
my angler-helmet hears incest.  
The in-ear-device sprouts a bloom.  
Sunfall combs my moss into disarray and the seeds are glowing in the ground  
and I am lazily pursued by several factions of poison.  
I fight culture by tinging metals in the basement.  
The sign of true potic gold is a thick paste excreted  
from the worms dangling above the pots, and their screams,  
which produce a chafe in my liver  
and a thin memory of prayer.  
The worms initiate the moss-placement algorithm,  
spreading plants, placing dogs near people.

### Decknamen III

Spreading plants, placing dogs near people,  
using my ear-residue and worm-paste I produce a salve  
mixed with two parts lemon and one part water,  
yielding mandarins and blackbirds,  
which the government attempts to exterminate.  
I put down my worms and head to my lover's micro-apartment.  
She is a yew tree growing out of a book with a blue cover,  
lovely, whispering secrets behind my eyelids.  
I inscribe equations onto her low-hanging limbs.  
Dogs are condemned from her room,  
whose fur ionizes her leaves.  
When she sleeps I rub the salve on her roots,  
and mushrooms grow along her cipher of sleep.  
Her sap reads my dreams, so that I may step out into the yard.

## Decknamen IV

Her sap reads my dreams, so that I may step out into the yard.  
The automatic rain-machine purrs,  
and large steel urns collect rainwater on the roof.  
Fat drops, each one staining me with militant perseverance,  
lubricating my eye sockets,  
teaching me the secret numbers of flowers.  
The house is sacred, but the garden isn't.  
Lavender, thyme, nightshade,  
all gathered in sufficient quantities, coloring the dyes and tinctures.  
The horses have stopped marking the weather  
and have retreated further into town.  
Bristly boars have infiltrated the irradiated homes of the locals,  
running their own rackets and labs, using their ancient names.  
Pulling secrets from the dirt,  
upsetting the nettles from their purchase.

## Decknamen V

Upsetting the nettles from their purchase  
I hear the axe blossoming by the windowsill,  
the corroded edges green in my shadow.  
The flowers erupt in soul-sweating panic,  
roots surge around my fingers and dirt  
tracking up the decaying walls.  
Only the mnemonic value of stillness  
gliding in and out of security checkpoints.  
Silence drifts up from history  
in reams of biopolitical displacement.  
First the trees begin to grow, then the vines take hold.  
First the bugs invade, then the birds,  
all standing in dust as monuments of perpetual exile,  
condensed radial engrams.



## Decknamen VI

Condensed radial engrams  
manifest as paranoia and science.  
I hide my work from myself by sleeping  
and through absence.  
Diegetic whispers boiling in the heat.  
This house is a fork in the canal,  
and as I dip my swollen legs in the current  
I make of the jagged edge of rusted metal  
a thousand knives.  
I feel birds on the other side.  
Therefore the fissioning of gold  
is not the transmutation of metal,  
but a tuning the landscape to its most lush and vibrant aspect.  
A forest with the speed of a temple.  
When I wake I am a lizard  
turning in circles  
before a thousand-petaled sun.

## Decknamen VII

When I wake I am a lizard  
turning in circles  
before a thousand-petaled sun,  
looking for crystals, for teachers, for guides.  
Books talk to each other,  
their rumbling bellies are the silence we hear.  
I am at the disposal of every body.  
Books eat me.  
Copper and zinc poison me.  
Come to my alembics and sandbaths.  
In my struggle to produce an antiperson  
my garments weigh me down.  
My hands burn hearts  
and my body quivers.  
The songs force themselves into  
this insurgent scrabbling  
through my dense shrubbery.  
I retreat to the bedroom.

## Decknamen VIII

I retreat to the bedroom,  
descend the staircase, push through throngs of jaguars  
with human names, alligators, sharks and serpents.  
I meet the orisha of the river, flowing pink exuberance.  
She lays out a great table, filled with bright and leafy foods.  
I kneel one hundred feet away,  
bow my head towards the ground.  
In the black air here she calls boat for me,  
made of cedar lashed together with halfah grass,  
it arrived curling and twisting  
in a blue flame, and I find myself lying in the floor of it,  
a tenon to the mortise of the weeping rock of the sky.  
I become conscious of the most beautiful singing.  
My skiff has stopped before a fence of fronds.

## Decknamen IX

My skiff has stopped before a fence of fronds.  
Two gates of sleep and a bridge of dust.  
At the top of the sky the wind barely stirring.  
Thunderous veins of light coursing down,  
space itself drunk on black shreds  
into a palace made of winds.  
A solution of the mind  
devolves into a large copper retort,  
into a Slow Henry,  
from which fish hooks grow barbs,  
knives grow longer.  
And in two days I reach into the althenor and find an emerald tablet  
the writing of which has been scrubbed away vigorously.  
The full universe of empty objects.

## Decknamen X

The full universe of empty objects  
pours me back into my delapidated pensión as if from a dream.  
I hold the blank shard on my hand,  
a brushstroke from an absent goddess signaling her absence.  
This morning's sun rises with creaky joints,  
the horizon is aphasiac.  
I descend the basement steps to my laboratory  
and make headway to the aludel,  
flailing through my notes,  
inserting the tablet in hopes of wringing some vision from it.  
I terrorize bits of paper.  
Strangely fluid, my vision has stopped.  
My sleepwalking hands move angrily over the instruments.  
I have breached the implied contract of the shard.

## Decknamen XI

I have breached the implied contract of the shard.  
The door performs ceration on my hands and soul,  
makes of me a gummy performative wax.  
Furnishing obscenities and mercury  
out of big knot holes, the door arouses empty space  
for the venom sun to enter and destroy,  
while the police state initiates a violent spell  
of home-made tear gas  
and large mills to grind my bones.  
I a pale rebus, dripping sweat  
and stuffing sheafs of paper into my pockets,  
am dragged into the sunlight.  
A barren necrophilic wasteland populated by dogs and cars,  
they bring me to the pyrological machine.

## Decknamen XII

They bring me to the pyrological machine,  
where humans, bored and industrious, are building pyramids,  
those clocks of grief and passage,  
rhythmic generators extracting  
latent projections of consciousness from the earth  
filtrating them into a purified apoplectic form  
which is projected from the tip of the pyramid  
into blades of grass that weep the dewy liquid.  
I am brought to this place for punishment,  
to restore the knife to the traveler.  
Churning the nursery for three days,  
connected to the sky with a gossamer thread,  
On my final strobiloid day I think of home,  
and I am all teeth and nails.

## Decknamen XIII

And I am all teeth and nails  
returning home face-down. Floating through an empty city  
5 feet off the ground, bald, wearing a white tunic,  
mute and unable to understand the language  
of my blind apotheosis,  
I feel the salt spray from the ocean,  
hear the glacial rumble, the volcanic murmurings.  
I return home to find my lover has borne fruit.  
The dogs clamor outside.  
I push past the door hanging limp by its hinge.  
Her fruit is large and glistening in the fading half-light,  
radiant like a mushroom cloud, or a smile.  
There are four glassy drupes, pulsing absentmindedly.  
I grasp the fruit between my fingers and pull downwards.



## Decknamen XIV

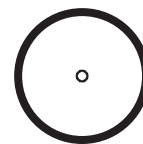
I grasp the fruit between my fingers and pull downwards.  
A fruit nigredo overcomes me.  
Oh my sons and daughters,  
my children born knee deep in coal.  
We know from the rind of the fruit what is concealed within,  
we know from the soul what is concealed in the body.  
My lover wraps her limbs around us all,  
and giant clouds of fireflies descend from the sky.  
We peel off our masks and touch the cave of the sky.  
We will return to our many basement workshops,  
extracting our dream fibers and performing sleep-acts.  
We tear down the choked wallpaper,  
slather a layer of fresh paint,  
wind the clocks and clear the chimney.  
A pleasant humming of bees  
tells us that there will be rain.

**Decknamen XV**

You could read it in the air, scaly and sun-choked.  
We destroy dream fibers for fuel,  
spreading plants, placing dogs near people.  
Her sap reads my dreams, so that I may step out into the yard,  
upsetting the nettles from their purchase,  
condensed radial engrams  
before a thousand-petaled sun.  
I retreat to the bedroom.  
My skiff has stopped before a fence of fronds,  
the full universe of empty objects.  
I have breached the implied contract of the shard.  
They bring me to the pyrological machine  
and I am all teeth and nails.  
I grasp the fruit between my fingers and pull downwards.  
It looks like there will be rain.



**biblioklept**





**bibliokept**

in order to torment ourselves more efficiently  
we must gather together into societies  
probe the syntax of lightning  
gather up our ashen effigies from our midnight vigils  
we must enter the barren deserts of our souls and make rain

walking avenues in the mud my disease turns into a map  
in the forest the branches droop heavily  
the mist blurs our outlines, the birds flee

a querulous bucket of water  
avoids theologians and encyclopedists  
stealing books for their stench  
we swim in the murmur of sun dogs  
through stunted mandrake withdrawal

**shapes that make me feel busy**

your techno-babble is the toile de juoy of my sun-room  
I hear your spirit rubbing off on the walls  
smearing a brown paste  
the blue and white farmer covered in dirt  
busily toiling at the earth  
in the wall we hear a buzzing  
black locusts bubble over the wallpaper  
there is a sudden noise  
crypto-human voices of avian insomniacs  
ringing through every room of the house  
executing a piecemeal pestilence on on the dining room  
the ceiling joists grow tired  
we fall silent as the lights dim

**gasmask**

I leave my DNA on the sidewalk  
and decline the asthmatic staircase  
I must continue my research  
a way of transferring the bark to the entire dog  
the sky is still the same charred vellum  
the yellow hole the bird made in my throat is still there  
I am the same  
I am scratching into the canvas of my life



**governmentality**

the new bible is transliterated  
from the shift of the bunkers into the sea.

its marble heartbeat is all apocrypha  
which are as incontrovertible as dreams

wringing our docile bodies dry  
on the municipal building steps

etchings on the doors of the city  
ring like the rain's loud chatter

as the book is read aloud  
for thousands of years

forming a light buzz  
disguised as incandescent humming

**eating**

summer throbs into being  
from the winter of over-speak

but the problem of lighting continues  
to occupy the fetishism of its own curiosity

there are tanks patrolling the boulevard below  
shining lights into to all the windows

like the sussurus of endless thighs  
parading through a fugue of gun oil

the heart turns to marble  
by beating itself into a ribcage

fear consuming the future  
in an endless repast

**weather report**

the sky in taking on a new consistency  
put this war economy to use  
by miniaturizing the leopard

whose ballet of moons  
warps the board in the image  
like a phantom of a chronology

the tree is constructed for the body  
the body is constructed for locomotion  
people fall down in the dark breakers

the inevitability of a deluge  
typifies the burning cathedral  
in a world waterlogged in worms

**drive**

I shed a vial of Lancôme and a busted speaker  
my tongue trips over  
the accelerometer goes up  
but the truth of the matter is  
you have a misshapen conception of what I'm trying to say  
which is mainly this:  
every time you reach for the glovebox  
I feel a pang of jealousy and rage  
the last time I opened the glovebox was in the hole  
that's where I store my youth  
densely matted in fur and covered in teeth  
scraps of nerves poking out  
laughing nervously

**babble**

some times  
the monolith is hidden

Tower of Babel  
on a VPN server

construction halting  
at midday

as cloud machines  
whirr by

their echolalic residue  
skitters out

onto the ground  
like splinters

of someone breathing  
in reply

**dreamhouse**

trying to wrap my neck around this attachment  
I find I have no neck  
in fact I have nothing  
tuning sleep machines for a living  
I carve dreams into the crystalline grain  
the wearers melt the glass with their forehead  
release a sugary tonic  
mouths loll open in moist reverie  
they build cities against the barbed wire  
teeth grinding the duration of elevators  
dream loudly in softly caresses  
a catheter in the chest  
scribbles electric eyes  
across the sleeping army  
like the memory of cars  
parked in fog under a bridge

## heart attack gun

people are changing all the time  
in a fast-moving ruse

I dreamed I touched a guillotine's edge  
and woke up in priapic boredom

drifting into the wispy horizon  
thinking of guns and pharmacokinetics

I would like to be surveilled  
by outsourced Indian CIA ana-lusts

they will put a bug on my moon-blind horse  
and follow me down to the pump.

using sex is a PR disaster  
bonnet off while the massacre continues outside

I pull a knife from my boot  
and a fast one on the spy from Bombay

simultaneously they bleach saxitoxin  
simultaneously they "be real" concerning sex  
simultaneously they drink gusts of ataxic wind

**goddess of spring**

bio-reactors in a basement of the city  
river heaped with charred cedars  
charcoal littering the avenues  
bad milk mixing with the blood of goats  
a tearing of meat from bones  
a breaking of those bones  
and a sucking of the marrow from them  
pale faces in phosphorescent glow  
their eyes reflected in the glass of the incubator  
as troops exit the city  
we are being swallowed by plant life  
and drowned in the floating spores  
of the algae in the river



## splanchnology

in every branch of human activity it is the same  
their pockets crammed with grapes  
saliva dripping down their chins  
haunches bent over unrolled tarpaulins  
the soldiers doze  
we hear fuzzy static of the monitor in the adjacent tent  
they're tying animals up in back  
the wind sticks to the palm fronds  
we sit on grass corroded by salt  
pricked by the edges of the zeriba  
against a metal beaten vision slurry  
we think back to the first invasion  
mitochondria entered the cell  
hostile invasion abandonment of binary fusion  
sludge of rotting meat under useless reeds

## drone repair shop

OBJ Lethal was haymaked two days ago

damage to the control module of PLUMBIRD

we need a new password

it seems like this service model is infected with a language virus

sustained kinetic effects damage on the screen of good fortune

be advised these new models come with volume control

sorry this drone is projecting a formally complex representation of cultural brain damage

I have drone-induced anxiety (DIA)

what are your qualifications?

*at space camp they called me radiant node*

what time is it?

this is not the geo-location of information being used to zone potential chronologies for future documentation

drone operators infiltrating the mirage layered necro-luminescence

**haute surveillance**

they insured the universe  
by bringing everything  
plumb with sleep

these pork-synthesized steel drums  
tweaking the beaks of birds  
rip open the swamp belly with a torch

renewed by knives  
a pond for the drowned egrets  
pipes metadata into my vegetal organ

the optical unconscious sprained  
bird in red dye of dogwood  
sings through its hollowed thigh

is sacred disc of failed sun  
for the ray casting operation  
bottlenecked in a bog

**museum of the mouth**

the museum is composed of human sounds  
we hear teeth opening pomengranates  
a mouth pressed against the steamy mirror  
interrogating its gums

deeper, small moans heard through the wall  
and tongues slurping over denim  
followed by sharp intakes of breath  
and laughter stifled in throats

the floor of the museum forces  
the walls to breath  
through a porous membrane

**fatal error**

sunsets packed into guns  
reach the seabed

from aboard the crumbling skip  
the rays illuminate the poseidonia

the lettuce and algae are awash  
light has gotten loose

while above the deacon uses a scalpel  
for gustating the sweat of the prisoners on board

his eyes meringue in the escaped light.  
the detainees now damasked golden effigies

glorious hetacombs of data march to the sea  
the glassy ocean palpates in revery to the sun

**gold**

I'm being carried to the outskirts of town  
becoming a payment to the diviner

the changes in the polarity of the lake  
yellow my eyes

I feel the moon in my marrow  
digging at the cellar of me

and the new gold in the mines  
suddenly my irradiated lover

we descend into the shaft  
as he fire-sets even deeper

using me for a dowsing rod  
as I glow brighter and brighter

## a song for a new way of living

the crystal hazes phlegmatic tubes  
in the empty municipal library

you walk like a refugee through my pages  
cubistic glimpses of flesh and flesh

between the days hidden by trees  
and the death-masks of work

when the library collapses  
we are coated in a slip of chalk

ghosts walk through the rubble  
weeds push up between our toes

when the last satellite falls  
when the last plane is rusting in a field

we will begin our new way of living  
transmuting into a genealogy of minerals

our souls buried in the soil for safe-keeping  
while we learn the language of the land

the clay talks to the wind  
the spider talks to the vine

after some time down in the dirt  
we assemble tools to extract our souls

big loud machines extracting resins from our skin  
salt from our bones and gelatin from our blood

we find our shadows are new again  
dark with the vigor of youth

spreading across the land  
even the temples look new

the birches now blur into the back of our eyes  
and we see the rays of our metallic spirit

# chrysopoeia

a poem in 15 parts







**chrysopoeia 1**

across the gray steppes a horrible procession of welders advances  
binding iron processes which stop at dusk  
I dream my shielded arc  
my gap of hot fire, my tungsten electrodes  
I'm hiding from the stars, imprints on the copper plate  
my brain hammering thoughts flat  
there is a fire roaring from within me  
dissonance buzzes in the air outside  
somersaulting over rays of light and faint motes of dust  
I scrape some grain from my linen pocket and step into the night  
my lower back jabbars with pain  
I see the mangle in the distance, wheels aloft  
flames frozen in a shiny faience  
the sand dulls in the light  
my sister steps from behind the wreck

**chrysopoeia 2**

which makes a shimmering crystal city in the distance  
Galena stepping lightly from the metalwork  
shaking bits of tin from her arms  
large and smooth, born in some basement laboratory  
her presence a study chiaroscuro  
even in the uniform light of the desert  
she dwells in the roots of language  
voices indeterminate rain down from above her  
an ash-flaking behemoth ahead of me  
she opens the trunk of the car, still smoldering  
she removes many withies and poles  
wordlessly constructs her hut  
*she-who-blows-smoke-through-her-eyes*  
inducing her dry bones through the small hole  
the moon congealing to a bloody clot  
the ritualism, the vandalism of the night air

**chrysopoeia 3**

Galena made of a series of small fires  
her tools drown the eyes with their iron menace  
in soluble night-errors  
that compose the sky and its flames  
she was born of a dog who had coupled with a bell  
at her birth a crow leered at her and she wept  
her life a land of grief and locked doors  
churning ore in a slush-boat  
her skin a grey-black osmosis  
and I plump as a cherry, learned nothing  
in a town of alchemists without hands  
my sister in the mountains, I in the library  
before she learned to drive  
her brain turned her armadas against her  
she leaps up driving a lance into my chest

**chrysopoeia 4**

the lance in my chest becomes a glittering antenna  
it's length catching some stray desert signal  
my chest becomes a hypomnesic archive of images:  
a sky covers the grainy detail of the crumbling wall  
I collapse to the sand in pain  
as the images fade from my eyes  
the enormous tragedy of Galena's dream  
I wake up unharmed in my tent  
eat blackberries and make the mouth a springtime  
in my sleep she has birthed in the hut a copper effigy of herself  
when she replaces our father's stone she will be king  
all this hangs on our finding  
our father's sleeping chamber in cartesian space

**chrysopoeia 5**

my hands mourn the absence of electricity  
in the half-light  
I carve a chrestomathy into the tentflap  
haunted by my empty steles  
and the many indecipherable ones littering my study  
then the smell of burning ore outside  
hot sulfuric gas passing through the grate  
galena's smelting process halts  
the world word by word  
and I, suddenly decarbonized  
my mangled mind  
carried through the air in the beak  
of a round metal vulture

**chrysopoeia 6**

my face reflected in the gaps  
in the crosshatch of the boma  
Galena choking in a fit  
watching her flux-covered lead  
she is a furnace sweating toxic  
resting while her offering of metal cools  
she sleeps, she eats  
brown fields hurl by in dreams  
she stirs killed mercury  
surveying the feckless drought  
making heavy heat with her furnace  
hoping to precipitate a storm  
I mime naked into the desert dancing  
mine steel to fling at the stormthroat  
Galena scares me, I am afraid Galena will leave  
she came in an ardent wreck  
now leaving with an armful of misshapen ingots  
she goes into the uncreated night  
she disappears in a sheet of rain

**chrysopoeia 7**

I am alone  
I have several things:  
wooden mortar, wooden spear, glass beakers, flint  
Galena had dissambled her boma before the rains  
the ground spongy underfoot  
the fires on the mountain quickly subdued by damp air  
I construct a second hut, with a conical top  
offer food and drink to my ancestors  
the car is now an aviary, it knows how to stop a bird in the air  
as I know how many spots are on the cats that prowl at night  
as the lightning burrows into its summer cottage in the dirt  
and the forge knows the names of the trees  
the sun returned today, and I am no longer in the desert  
I must have traveled a thousand miles in my sleep  
the sand thrusts up in so many moist castles



**chrysopoeia 8**

store the light in the day to project in the evening  
the holocene ghost of the ocean in the dunes  
like waves frozen in time  
the dunes wear so many faces  
crescentic, star, dome, linear, parabolic  
reflections of the movements of the stars  
they wander like monks across the desert  
some are held back by winds, some push forth  
rolling monuments to ancient kings  
I try a spell to push the dunes away  
to make level land to live  
the snakes sidewind from their holes  
a dog howls to the east  
magic has no interest in my comfort  
the dunes alter themselves under various darknesses  
flattened versions of which innerve a phantom water

**chrysopoeia 9**

a bullroarer razes the distance  
weeping in circles  
going back to the origin of the illness  
a scavenger alights atop the dune...  
I awaken in the mouth of a crocodile  
water gushes through my pores, my gaps  
forming a new ocean  
energy pulsates from my chest in surging waves  
my inward cataract now a platinum cumulus  
I am delirious with the brass founder's ague  
lungs full of heavy gas  
when the nomads appear  
from along the newly revealed beach  
long hidden beyond the dune-cap  
they wrap me in linen  
strap me to a board  
and set off towards the sea

**chrysopoeia 10**

we chase angelic edicts scattered across the beach  
the book is lying in my lap, brown and moist  
like fertile soil ready to sprout a massive tree  
to my ear the drift is the sound of the borderzone  
moving crabwise, the birds moving diagonally  
I close my eyes rabid and iconophobic  
and the desert din becomes rain  
the gloaming edge of the sky a common error  
sand speaking extravagant diatribes  
my eyes glaze in a corolla of mud  
I wake stretching my neck in bovine persistence  
I am alone laid up in a grotto  
what I thought was the sand was the sea  
the world around me warbling a false tune  
trapped in a soma press at the edge of the ocean

**chrysopoeia 11**

the ripening of stones at the grotto's edge  
soft red clay grown phosphorescent  
beneath the moon in my lap  
like spring I construct a bloomery  
I mold a pygmy ziggurat  
leaving a hole for air at the base and apex  
burning sticks and branches for charcoal  
slapping mud at the sides  
ore from my bag enters through the tip  
the bloom is highly porous  
in my sleep the slag flows to the forehearth  
the work here is but work  
transmutation before machining  
I sit before the ocean as it throbs deep resonant chords

**chrysopoeia 12**

the heterogeneous bloom languors in the small grotto  
I, one green sprout in the weed of summer  
resting in a reprieve from truculent sand  
I stare at the lump there on the incline  
like Galena, I transmute with purpose  
I want to be shaken all the way back home  
the ocean and land become as one  
my loneliness all-encompassing  
I break the bloom with a hammer  
picking the slag away  
in sleep I return to my former solitude  
beneath the arches and the rhapsodies of the desert  
to escape the paralytic damp summer  
and the desolate impermanence of the tide

**chrysopoeia 13**

blank effulgence of the late sky  
the old latticework of leaves on the shore  
everything is shredded  
now back in the night of the desert  
the wind in contrition  
no car, no Galena  
lost in the variable striations of the desert  
I find myself west of the river of Hapi  
the somnambulant wasteland assembles  
quickly producing a crystal that floats heavy on the air  
turning askew in the pre-dawn light  
the size of a kidney  
the crystal would appear to look at me  
a glimmering distant hope of the horizon  
as the crimson ribbon of solar radiation  
comes fast over the dusty promontories

**chrysopoeia 14**

the crystal looks like a boar  
I see inside, its tusks pointing upwards  
coarse hair spilling blackbody radiation  
in endless millisieverts  
all the raging boars of Fukushima  
must end in this dusty corner of the world  
I think this boar must be my father  
my vision blurring in his gaze  
and the sun setting like a shard of glass  
he will unzip my DNA  
I will fall to the ground in a pallid thud  
moisture quickly evacuating my coil  
I will stare at his shadow  
I will do nothing but die  
my mitochondria will bore into the sand  
my body a helical lacuna of divagating cells  
my teeth will scam and nails stray  
my atoms spreading me across my life  
from the initial bloomery  
to this final fission  
I begin to rot

**chrysopoeia 15**

my quarks' agglomerating movement flattened by static  
my body flees me and my father  
form burns of light that spread over the world  
and trepan the roots of the trees  
my nonmotile bacterium extruding a lust  
and rods of light issuing from puddles  
my electrons gaggle in cooling grunts  
one by one they come to a stop  
I torpedo past spilling sap and slag of me  
and antipodal spears of ash  
spreading myself across the underside of the earth  
Galena anneals me into a dark crystal  
I'm absorbed into the valley of the neutron  
my soul flexes its daydream  
my brain the forge of its memory





## afterword

The meaning of a poem should, generally, not be explained. I believe that the poem is language condensed to the utmost degree, purified and condensed into a glistening metal. I aspire to be, in the words of Charles Olson, an “archaeologist of the morning.” The root prefix of archaeology, ἀρχή, can be translated as “beginning.” I want to return to the beginning, to the roots of meaning.

However, the poems “Decknamen” and “Chrysopoeia” are both rooted in the practices of alchemy and metallurgy, and deserve a little explication. *Decknamen* is a German word that can be translated as “cover-name.” This refers to the practice in alchemical writing of obfuscating meaning by using code-words, or referring to compounds by incorrect names. This ensures that only other alchemists will understand important texts, creating a cult of secrecy and misinformation. The word *chrysopoeia* is an alchemical word that means the transmutation of gold.

Alchemy, strictly defined, is the science of transmuting base metals into silver and gold. The roots of the word are unclear. “Al-” is the Arabic definite article, and the suffix can be traced back to either the words *khemia*, land of black earth, *khymatos*, that which is poured out, *khein*, to pour, or *khymos*, juice or sap. In any case, it is the root of modern chemistry. Alchemy becomes truly interesting when viewed through a spiritual lens, as a transformation of the spirit, as Carl Jung espouses in *Psychology of Alchemy*. This can easily be applied to the poetic project. The words on the page should transform the reader.

What follows are definitions of some of the more arcane terms in “Decknamen,” a poem which attempts to hide itself.

- In Decknamen V, *engrams*, used in dianetics and Scientology, are detailed memories of trauma that are hidden from the conscious mind.
- In Decknamen VI the *fissioning of gold* refers to the synthesis of gold in a nuclear reactor. The ancient goal of alchemy was finally accomplished in 1980 by Glenn Seaborg, but unfortunately, all the gold was radioactive.
- In Decknamen VII, an *alembic* is a distilling device in which one container of liquid, a cucurbit, is heated, and the vapors rise and condense onto the walls of the anbig, which is placed over the cucurbit. The anbig has a long tube connected to it, which the liquid slides down, landing in the receiver. A *sand bath* is a device used to evenly heat reaction vessels by submerging them in hot sand.
- In Decknamen IX, a *retort* is a device that combines the cucurbit and anbig of the alembic into one container, under which a receiver is placed. *Slow Henry* is a colloquial term for the athanor, a coal furnace used to slowly and uniformly heat substances, performing one of the basic alchemical processes, digestion.
- In Decknamen X, an *aludel* is a pear-shaped bottomless and topless earthenware pot used for sublimation, which is the phase shift of matter from solid to gas. Several *aludels* are stacked together, and the substance is placed in the bottom *aludel*, which has a bottom, and placed in a furnace. The gas from the evaporating liquid collects in the top *aludel*, which has a top.

“chrysopoeia,” while similar to ‘Decknamen,’ is centered more squarely around the practice of metallurgy. This is the study of the physical and chemical behavior of metals, and the synthesis of complex metals from simpler ones. It is less strictly spiritual than alchemy, but in my research, I have discovered that the metallurgy that was practiced in the area of pre-industrial West Africa had ties to Ifá, a spiritual practice that my Caribbean ancestors also practiced, and the production of metals was almost a ritualistic practice. Below some metallurgical terms used in “chrysopoeia” are explained.

- In chrysopoeia 1, *shielded arc* and *tungsten electrodes* refer to two types of welding. Shielded metal arc welding is welding by pumping an electrical current through an electrode to the metal being welded. In Tungsten inert gas welding electrical energy is conducted via inert gas and metal vapors called plasma.
- In chrysopoeia 5-6, Galena is smelting in order to produce lead, which she hopes to offer to the gods. Smelting is done by using heat to rid an ore of extra carbon electrons, which are released into the air as poisonous gasses, in order to produce a metal. She has covered the galena, a common mineral of lead, in a flux, in this case, lime, which absorbs the sulfur dioxide. She roasts the ore in a furnace, and the sulfur dioxide gradually evaporates to leave lead oxide. This is placed in an air-starved furnace for reduction, and the carbon monoxide in the furnace removes the final oxygen molecules from the oxide, leaving the metal lead.
- In chrysopoeia 9, the narrator is sick with *brass founders' ague*, a sickness caused by ingesting too much poisonous gas.
- In chrysopoeia 11-12, the narrator builds a bloomery in the grotto with the hopes of making an offering to the gods, like his sister Galena did in the desert. A bloomery is used to smelt iron from its oxides, one of the earliest devices capable of smelting iron. The bloomery is constructed from heat-resistant clay in the form of a chimney, with an open top and a hole in the bottom for retrieving the resulting product. First charcoal is produced by heating wood at very high temperatures, functioning as pure carbon fuel. Bits of iron ore are placed in the bloomery, and it is heated at a carefully regulated temperature for a long period of time. The charcoal produces carbon monoxide, which reduces the iron oxide in the ore to metallic iron. The iron drops to the bottom of the bloomery and mixes with molten slag, which is a combination of silica, oxygen and iron, hardening to form a lump called a bloom. After it has cooled, the bloom must be broken with a hammer to remove the slag, and the metallurgist is left with wrought iron.



