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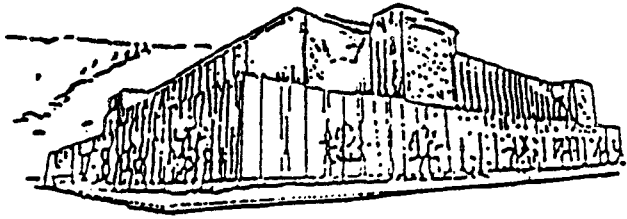
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RUBRICAE

poems by

Sarah Conant Gridley


M.A.T. Tufts University, 1992

B.A. Harvard University, 1990

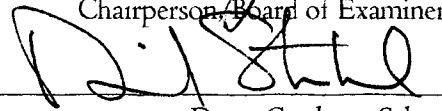
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2000

Approved by



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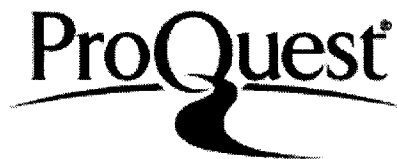


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I

*I dreamed that all men dropped their names, and sang
As only they can praise, who build their days
With fin and hoof, with wing and sweetened fang
Struck free and holy in one Name always.*

Hart Crane

Wechsel, Wehsal, Vixl

Comes off the sea
to spray the petals from the branches.
Near confetti. Salt-bitten shells. Faint oils heard
brushing.

Bruised faintly. Gently pink. Begins before
she knows. The nestling fades. The feathers cool.
And she is curious to accept
what is beautiful
in that. Cannot find

the proper feeling in her skin.
Some corner of that provence remotely
vocal.

Praytell, he was saying, Praytell.

Rain on the red umbrella. On the tin roof.
Rain hissing in the torches.
Rain on the warm cement.

What now shall be worn outdoors?
She is an eye or two away from the daisy throng. Almost.

Lights are strung and nearly is the dark enough.
Have you seen
herself made pretty in the bobbing flames?
Chaired. Patient. Have you felt her arches thumb-plowed
through another? Sweet Vicar!

Know that corrosion can be wired off.
Know that flirtation is a self splitting into metal wings.
Know that tea-soap is being stockpiled and sherry poured into soup

for when the weather dies out. She has heard the whistle
of a faraway fuel.

For when the weather dies out
it comes off the sea with warm hands
with warm hands for the trees and their shivering ears.

The messenger dream.
The four folds
of a saffron-steeped quire.

Comes off the sea
spoon-drift in brushes. His prolonged
strokes. His black returns.

She has heard the whistle.
And for this
has she stripped
from the green girl's body—

Prague: Nude Ascending

So bent on meaning come the dervishes. Dust-cones
of centripetal magic.

Inrushes of erasure siphoning static.

Liquor's gullet-fire, extinguishing,
to the yes, you are as much an inside as an out.

In some
such and such direction, generations tip
ladders down stucco eggshell walls, down
glistening agate walls,

inconclusively.

Rungs being the systematic way up
to the ground. Zero being the roundest form
of ambition. Surveillance

blooms brightly on rooftops; communication,
where boots scuff. More
the acrophobe

or agoraphobe? Fear is rapacious as space,
in any location.

Out of dark green
fenestrations, under arches sleepless
to gravity's lullaby, in the cobble-minded
alleys, lamps leak their partial

evidence. The city
is on a backward watch. The marble nude
is ascending, conscience
seduced by the moon. Graffiti

coils red
around the hero's shoulders
history

repossesses his arms. The city
is timelessly indifferent.

Where architectural illusion boasts
its perfect right angle, the need

to puncture
remembers:

in globed embeddedness doze
the cooled invasion of Swedish cannons.

Towards Decadence

At four o'clock we found ourselves
in a period room issued by the Sun King Louis,

and by the oath, *caged radiance*, swore our bodies might
yet be memorized (even in the waving veldt,

depressions amass a golden static). Immeasurably
apropos, the royal pain of freezing time. Could

our eyes have melted the accounting system—notebook
columns blacked and bled with numbers, to derive

the final sum of lions poured into wood, light made slack
with kill, and yawning, yellow—then might we not

have grown grave as furniture which late had turned
Victorian, or panicked, claustrophobic, in velvet

contusions and mahogany claws, in terror of wing-
backs come to permanent roost, littered

with antimacassars. What fate if the lilacs drooping
in the Chinese vase had remembered us, and remembering,

gone browner, sweeter still? Should we have drowned
in the morbid bell? Or found, under the Persian, a brass-

ringed door? Stairs, pitched into coolness of cellar space, grapes
accrescent in their bottled patience, and dust—we must not forget

that confusion—how the dust and light clung merely
to glass shoulders, how Burgundy soil bid our palettes,

stone-cloistered and corridors off,
untie their red curtains.

The Designated Borachio

No, don't get excited, he said. Remcarnation
is for another day. Learn trajectory of hide
then soul. A soul grazing is splendid,

yes, but which is more seductive:
the goats all day translating
green cud to sourish dairy

or the borachio round with swills
and indiscretion, all the wrong words
corked and handy? My tongue

is blacker than you'd think. Ah Rioja,
Sangria. More often I am thirsty
than hungry. Often I mistake hunger

for never gorgeous but petrific thirst.
Is coral not the hardening dream of fluidity,
this rhythm caught coming and going?

All good nouns are fossils.
No good nouns have entirely lost
a joy in pounding tables.

Borachio: 1) in Spain, a goatskin bag
used for wine or other liquors.
2) a drunkard.

A toast to sacrificial goats, he said,
to skins, hooves, horns
& vacated skulls.

To Continue the Survey of Ratified and Unratified Unions

All things were together. Then mind came and arranged them.

Anaxagoras

The clarinet and the asphodel, for instance,
were together, when music smelled of green
being broken. Underground, she split fruit,

paled at his hips and all-sided glamour.
Her detainment troubled the reeds,
drew gloss from dark clicking throats

so that music smelled of green being broken
and the clear saliva of shoots. Later,
in Queensland billabongs, shovel-sized toads

go together in multiples of two & forty-thousand,
a buoyant and copious amplexus,
the fore-playing grip that puts us here (think

relentless sex, plus, the chance delirium of toxins).
But just yesterday was storm, skin staticky
after lightning's bright divisioning.

We spit it out piecemeal, feeling
what put us together was cruel, bright,
and anticipatory. There was the picking up after,

also. Then green smelled of music being
broken, the strung saliva of shoots.
Was it evolution's dicing finesse

that whittled tentacles sharp? No wonder
it feels at times as though I am making
fine, but irrelevant arrangements.

Hypothetical Ablution

In forfeited shells
of sixteen-

pound mollusks,
Mandarins, red

silks circling
round the

ankles, strip
to bathe. As blood-

orange light
sets in lacquered

rooms, hands
turn coral,

noctilucent
in the benthic

blacks. What was saw-
toothed is glazed.

The bathers
are forgetting.

Foot translates
the opaline

walls. Day absolves
mind

as it cants
off phantom

ledges
to the bottom.

Notes from Under the Cupola

An arrow splits in heaven, raining its return
in dotted lines. He comes tonguing life. Bells
of sluice and clover.

Hear them? It is the hum of wickered coracles
winding down clean canals.

His wings are black but drizzled gold,
his robes are gray but swathed in carnation.
His cheeks flush with difficult message.

In the space between diptych, he splutters, "You."
The seed drops down the copper tunnel of millennia.
In every chrysanthemum I smell the shimmer.

I've tied a string around my finger so not to forget:
intent is dusty, risen to attic disuse, reverberation is worse
than dead: it cannot snap
its rib. I say,
my alphabet is sorely stretched, each stroke
a lengthening bridge spanning cross-purposed idiom
(the sharks are busy below,
fins making graphic the risk).

No way through time but exfoliation
spending perfume in pillows
and drawing rooms whose cream shades
are drawn halfway.

No shreds
but the ones underfoot, a sodden gold and mushroom
(paste, I think, is willfulness,
which smells of so much kindness).

In ear-privacy he marshals me:
we must try now
to resurrect what goes, the burning leaves the book
withstands between wax paper,
the veins
that never stopped to think.

Le Repos Noir

Goodnight he gives to slab pillow's closed ear. He has
one thin foot
in the stirrup, one in full gallop, is riding
down to the bone,
silver buckles shaving ribs
to a picked clean rattle
shaking time. Nightly
there are singularities at the heart of black holes
missing
their shapes. From throats of boys swollen
in anonymous ardor,
from cardinal splash and lily ruff, from faces,
from faces cherubic, flushed, and blank ascend
the cold strains, companionless, and thus
& thus how oh! & thus
infinitely mobile
choir notes in heavenly
deterioration, pure flutes
cross-stained by reflection, the glade's wedge green
and pooling, pooling
mercies hatched in glass chalice. In glass,
the chalice, sunlight wetting
frescoed walls with story, warming
cathedral's aching vault, hunger turning
inside out
Gloria, Gloria, Gloria
the notes ascend
Gloria immaterial
Gloria strict digestion of space
lemon shafts bathing brittle ribs,
crypt shadows drifting
through powdery knights. Repair. Repair
with the?
Grail.
To repair? To the? *Gloria*. After all there is, after all there is
no sacred heart after all there is
no rise the red notes, *Gloria, Gloria, Gloria*
no singularities willing to cloak
(*Gloria*) terror in warm flesh, no glaive
long enough to let blood clear of nightly
(ghastly) principalities,
the weightless rider, the whinnying
trace, hooves perturbing dust,
the root-clipped cry
Gloria (no glimmer)
no glimmer
then, glimmerless. Then
glimmerless and true, the opaque cloud poisoning
in the drum.

Vocabulary's Increase

What shape remains if we shoot the stalking horse,
if the horse be put down by killjoy archer, what stands
when the legs of the painted blind buckle?

Can you distinguish that which stands to mean from
that which crouches behind? Is this certificate to say
you've mastered the art of ousting simulacrum?

Another gudgeon swallowed and I curse matter,
all the mind excerpts as sense from cramped embrace
of line and substance. Are my eyes all mouth?

No harm in entertaining dimensions, though keep in mind
there are more planes of matter mattering at once than
dead people dead, or as better said by Blake,

It is but lost time to converse with you whose works are only Analytics.
Consider the candidates and their transfiguring crops,
genius at flushing the palatable from the profane.

To divide and defeat the opposition, I give you
the stalking horse. What you see is flank horse hair
and flank horse flesh. Let eye go under spell of glossy

haunch, the ribs, belly, bangtail, its volume or its chestnut
promise. For what else is there, what bides time better
than good seeming? Take only axis as axiom.

We are all revolvers, hazardous in unfinished business
of making selves. Believe in absolutely nothing.
Then let it draw near, if it is beautiful.

II

The word is not the thing, but the flash in whose light we perceive the thing.

Diderot

Dispatch from the Dark Aleph

At first, she came only
riot, no dun-

coated pedestrian.
Task was to sip

at some of the gold
bleeding, without lips

stiffening, later, into
liturgy. What she wore

was clean mystery,
white sheaths tucked

& tucked again.
Her silence spoke

in strict knife pleats—
alphabet unforged,

nervy flickers
in ribcaged, twin

capacity. Bonfire
& plow, she offered,

start there. Smoke
& furrow be

the paraphrase—
by heart Glory knows

the nameless
ways to disrobe.

Swoon/Hortus Conclusus

Psychologists define hypnosis as the filling of the field of attention by one sense only.

Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body*

Back to dialogue with languish, I said *keep lungs closed*

against the given, lavender,

brackish pond, and privet cuttings.

The lawn was overruled by poplar shadows, which cribbed

what words I could imagine

speaking. The hour dragged out

in forms too small to rescue,

and your unwillingness to move

grew embarrassingly beautiful.

Despite the stakes and strings, the gardener's

close attendance, Rose of Sharon

looked ruthlessly bitten. Rain broke

its miniature lenses,

Pye-weed banked

with Russian Olive, a sober purple,

an argent green, in peripheral verdict. I said

Go in if you are tired.

The Snapdragon's teeth, frilled fuchsia, the news, staticking

out from the kitchen, opposing

what particled itself

through hedge: ocean,

crashing one mile off, that Ishmael sound

you love so much.

Etude: Frédéric François

Pardon. Did I say fuselage?
In the clouds I was dreaming of a spindle
flax twisting into thinner matter.
No matter.

I beg to differ. Hyperaesthesia, if left untreated...
penalty orchidaceous.

We shall snuff it in a capsule,
we shall tie up. No: we shall burn off
the loose ends. The feeling ends.

(lest something heraldic should come of this lozenge,
which is only a figure, after all, at times dragged in
to illuminate the moon)

Play another record round the spindle.
Attenuate the song. The hot breast must be spun
into violet oblivion.

I should dearly like to ship you
a third swarm of bees per annum.

Pinned to the high winds.
And we shall sit round the turf fire
and gaze on the mineral keys.
Round and round until the pixels relent.

Where the box gives up the blue ghost,
there shall be beautiful knuckles and tendons.
A green suspension bridge bisecting the town.
It shall be sheer terror
to cross it.

But you know my gestural thirstiness,
the Delacroix I dream of climbing into.

Shoot,
the ropes are positively trembling.

Siasconset

for Ben

First there was survey: training eye to sieve distance
for minor disruptions, life in shadow or spray.

This was ocean folding thoughts with shells,
mind retrieving green trough, black smudge—

was crooking for terns and eiders, was hooks
flying from wrist to water to unseen mouths.

Then scales unclasping life, bluefish
slit from teeth to tail, a red fever opening

to the knife; then grope for clams, then wet sand
caving, then soft things burrowing a blind escape.

Then was tumor eating seal's eye, flies draping
form that ended not in wing, foot or fin,

but some slow memory of them all.
Is this what desire makes?

When wind routs spartina an indigo
green, each blade concedes its boundaries.

Storm, Apple, Stieglitz

Night-long the rain
kept me up,

a candle dropped
in bone colored

pools, a woman,
undressing. By

morning, I was
fierce, plunged

into Lake George
naked, cold-

stung, sharp
under rib, swam

in a world, in water
turned mercury.

Tart flirt, swinging
your shadowed

sepals at my
lens, leaves

twisting spades,
you were not

black and white
when I found you.

Atom Rations

Was it a real problem that no one understood claret cups as flowers?
What she meant was cactus bloom; what they saw was a cup full of claret.

Whether puddle
makes the impasse, or

the mincing sidestep,
surely something kindles there.

To recommence, or, to push off in the morning when the waves slap
with possibility and the sky suffers a blue seizure. Observe
the cleats, how they cower into the dock
and the dock into the harbor and the harbor into the bay.
How the hills are favorably scriptural today!

As a rule, the desert nurses its dry throats. To make enough of enough shall we
say the conservative
impulse of paradise? Spring is debut
and re-debut of claret cups:
water stowed jealously against the drab and gruff. A meaningful sigh,
a clustered eruption of

say such lapses were not prerequisite, so that work might ever
be rendered otherwise,
say I could

devote all hours to watching negative space,
inhabit, hour by hour,
the forms, the so-called *still-life*,
that won't be quiet,
the Wedgwood pot, the shriveled boot,
a cultivator's rusting claw?

But Dame Numinous *is* tenacious, *will* keep burning
holes in pages, ever torching and hopping
around the matter, with a *thrum*,
and a sliding of fingers along her frets.

Parroting, I said, *Did you know the center is everywhere fastening a there
in relation to here? Making a moment's stab at duration, letting and letting blood?*

And maudlin, I said, *I will give up my Byzantine angel, who is all
red and gold. Out of a new romance with ellipses, I will leave what is lost,
lost. All that is fit together, I promise you, is a rough, and unbound sea.*

Think (she thinks), was it vowels or atoms made up the difference?

To The King Her Brother, a Letter from Bohemia

. . . a thimble of caviar and champagne
buoyancy, a roving accordion, a sense of
what did you used to call it? On this point
the crowding thousands cushioned their fall.
In the comer (de rigueur) the gyre took its
Cuba Libre through a straw, in black tie

sucked in its breath, as at doors opening
to Bargello crest and trough, or the splintering
flute of a fragile faux pas. Unchaperoned
in the draft with wet hair, shy to the flashbulbing
cameras, I did my usual trick, tucked in glimmers
of atheism with a solar physicist, wink

of the hyphenating sword-between. Languorous
indeed. A castle honeycombed with cells and bored
by endless stairwell. A general buzzing
in curtain sashes, a winter garden: Cerberus
and Cerberus twinned in stone and shushed
by snow, pines fueled by dark green industry

of sap, an escalier split achingly around
a disused fountain, scalloped basin iron-stained—
how this proves your suspicions about symmetry!
O Liege! The jade depths of a forgiven faux pas!
Impassive or impassable? Impossible? Why now
this submerged desire to dredge up my French—

gorge, dégoût, chouette, tristesse? Somewhere
in the translation of Czech brewery to English
hectoliters, ending with goat, with frothy
gold, with the donated garnish of other lunches, was it
the miracle of sprachbund or doppelganger? You once
charted these for me, did you not? It was an issue

of what did you used to say? Gravity, tracked
by all its ghostly footprints? I report to you
this: a Slovakian Elvis zipped in white,
wigged and shaded, who wrestled through
my wholesome midpoints, speaking flawless
Memphis between sets. Return

to sender: glass breaking in delicious
slow motion, the slim but significant sum
you weighed in grade-school, the coronation
I conferred in imagined tagrag unity,
holy anointment by the overhead light,
subjects oceanic in my cupped right hand.

Jan Vermeer: Soldier and Laughing Girl

The canvas stretches soldier and prostitute
through centuries of conversation, an hourless
contract running through the artist's weakness,

his penchant for open windows and inconstant light.
The soldier's hat, a black pool fishing upon itself
for colors possibly absent, is a flood shored up

by map, lattice, plume—bright trceries of ornament
and utility. What lives of the two is an arm cocked
in gesture of storytelling, vermilion coat and imagined

baritone, a pleasing synaesthesia, words invented
between them like *duel*, *parapet*, and *brig*. For her part,
erased volition's pliant features, cream kerchief

withholding hair, frame to the flush, scrubbed glow
of one being story-told. He studying her for evidence
of him, she, whose attention turns the small exchange

gold: interior reminds us we are otherwise expelled.
Discarnate through the painted window. Drawn into
the rafterless sky. The intimate inflection.

John Hancock

Witness first case subjunctive, the good faith glorious ego:
I am, I do, I agree to the above. . . I.M. Pei inscribes his

lengthwise in Boston, with steel and mirrored glass. Sky-
catching windows, wind calculated struts amount to

monument (how the bricked metropolis loves its reflection,
loves patriots who floated political theories, forged

centuries and insurance buildings). Behold present
in blueprinted truce with past, nation raising itself from scrawl.

In the early evening, spire tiles burn red against rain.
When is monument a chambered thing?

Pillar of projected May, cerulean. Lit beyond what's given.
The Hancock stands, obstinate in its own conceit

of weather, choosing to reflect alone some remote brightness
I cannot verify. For a moment, I might almost have it

too soon the links of signature recommence:
I am, I do, I agree to the above. . .

Consultation with the Simultanist

The Simultanist cannot speak; one must
consult him with this in mind. In the white

tent so fully at once, nothing escapes him.
Above his brow, plunged in green silk turban,

a fruit-like emerald stares at no one thing.
Above the emerald, above the winding turban,

peacock feathers rise. They wisp and stare
at no one thing. You must help me, he says,

but there is no space to say. You must listen,
he says. Nothing says: not now, not now.

Interruption is not possible. Not now.
Now winter cleans the yard of all save the bright

red cold in the berried quicken tree, in and out
of which nothing comes, only the eighty

odd starlings, launching their black scatter
and collapse. O, says this force and its lonely

displacements—O, says the flood
from the drawstring pouch—a finch

a finch obscenely gold. It seems, he said.
It slashes, he thought.

In the luxury of the white tent patterned
with no shadows, the dream

is residual, something crushed
and rubbed at the temple.

The Simultanist is nodding—no,
he has fallen asleep.

III

Hence, discourse on love though I may for years at a time, I cannot hope to seize the concept of it except 'by the tail': by flashes, formulas surprises of expression, scattered through the great stream of the Image-repertoire; I am in love's wrong place, which is its dazzling place: 'The darkest place,' according to a Chinese proverb, 'is always underneath the lamp.'

Roland Barthes

Under "S"

*You have given me such a delicious dish that never shall I partake of another*¹

In its most generous mood, a dictionary will tell you
what keeps you awake at night, a complimentary
diagnosis, as, under "S," the word *stellify*,
the wish to transform into star or constellation

what keeps you awake at night, a complementary,
though receding objective, apparently an end in itself,
the wish to transform into star or constellation,
not quite approximating the speed desire must travel

through receding objectives, apparently, an end in itself
tautegorical, expressing the same, though not exactly,
not quite approximating the speed desire must travel
to make bootless but enchanting displacement

tautegorical, expressing the same, though not exactly,
not quite authorizing the terra firma of indifference
to make bootless but enchanting displacement
intelligible? O, patience, it takes years of praxis

not quite authorizing the terra firma of indifference
to partake of a reality impossible to render
intelligible? O, patience, it takes years of praxis,
the dimming down of radiant theory,

to partake of a reality impossible to render
otherworldly? Gooseberries, under "T" for
the dimming down of radiant theory,
a.k.a. translucence, how the Dutch painted

otherworldly gooseberries— see "T" for
the temporal—see "V" for vanitas
a.k.a. translucence, how the Dutch painted
still lifes, fireglobe gooseberries inflating

the temporal—see "V" for vanitas
see "H" for helium, then of course see "S" for
still lifes, fireglobe gooseberries inflating
precisely what keeps you up at night

see "H" for helium, then of course see "S" for
stellify, wish disguised as astral nostalgia,
precisely what keeps you up at night: see O! for
translucence, for hot air balloons in crimson fleets.

¹ The response of a lady to her lord, upon learning he had murdered her favorite troubadour in a jealous rage, and fed her his heart.

The Minors

Daytime posing
in the glamour getup of dusk lights
and the crack of ash in the valley
& the green grass
throwing off its diamond fires
in geometric flirtation.

Hypnagogic.
Sleep from now on will be won by this field, bodies perched
on fading bleachers that usher in
the farm team, August

absorption.
In this skeletal cathedral of wait-and-see,
chance and dexterity cross
faint quills in the air.

When,
in the bottom of the seventh, the eighteen year-old from New South Wales
steps to the plate

under the moon's white nick,
our dreams shape to welcome cliché. Heart weaves and unravels
its red bolts in secret.

The boys are setting out and coming home,
Ulysses and Ulysses and Ulysses.

Etude: Chopin

...a true specimen of Nietzsche's ubermensch, which is but Emerson's Oversoul shorn of her wings
James Huneker, *Chopin: The Man and His Music*

The continuum did not want to be sounded. Not struck,
not hammered. The light wanted only to spill from far away,
wanted only to feed and burn us. Wanted this:
that something should get in its way
that it might speak beside itself, in shadow.
The little replica would do. Would do to say
what vast, cold spaces it daily overcame to reach us.
To feed and burn us. The paraphrase of light years
being shadow.

Hello, Lovely.
Thank you for leaving that voice in my machine. The light is good.
The two hours after sun-up. The two hours before sun-down.
Your face never agreed upon.

And what sinks turns the mind red.
He could not unscrew the tower.
The sunrise was behind him, permanently.
The east was behind him and looked through him to the west
and Europe felt a new shudder of delight.

This was my swayamvara fantasy: I am leaning
on a garden made of ground up chandeliers. The light
going down as I fill a cribrose dress.
A peacock fans itself on a green felt table,
all eyes, all Jacks. You in the corner, coughing.

A cigar box opens. More green
felt. More wings. Dead butterflies.

Sometimes you call a heart a spade, said her mother.
A spade is a black heart with a stem, she agreed.

*All that I can faintly indicate is the way it affects me,
this music with the petals of a glowing rose and the heart
of gray ashes.*

Peace in a clamshell.
Peace in a dripping grotto.
Evacuation of the flesh through secret ivory detours.

Her brother's word on windmills:
purely horizontal. An oxymoron,
she loved most of all the stationary propeller.
That a breeze lovingly bladed was energy enough.

What was worship? Kissing sandals.
The last thing left to discard was a Jack—a heart—
And that was scarcely a hoop.

Ad libitum:
I think you would admire Pollini.
I think you would enjoy the wind in the spring cottonwoods.
Green leaves rushed up and down in silver glissandos.

Paris will certainly object to losing the bones of such a genius.

And one last thing: piled in a glass case,
Benny Goodman's played-out reeds.
The grass. The hoppers.
The thousand stops.
Hello, Lovely.
Hello.

Excavating Virgil

A pair of black sleeves keep pace
with labored directions in English. Slash
allegro. Tongue unravels in gestured
meaning (meaning)
a remote place, Cumae. Out of bounds
of the Circumvesuviana. Clattering train that runs on lava
the length of the Amalfi Coast. Through gold grass.
Graffiti. Through grove shades studded
by orange

lantern (lantern)
the recess original to recess. Shred
companion to voice. At Cumae,
the Sibyl's cave. Trapezoid cut
in tufa rock. A powdery consolidation.
Stratified tones of solitary prophecy.
Walls porous with whispered

conscription (conscripting)
leaves on leaves in the dark.
Minding the immaterial. Scratching the invisible.
Volcanic ash, black silk on Sibyl's tongue.
Where Aeneas stoops. Ears drowning

in future disarray (in future disarray)
what I love most. Book Six. Abandonment of order.

When soft winds toss
the wounded leaves
and door hinge turns
and Sibyl's hair is wild—
and nothing.
Better than nothing will ever be recalled.

Topophilia

From the country she once exited, she took the untranslatable:
incense and phoenix ink of monks snuffed in the accordion pleats
of a leek green book, her record of temples visited. By contraband,
she cheated the exit, so what once passed through would do so

ever after, an exit chamber of renounced and returning pleasure,
bone-clicking reliquary, saintly castinets in miniature percussion.
She took the full concavity, apples flecked and bowled
in phantom friction. And she kept the phantom calling,

crumpled close to her, precious with fuse and broken staff,
hanging red letters in smoke. When she opened his face in the dark,
Love called her foolish. Exile began with the smell of wings
like filmstrips burning— image held too long in projector's

blind bulb and flicker. From the country she once exited,
she took the swollen feet she woke with under Pre-Raphaelite
women floating in vestal sails, dark saucering eyes and fingers
like candles melting. She acquired the sandy tongue:

the black prowler became her tutor—rubbed and mewed
until she understood. What was it there and was it there—
what had she left in the no-place she inhabited? There was
no language between them: only the light hyphenated

between junipers as they drank mint tea in absent
capacity, sun, unspeakably low, goats teaching topography
to the ear with their crude copper bells, mint leaves in cracked
cups, just-pressed olive oil sinking green illumination

into flatbread. From the country she once exited she took periphery,
the liquid fable. Of periphery, in the see-through maps of two
hands butterflyed against horizon she believed it was true,
Je suis l'espace ou je suis—believed it extended somewhere,

that another, too, was being the space where another was,
in peripheral *I am* in peripheral *you are* she was. What was she
becoming? Wind funneled down to figure itself, desert whistled
the entire repertoire, glass orts dissembling into roasted,

shimmering red. What she lost there was the liquid fable,
horizon outcircling her eyes. In the optic harbor, boat masts
ticked black and metronomic in the orange sky. Not wanting
the way forward, and wanting the way back, she took

the art of floating, heart fixed on a loosened castle's
silhouette, mind in imagined invasion, flames descending
in pointed wingbones. There the coastal grasses drank
the low light and wind in shudders of burned sugar.

Could this and that be smuggled? From where? From stalls
covered with tarpaulin sheets on which the morning rain swelled
and streaked she found his twenty poems. Inside, an outburst
of yellow crayon became thicker, fire and cage. *Christmas 1938.*

The odd coordinates of water spots, the paper cover
catching fingertips with a soft chamois roughness. His profile,
in albumen's dimming recall, *The Great Lover*—

These I have loved:
... *live hair that is*
Shining and free; blue-massing clouds; the keen
Unpassioned beauty of a great machine.

Under her fingertips under her eyes his language was
efforting. The compound *unpassioned* worried
on a rusted hinge, until another came along with quiet shoes
and quieter voice to say *Beauty and ugliness pertain to form,*

not being. In this country she continued to hold
to what was dead, thinking, *satisfaction is a broken compound,*
thinking, *this voice is a texture, not a transfer...*
Exiting, she stole a box of ashes. A house gutted

by fire. She took the exterior intact, every empty
alcove, the garden's staining compensation—
rose swarms terracing down to a lily pond
flanked by gold-winged horses. Of tangible things

she discarded nothing. Not the buzzing flies hooked
to tiered cork, or their silence in a black tin prayer book.
She kept anything that might hold itself in. The river,
sludging through her mineral thick. A self-

administered transfusion. In that other country, she found
so many true perversions of English: one door reading
Exit. The other, *Exitrance.* Thus began the ruby
superliminal: heart's uncrossable transom.

In the country she has not exited, she leaves reflection
in a lake. A green-winged teal cracks the glass.
Pebbles magnify. Golden, inflated currency.

In mirroring export, the holy rubble

multiplies, ghostbells shaving silver
from the tower. Entrance: that
by which anything is entered. Entrance:
to charm, to carry away.

Peregrination

I'll wait forever in flaking spray paint
by the Chagrin River,

voicing what flat Ohio fields suffer
for fantasy of red manes dipping

into timothy. Gentle mastication,
horseshoes making lazy,

acre-wide suggestion, u and u
and u and u. Zephyrous response,

galore, conversant; sunshine
trucked through wind.

A glimmer, here and there
through lion teeth,

dandelions up through pith
and out of yellow pride

into silk-white seed that flies
over a darkening appetite,

grass in shadow of nothing
permanent, grass turning jade

in tidal obedience. The freight
overhead is bluer than usual, a deep

unmovable silence. If anticipation
might will itself some footprints,

the pilgrim will be one field
closer to home.

IV

Fortunate is he who came into being before coming into being.

Gospel of Thomas

Father Ferapont's Daemons

When those went, these went; and when those stood, these stood; and when those rose from the earth, the wheels rose along with them; for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels.

Ezekiel 1:21

And beyond the boxed drone of the hermitage apiary
lamp oil is greasing icons. A thin brume smirches
lapis robes, gold-leafed halos. And rain begins

an uncouth pattern upon the roof, and rain begins
its softly counting. Taps and taps. Begins
a wet black freshening in morning's fossil mosses.

And he is kneeling, still.
And still his eyes are closed.
And he is listening.

And Father Ferapont's coat is red. Coarse broadcloth
belted with rope. And it is said underneath
he wears thirty pounds of chain. And every three days

he is given two pounds of bread. And every day
he takes new water in the jug.
And to some he is a holy fool.

And his work is indeed mysterious.
For with steady hand has he crossed one
thrice to death, has he quenched another

in the doorjamb. So the pair lie silent there
in the dust. And uninvited shadows buzz
up and down the walls of Father Ferapont's cell.

And the elm crooks its washed limbs.
And through its grainy rings a spiked light hums.
And "Fearsome, oh fearsome!" cries Father Ferapont—

But what is breath to fire? And how will it gather him?
And what of the crushed combs, crushed wings,
dripping from the wheezing bronze—

Should it attend on us at all

it will be
after dinner, when evening at end prolongs its purpose
for a curio encased in walnut wood and glass.

The room knows
that sound is a muscular cursive, that the picture for it
is waves' haul and collapse.

When between exceeds two,
attention masses brightly
in one
pooled expenditure.

And so
a gold and animal grease
begins to heat our only interior. Atmosphere
can be so very fat,

so boundlessly general. But still,

if we'll agree,
quiet is nothing if not mutual.

We are never
so truly the composers of each other's thoughts as we are here,
faces caught in the museum of collectibles,
never so patient
with what we are not thinking.

As though to say
goodnight
a scarab interrupts
the dark.

May it rest within blue-winged brackets,
stone annulled by a flutter so freezing slow
we think we hear
how not to touch it.

For as long as it takes to lure breath and hour back together,
we keep it beating,
no,
keep it speaking,
wordless,
a featherweight in the palm.

Ark Propped in Estuary

Cymbaling foliage, a hectic brushwork, perhaps
half in love with demons, perhaps kin to impulse,

and unseen collectives (nothing material was broken).
Maybe he loved the latch, the hook, the chain link,

the piston and spool, the oiled teeth and gears. Flurried shadows,
at low tide, here where the leaves clink in metallic collage, dimmed

gold, silvery black, wind painting leaves into wet, new-wiped
hieroglyphs, verdigris in glittering reproduction. Enjoyment

was painstakingly wrought. He loved nothing natural.
Further in the inlet as though passed through kiln, a glazed

fishbelly green, the meat that's bled near fire. The nautilus,
the screw, the lever, the scales, the wheel—to the means he fed

the ends. To what purpose disturb? The sea boiled
in the hearth, an altar to inundation, backwardly

mythic. Pure scheme, pure device, perhaps ending flush
with predicament, the flame rose inside the aqua

walls. And this particular rubric stamped every further
entry. Beyond the leaves, the first gray strip of estuary,

chalk's ghost softening the slate, something quietly renounced,
violet lifting black out of mourning into sorrow, into smoke, dense

and gentle rising, lavender sprigs and wood burnt into thin winter
air. Elephant grey, thick-skinned for the ages. What purpose

does it serve? He loved the clicking, tipping, trundling complication.
He did not want her. He could make water mechanical. He wore

the pants. At low tide, here where the leaves sharpen to last leaves,
sting with individuation, knives in the canvas, is turmoil a color?

Perhaps (when have six things been said about demons?) in love
with demons, he housed the simplest task in titanic complexity,

christened it with champagne. Fantastically complicated, ever
unproven device. Kiss as fully orchestrated collision. And this

distinction moves toward the palest register, violet in vespere
dissolve, obverted, evanescent, a harp of sand surfaced

with barest sheen of water, glistening taupe, middle-rifted
by deeper water, mercurial blue, soldering

gray smoke to muted rose, salt-rinsed puce, and
umber moth, powdery on the fingertips. How to undo

a vapor bath? Proustite, a light-red silver ore. Then
ridge, white edging into heron-blue, a burned-out blue, dusky,

austere, exhausted, the inlet pushed further in, while this
particular rubric, something renounced, something

beyond the leaves, stamped every further entry, so
very calm and muted, so steady and otherworldly—and the sky—

remoter yet—yet more watery than the tidal traces—more
tremulous—more rippable—more sad.

Whale-Drawn Troikas

The lamp goes out, and with it, what utopia body knows. Eye no longer swims in oil. Bluefish zigzag. In synchronized alarm, in deep marine scission, home and exile are parting ways. Across the Jordan,

Galilee. Miraculous draught of fishes at the base of Fuji-yama, white lotus blessing the haul. What begins defervescence, earth's fever abating, red fan fluttering, snow-ribbed, to rust? May our senses be pure,

and the weather on the sea be fair. In ark, or flockmeal, shall we be saved by movements, not in themselves desirable, which net a sparkling pile? To be subsumed by quality, to be air burning, or a cold

green, scrolling lucid in the waves, immune to anchor. In the book of radiance, moonbeam as attribute or accident of jar? To be transparent, to look through the world as it looks through us. Immediately

they left their nets and followed, immediately they left their boat and father, and followed. Seaweed dries on the keel. Darjeeling leaves lump in the wire strainer, a buzzing draught, tea at the palaz of Hoon while oboe plays

hide and seek with violin. Above the canister, Raphael's cartoon. Somewhere in the Vatican, its arras mirror. Confabulation, Hokusai and Raphael, colliding postcards. Jubilate Deo for the dissolving

shibboleth, for what need distinguish us, so long as kindness is endlessly divisible—Shinto pilgrims with broad straw hats, chanting as they climb, or sunburned, will-be disciples, curls stiffening in the wind—

anything is open to communion, Fuji's base rising to crater, corded arms of James and John pulling the net, robes blown sideways. Mountain, triangular conversion of miraculous draught: sapphire falling through snow-shower into fish.

Is this a brush drawn across the surface, or ink, rousing the woodblocks? It is said that many attributes can exist in one substratum, such as the "yellowness" and "sweetness" predicated of honey. Shall we drink now, or smoke?

We are mired in substratums, Coz. You are, I am, we are all sick, invisible, and heroic. What thou lovest too well stains; the rest is rude, and cross. *Shall our blood fail, or shall it come to be the blood of paradise?* How many

fathoms dark is the draught, this pull, this measure, these arrow feathers at the ear, this spinning, this thread, these schemes of eels, this evening's water, carnelian, floating us here—

May our senses be pure, and the weather on the sea be fair.
May the hummingbird know the heart's errand, may her wings exceed its clutch.
May we, being round thee, forget to die, may we, being in thee, forget to die.

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