

1996

## From "Under"

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### Recommended Citation

Silliman, Ron. "From "Under"." *The Iowa Review* 26.2 (1996): 174-178. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.4651>

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## *Ron Silliman*

FROM *UNDER*

*for Krishna Evans*

Then beam the music in. A gang of teens seeks someone to buy a sixpack. Violets against women. Is it a living or is it Memorex? The sun returns for more.

So I stand on the porch in a dense fog, hearing the sparrow in the bare tree. Having died, the old washer in the pantry has become a table for homeless potted plants. Thirteen ways of scratching at a blackboard.

Never whine, Sensodyne. Pots atop the counter await their turn in the sink. Lone spider crosses the vast pattern of linoleum as the shadow of huge shoe crunches down. His nickname among the troops is Old Friendly Fire. It's not the wind whistling we mind, it's the tune.

Homes that people return to after work. The new printed sheets are stiff, having never been washed (making the bed, we disagree as to which side of the top sheet is "up"). That wonderful dimple where the leg joins the ass. Your lips cling, firmly grasping the head of my dick until again I push slowly and slide in. We hear hummingbirds in the dark.

One-hit wonders: the smell of toilets in a drought. Object oriented dBase dreams—that last word (is/is not) a verb. More to the spots on that plant than aphids. The cheetah looks up from PBS.

Lion still. When in the dream you speak, Sean Connery's Scottish brogue flows from your lips. Helena Bennett asks, "Why don't you poets just mud wrestle?" Pace at which a flower unfurls.

Enjambed by millions. When the alarm goes off I see a color, more accurately a pattern, a plaid, before I hear the sound. Collateral dam-

age lies bleeding in the rubble. I get off the freeway at the next exit and follow along the frontage road to avoid the backup created by a four-car crash. Tie a yellow ribbon, a tourniquet, a noose.

Write by numbers. Make of the stove a face (the broiler is its jaw). I climb up the stairs of the old ruined hotel only to discover the seashore's on the second floor, sun-splashed lagoon. A jarful of pennies from foreign lands. Sounds of the dog actually catching the cat.

Sugar push. What makes a sparrow chatter in the dark? After hours, the bottle gang drifts down to the Taco Bell, settling in on its concrete tables and benches. A homeless man's puppy, leashed to the shopping cart. In West Coast Swing, the step is called The Whip.

With dreams this detailed I should take notes. Prose poem as prototype of mixed-use development. Kathleen Fraser, Steve Benson and I on a corner of the financial district where the sun sets early even on Sunday. Banana slug rejected as state mollusk. Moment at which the ocean catches fire.

This is the book of drumming, each sentence, each syllable. A cheese and kitchen shop, but in the basement under the street a vast cafe. The old drunk had a calloused nose. I'd thought the slogan was "No blood for owls."

Bend the page back till the binding breaks. Lucite dreaming. The dead are more numerous now and will be more numerous still. Smart bombs, stupid people.

Gaelic garlic. Within minutes, the spin control is whirring, explaining how they knew the building, sandwiched between a school and a recreation yard in a residential neighborhood was "legitimate" as a military target, down to architectural drawings, even if, during the Iran-Iraq war, it had been built originally as an air-raid shelter, but did not know now why 400-plus civilians, many of them children, would actually be inside when the first bomb pushed through the steel-reinforced concrete roof and the second right through that hole to explode

and burn them all alive. Neighborhood Swatch. The shadows on the screen become articulate as the doctor moves the ultrasound probe: "These are your ovaries." You point to the place on the freeway where yesterday a body bag held the corpse of a 13-year-old boy.

Aftertaste of toothpaste. Forethought of policy. Fivespot on the electric scale by the register as the cafeteria employee totals up my lunch.

Mourning doves in fog. Events subtracted from history. Male culture does not equal foreign policy. In the oven, coils glow with heat.

The owls are not what we deem. Describe each vent (there are five) rising from the neighbor's house. The way the blue shades in advance of the sun. You breathe as you sleep (peacefully) and I listen as if to the music of the waves. Put two infant twins asleep at opposite ends of the same crib and they will soon curl together, taking the same positions they held in the womb.

Sound of a distant train (I'm still in bed, half awake): where is it heading and with what? We lie flat on the freshly cut grass, talking with our eyes shut, feeling the sun. The counterperson brings my tea in a bowl. The sound of a jet completely fills the sky, then fades away.

Elvis sings of the Bossa Nova. Next morning, the kitchen and dining room still smell of meatloaf. What if, muses Harry Allen, instead of racism and its cognates, we substitute the phrase white supremacy—which aspects then become more clear? The house is dark because it's too vast to be lived in really, the kitchen with two stoves, a dining room solely for formal occasions, the sitting room in front his mother uses to entertain her friends painted an odd deep brown with many small shelves, each holding a single antique porcelain doll, all of which we pass through until we arrive at the sun room with its view of the bay and four counties.

Banana too sweet at the bruise. Glasses sit at the tip of my nose until a finger pushes them back. Theory of which plate goes into what cupboard. Is that fern happy?

Right by design. Write, writhe, ridden. With a first twirl of the cap, I break the seal on the gas tank and step back to let the pressurized air hiss past, inhaling that distinct gasoline smell. Wondering, each time I turn the radio or television on, has the ground war begun? Tapioca cake with coconut frosting, the end of a perfect Laotian meal.

Graffiti fades from the walls of the hard drive through the tunnel. New highrises glisten for a little while until the same grime that turns snow to a brown slush settles in. The fascination my grandfather held for trains, airplanes, vessels of all sort, the cul-de-sac on the hill he went whenever he could on a Saturday just to watch the locomotives grind by, reflect a childhood spent in the 19th century, a sense of awe at machinery that he thought my brother and I foolish not to share (sitting in the '51 Pontiac waiting to catch the eye of the man in the caboose and wave).

Plotting signage, color code the networks: red for Ethernet, blue for token ring, green for LocalTalk. I hear voices of old friends in the dream, rapid intimate conversation, but I never see any of them. We are running, trying to catch our train but the station is underground in a tunnel but there's been a wreck, green twisted metal, and people are swarming over the broken car not to rescue or escape but simply to reach the next set of tracks where a new train arrives and then pulls through without stopping, a destination sign on its cabin unmistakably reading *Formula*.

A woman with one ear plugged with cotton pushes her way into the laundromat with a basket of clothes already soaking wet. One of the two live screens in the video store is for security. In the garden you crouch to examine the volunteer lettuce. The *Examiner* runs the total news blackout on page ten of the Sunday edition. It's sweeps month in the sands of Kuwait.

InterCaps: deviance or innovation? How sweetly, smoothly I slip inside of you where I belong. Cat sleeps in the unused driveway, concrete warmed by the sun.

VOG: Am I my banana's keeper? I traipse over to the mailroom to send a fax just to get away from my desk. Hopyard, willow—street names trace an erased landscape. Angular gait of an egret through the reeds of the drainage ditch. Through the rearview mirror, I watch the expressions of the young couple in the pickup truck behind me, the man's long blond hair jutting from a baseball cap worn sideways, as they read the "No Blood for Oil" sticker on the rear of my car.

The only light in the dark is on in the bathroom—I too stare at myself in the mirror as I brush my teeth. The yellow ribbon as a Claes Oldenburg sculpture on a mass scale, entitled Soft Swastika. Orange peel without the orange (sits atop the cutting board). Murdering thousands, the President warns that we must "guard against euphoria."

The banana freckles overnight. I wake exhausted from the shouting and venting of emotion the night before. Note to the typesetter: you can't always get what you font. Don't say don't. The sea, gray and vast in every direction.

I wake to the sound of a hard rain and walk around the house just listening, careful not to go into the rooms where the motion detectors are armed.