

1-1-2007

a diagram of the whole new world

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.25669/gte9-t0k0>

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a diagram of the whole new world

by

Caleb D. Mammen

Bachelor of Arts
Arizona State University
2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts Degree in Creative Writing
Department of English
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
December 2007

UMI Number: 1452260

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ABSTRACT

a diagram of the whole new world

by

Caleb D. Mammen

Claudia Keelan, Examination Committee Chair
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My creative thesis, *a diagram of the whole new world*, is a book of poems that explores and discovers what it means to write in a native tongue and also what it means to lose nativity all together. Travel is a treated theme, literally, as most of the poems were written across the world, as well as metaphysically, in the sense of making and erasing new boundaries of perception.

Each poem aims to exhibit its own form as it itself is made. So, I have not written them in the shadow of any particular formal constraint(s). Rather, I have borrowed freely from various poets, poetics and traditions, literary and otherwise. That is to say, I have composed the poems of *a diagram of the whole new world* with the intention that they be an organic method of thought, exploration and language.

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FORWARD

A poem reveals; otherwise it is of no interest. When in the event of the poem we may be able to see what we already know or have known it becomes what we have no use for. This is not so much an assumption I have while writing as a conviction formed by reading.

George Oppen's "THE BUILDING OF THE SKYSCRAPER" is a poem which reveals this process to us. It is a poem for poems and a poem for life. In the first stanza we see a picture of a status quo, a "steel worker on the girder / [who has] Learned not to look down" (149). He looks only where he is and up for fear of vertigo, and revelation itself is a form of vertigo.

In this same stanza, beside this worker, we see another worker, the poet. Words exist, Oppen asserts, that we have learned not to look at, but there is some substance of meaning below them we should be looking at. "But we are on the verge / Of vertigo" (149). Who is we? The poet and the steel worker. By not looking, we ignore revelation. We must move from the vertigo of ignorance to that of what we can learn from the world around us, and that includes the world of poems.

The middle stanza drops the steel worker, at least in any direct sense. Oppen shifts entirely to words. He rejects non-meaning; he rejects unimportance. In fact, the work of the poet is to wade through these conceptions and make meaning and importance out of them. We work to find "Not a declaration which is truth / But a thing" (149). What is the thing of this poem? To answer this question, we return to the steel worker because only

he has the privilege of perspective to see the very thing that emerges from the vertigo he had imagined: “the tree, growing from the sidewalk” (149).

This is a world in which all workers occupy spaces which mean to them. The steel worker looks down, and sees the tree. The poet looks up and sees the steel worker looking down to see the tree. Then, the poet does what he does best, making things mean. In the tree, he sees bare land 300 years before what New York was at the time of the poem. This is a time gone, a time that now only exists in the tree growing from the sidewalk.

Finally, in the last line of the poem, we suffer vertigo along with the steel worker and the poet. This is not the nauseous vertigo of looking 100 stories straight down, nor is it the vertigo caused by lack of meaning or importance in life or words. This vertigo is a disorientation from what we had thought about things. Below, words, the tree, the poem, the practice of the poet—these things are all defined by this final vertigo of revelation. If we are ethical about poems and the practice of poetry, this type of vertigo (redefinition) is quite important.

The purpose of this piece shall be: what is after the poem? George Oppen asks the question in a 1968 letter: “[t]he word beauty means the quality which makes the thing graspable” (173)? Surely this is not form’s perfection. He speaks of a beauty which is not important as a referent for any cultural construct but is important for individual sense. That is to say: what is? If I could answer his question and mine, I would say the tree from “THE BUILDING OF THE SKYSCRAPER” is beautiful. It is a thing which makes the world of

the city graspable. It is what is, and had the steel worker and poet not been willing to test the vertigo of redefinition, the tree would have gone unnoticed. Had the poet mistrusted the vertigo of the steel worker, the beauty of the tree could have been looked over. This is the nature of the relationship of vertigo to beauty.

There is a poem in *a diagram of the whole new world* which especially concerns itself with this relationship. “[W]hen returning home after some time” (page 16) reveals a relationship of poet/speaker to an idea of home and, by implication, ideas of what home is not. The first stanza consists of three images, two surreal and one real. The post office is, should be, a familiar place but appears in the poem made of quilts. It is de-familiarized. The face also is made of what a face is not, so if it at one time was familiar at all in a human sense, it is not now. The final image is real enough but quite foreign to an American in Romania, where the poem was composed. I say foreign because when was the last time any of us saw an old woman selling bouquets of baby’s breath and basil on a street of our own country? Roses, maybe. Basil, certainly not, at least in my own experience.

The poem then addresses a you, whose “face is a quilt” (16). This you is familiar enough to address in a poem but once again de-familiarized by the covering of a quilt, which “patch[es] the roads beginning over there” (16). Instead of being a patchwork quilt, the quilt that is a face patches roads, the roads that begin “over there,” some indeterminate other place. I think it would be safe to say that the roads beginning over there come here because “(t)here” is such a pivotal concept in the poem, indeed the whole manuscript.

The next stanza begins with a simple enough directional statement and moves into the second line, which asserts a slightly more complicated fact of mirrors. We see ourselves, but we do not see what we think we will see because we cannot occupy the physical perspective of someone or something else's vision. We are not surprised, yet we are sometimes horrified or sickened. Then again, we are sometimes happy because we may appear attractive or beautiful. It is in this sense that the mirror is a "bad enemy" (16). We expect something different than it can provide, so we are disappointed by it.

Finally, we find the speaker attempting to convince the you of something he has tried to convince her of before. She won't believe him. She never believes him that "there is no such thing as beauty" (16). This is ultimately what the mirror must teach us, I think, if we are to survive it. There is only what is. This has been my mission in front of the mirror, but more importantly, this has been my goal in the composition of the poems in *a diagram of the whole new world*.

"There is only what is" as a statement supplies me as a poet with necessary vertigo. What is? This is a question I am constantly trying to answer in poems. I think "**when returning home after some time**" answers this question as well as possible in one poem. There is never truly where I am and where I have come from. There is only a place where these concepts or expectations come together: a country, a mirror, a poem. We are accustomed at times to expecting "the meaning," and this poem questions that expectation. The vertigo in George Oppen's "THE BUILDING OF THE SKYSCRAPER" also questions the existence of "the meaning," as such, of anything.

Travel is a concept not of airplanes, boats or currency, yet is, but travel is about losing language for a time, having no ground to step on. We recognize everything. Under these circumstances, we must make our own language and create a new earth. I believe this is what poems reveal at their most important and memorable. By we, I mean, specifically, poets. Yet, also, the whole new world is one I have come to discover I already know and know well. When a poem reveals it is not necessarily unique, yet it shows what we take for granted in language, perception, love, etc.

In Europe, many borders are open. One could drive starting in Salamanca, north to Amsterdam, to Berlin, all the way to the Polish border, without seeing anything of border guards. All that is left of many of these borders are shells of building and fragments of wall or fence, and in some places, even these are gone. It is strange how sometimes driving an hour or more in a new country I did not realize it before seeing a sign in French when Basque had been the language of choice, and I could use many other examples. When there is no one to tell you where you are, borders blur, and the world becomes new. It is simply the world.

When driving from New York to Pennsylvania, I am not fully aware I am in the latter of the two until I see a sign that says "Welcome to Pennsylvania". That is to say, there is no real difference. There is an imagined difference. The land is the same. The air is the same, more or less. I mean to say that borders are political, and it is difficult to apply this fact to the senses and vice versa.

This is to be contrasted with a situation of closed borders, borders where passports are checked, accents are scrutinized and politics are surveyed. Crossing from Turkey to

Greece, we were asked this question: “Do you think George W. Bush is a good president?” What did the guard mean by good? What are his political convictions? Will I make it out of Turkey to Greece if I answer truthfully to my own convictions? How would I answer in my own country? These questions were largely irrelevant at the moment of the guard’s question because we couldn’t not answer. Until after, I overlooked the possibility of his question being simply curious. The fact of my overlooking this possibility is the danger and difficulty of borders, intellectually, artistically, personally and otherwise. Experiences with borders influenced *a diagram of the whole new world* greatly and continue to influence the poetry I am writing now.

As for this manuscript, though, “**border sequence**” is a poem precisely concerning borders we build and have. The poem’s first stanza offers a surreal idea of place followed by notions of familiar others in their respective places:

in the Belgrade of everyone’s dreams
we are in Macedonia
my mother is a speck in the Western Hemisphere
your father the bird hopping (23)

At once, the first couplet asserts these places as ones different from those we have dreamed them to be and confounded with each other. The mother, then, in the third line, is more of a star in the sky than any human presence. The father is not human, rather a bird hopping. He is among us but other than us. Moving through the poem, in the second stanza, the we in the poem catches up, as if they have lost each other at some point. Even though traveling together, they become bordered upon each other, and it really could be no other way. “I Object” (23). What does the speaker object to? Borders? Catching up?

Then, “you pay no attention,” (23) and there is another border between us. The Spaniard’s dark night, as imagined by the speaker, becomes a sort of dark night between us. However, at the very end, there is a working through borders that is a hope: “you plan to stay // as do I, comrade” (23).

The next section is, I think, the only poem in the manuscript written blatantly in the voice of another. The speaker in this poem intends to inflate the value of his own culture, customs and ideals, while looking over those of others. Macedonia and its people become a sort of super people Anče’s eyes. “[I]n my country we have a big heart” (24). “[W]e like to ski and walk step by step on mountains” (24). He loves people of certain ethnicities or nationalities but not others. He is a creator of borders in the poem, just as he was in conversation. But, then, he apologizes for something he could never have caused in order to curry favor: “thank you America // we apologize for the airplanes” (24). Not only does he apologize, he does so on behalf of his people. This gesture puzzled me talking to Anče, and it puzzles me in the poem, but it must be because it is precisely the sensual confusion that borders create.

I mention losing language for a time earlier in the forward, and section three treats just that sensation. When I say losing language, I mean we conceive of language in terms of the particular language(s) we happen to speak; if we are in a place where this or these are absent, we experience a vertigo that could possibly be conceived of as loss: “at the border / a Bulgarian helps us speak” (25). Conceivably, it has been quite a long time since the speaker has had any help speaking and would probably like to think that he needs no help speaking, but in this case, an exception exists. The border-crossing is

thwarted. We must go back through Kosovo to cross at another place, and in the final stanza, the borders become palpable. They are physical, just as the snow is.

The final section of this poem is a poem of destruction and construction. In a certain sense, it is the very building of borders. The first stanza asserts dual results of building. The roses in line one could be natural roses or Sarajevo roses, which is why I have explained what a Sarajevo rose is. That is to say, construction destroys the nature of things just as much as destruction does. The second stanza is deceptively simple: “in the hills, houses / a mosque” (26). There is a separateness exhibited in these lines especially because of ethnic and religious conflict and genocide. “[T]herefore the man breaking / the man fixing the man breaking” (26). Seemingly, it would be so easy to rebuild clusters of new buildings after the destruction of people. There is also a deceptiveness in that ease.

So, I suppose I would assert that the issue and difficulty of borders, on the ground and in the mind, creates a bit of vertigo from whence many of the poems in *a diagram of the whole new world* are made.

A process must move me on, then, from the vertigo of borders. Just as we can't make ourselves have no borders, we must confront our borders and move on from them. We learn from them if we will. Often we are of a mind to make borders between what we perceive to be the poet and what we perceive to be the poem. I believe really no lines exist between those concepts, save the lines on the page. In other words, I attempt to foster a healthy relationship between myself and my poems by letting my poems happen where and how they will. That is not to say poems are no work. They are immense toil

some of the time, but nearly always great joy abounds.

“A sense of the KINETIC impels recognition of force. Force is, and therefore stays” (Creeley 473). In “To Define,” Robert Creeley asserts the fact of force no matter whether we recognize it as such. What comes to the page for the poet is most important. (Could we say true?) Not what he makes it. That is to say, poetic objects already exist in the world. It is up to us to put them into poems. We can let a poem happen, but we can’t make a poem happen, at least not one that reveals any use or sense.

KINETIC in the sense that Creeley uses it, in the sense of poetry, can only exist in the erasure between poet and poem. I wish to go back: we can let a poem happen, but we can’t make a poem happen, at least not one that reveals any use or sense. I mean not to take away from or belittle the fact that the poet works hard. There is no benefit for me in that! I do mean to say that there are poems around us in all the places of the world. We poets just need to find and write them. Voice is nothing more than the way in which we write the poems we have already found out there in the world.

We are in the company of poetry, whether in the weather or in books. I have written much in the manuscript and in this forward on the finding of poetry around us in the sense of the former but not so much in the latter. Of course, I have friends among poems and poets. I have mentioned already Oppen and Creeley; their influence on me is pervasive: what poetry is and could be, poems that mystify and haunt.

Louise Glück is a poet I have trouble getting away from. I think it is because so often she dares to write about intense family relationships, and does it well. Rarely are her poems cloying or neutral. That aside, there is a couplet in a poem called “THE

SENSUAL WORLD” which will haunt me always: “Meaning, it will feed you, it will ravish you / it will not keep you alive” (7). This, in some sense, is my mission as a poet, to create a field of meaning. This would be a place where meaning grows and diminishes based not upon what we give it, but upon how we give it what already is in the world. Meaning is a mirror, in the sense of the mirror being a bad enemy, which is a concept I have already touched upon in this forward.

Beckian Fritz Goldberg, Guillaume Apollinaire and Kenneth Rexroth are others I can not seem to leave behind. This, I suppose, is what a friend is. It is certainly how I define a friend in the sense of a poet or poems who keep me company in the work of writing. I see all the influences I have mentioned here in the end of this forward as contributing to a field of meaning, as I have defined it above. This, I see as my task also. This is what I hope the poems of *a diagram of the whole new world* contribute to building.

prologue

summer hides in your pocket,
a forgotten bird
I sleep on the bed
but love you seeing

my eyes are a farm
seeing cabbage
and the free verse of pigs

if thought were a cloud
all our dreams of life
would diminish

here is nowhere like that

in the universe there is nothing to write
at least no sorrow or lunch

and if we die so be it
rare and fitting
so be it loud and without sound

and be it open: island, awake

now we are awake

a diagram of the whole new world

in the window
the face of god
taken away by orchids

when the singing begins be the one in it
and remember language is a thorough gift

in all its beauty
wants an end to everything

outlined in the desert's heart a dark gown
and the secret want for color

these are just experimental photos

such a pretty horse
and such for the photo

together here and hereinto

lifted and light

in a short vision of the universe

taken away from where it began
and now where it is
to be what it was:
infinitely small and alive

in a manner in which
so far as much as feeling
the great blue heart of a whale

where it came from remaining
so important as to mean

in a longer vision of the universe
small and alive become lost
and infinitely heavy with stars

when chasing the sun
look hard for love and fall
hard for the photo

into the light,
love, and the eyes
but not until landing
when running from it

run hard
long after the light
in the hereafter
which is speed
and sleep walking

in the hemispheres of the earth
there is an end to water

our own personal sunset is deep
my own biology in the frame
here standing
for hope sitting

waiting around in the fire
for what in the coming
is your biology singing

in your feet
in stride
and separate
for loving
and for all the little steps

infest me with the afterlife of trees
into the order of things and vegetables
being sweet
colorblind, forested

above the Arctic Circle we are lovers
and below
passing over the earth

distant as bees and humming
we are the last ones ever

sleeping into the morning there is a fog
swimming with fish
and fishing with deep walls

in the sex of water a story begins
with storm
and light footfalls
wooden lung
and a smile

I should have been a cat or a fjord
next time I will enjoy the stones

when the road falls off

away from the light
turn left

now you are autumn
and forgetting hereafter

where the birds become a field: music
enlightenment happens because we have a tongue

you are music in a dog's ear
when the train comes tomorrow

we will weep over your bones

this country is an island
on this island we will hunt again

we will eat meat and starve

brought forth by the ego of the earth's first palindrome
by a story of dust and love:

our story without words but with shapes
back and forth with the force of water

first of all I created a road
and wild things

lastly I destroyed my own virtue

sound into a tunnel

**the sweet language of the forest
is a tool of production**

its little black heart
eyes grey as a spade
machinelung, force, gall bladder

the body is amazing
the body has one wish: elegance
it is made of the ashes after love

there is a bird
a fox ran
a certain animal will pass here
after nightfall the world will begin

today death is not alone

there is a dead end; there was a dead end
thank you
I am a fish
in your nose I am an everlong stench
and I am bone and hidden

the end of the world arrived

now it begins again
death accompanies you
and I am pale

when returning home after some time

the post office is made of quilts
the face is made of grass
an old woman sells baby's breath and basil bouquets

your face is a quilt
patching the roads beginning over there

our room faces east
the mirror is a bad enemy

you don't believe me
you never believe me
there is no such thing as beauty

underground strung lights about me

find me an airplane here in the open
anything is here and there is a song

we cook potatoes
there was nothing for you to eat on the bridge

love me across the city
on the highest place god is

once upon a time in a garden
a man tells us a story and we are touched

distractions are good and I could be a cat
live in a box
shelter the known world

**when your mother ceases to exist
she is a porcelain doll**

in the mountain there must be a dancer
I want what you eat when you fuck

a rooster on the road is a what
my deep before relaxing
and the moon turns you want

you want to see my ballerina's shit
before you sleep, dance
just dance

the rooster on a road is your mother
she is gone like the mountain

movement

ocean the version of itself falling
over the sand into
breaking on the bird's cliffs
making cliffs

not uncommon seeing
a thing flying
wishing it were
dancing, a human

willing it would a wellspring
after over and ever
the earth a Tower of Babel babbling

looking on
leaving the best ashes
being breathtook and holy
sinner and center

a meditation on modes of transportation in Turkey

the most beautiful suicide in life is a paraglider
one fell to the ocean
the other crashed through the deep

only in childhood a wondering at flight
only in flight capture the heart wherever

dirt like there is a road
like there is no road then a road

because living underground feels dismal
because windows the momentum of doors

here walking toward forever

how many times can you fall out of the clouds in one day?

the best depiction of irony is driving crazy around dogs
a death in the mountains would be superb

I think really clouds fall out of us when they please
into the wild religion of weather
into our celebration of it

as children we are deaf but intent on sound
as adults bearing gifts of vaguery, clockwork
as the dead clomping around in too-big shoes

here is the city we have believed

don't forget we are a narrative

believe there is no water in the story

a man awake from his nap

a van from Switzerland

the man is balding

there is water
remember I refused to swim

you take a shower

the van is empty

the heart is made of potato

we've never owned an island
I wish for salt
you wait

you would rather own a cat

border sequence

in the Belgrade of everyone's dreams
we are in Macedonia
my mother is a speck in the Western Hemisphere
your father the bird hopping

in the rain night is more alive
we talk of films
catching up

I object

you pay no attention
and forget to email the Spaniard

I dream of her dark night
you plan to stay

as do I, comrade

dedicated to Anče Aleksov with irony, suspicion and spinach

in my country we have a big heart
next door, the protectorate
full of fake people and the UN

we like to ski and walk step by step on mountains
in my country we love Italy, Bosnia, Israel
not Kosovo, not the Greeks

we are a small people with big heart

thank you America

we apologize for the airplanes

our own dear tragedy was an earthquake

in my country a man who writes on the wall is a hero

at the border
a Bulgarian helps us speak

we are not crossing

back to Kosovo
a ruined house

Serbia ahead

through the snow
the borders

*a Sarajevo rose is the remnants of a mortar explosion
on the sidewalk filled in with red cement*

building over the roses
up and out through
filling red with vacant spaces

in the hills, houses
a mosque

therefore the man breaking
the man fixing the man breaking

Stein-esque

which flower and who
hoarse lace and following
off the upstairs looking

the school
sunshining
more into you than ever

the hills wherefore
and weakening
therefore grammar and difference

the typical clouds
high and thin
immortal and unstunning

ars poetica

love your first exposure to expression
like pain, pressure, peaceful
don't fight against peace

have a conscience not eyebrows
in code language: be a vegetarian

many years we stand against
we wear them in the language difficult

and for hearing the weather was good

in the wax of your deep heart

I split you with a gaze
hiding there are secrets
hiding there is paint, sky, red beet

a murder in the kitchen is usual
a woman jumps often
a man wants to speak again
a girl wishes
she is free

we are the first ones ever
we come through the moment
and light turns to sound
and sound into a tunnel

Munich in November

underground and before the rain
I am your best disorderly

you imagine forthwith
which is a mistake
and misdeveloped

hither walking walled in thus misreckoning
above ground and flooded in

I your tower
you the mystery of

the train leaving them

shapes in the water

secretly kissing and telling
then coming and the train leaving them
we alone

always I am crying and you not
then you are crying
I forget

here at the same place we consume
you make the moon
I am a fish
and the train leaving them

how to love like an onion

look left, step forward

leaving into the light horizon
the right train and the wrong moment

be strong

sometimes you will sing
and the earth's stark eye will join you

up until then like an asparagus
the real English landscape dominated painting

two doorways, still life

with two English realities
having been all green with flowers

the metronome is quite old

a small country of the world with eight plateaus
your body is now leaving Cataluña

curving over the nose under the eyes
your soul having been

left behind the tunnel
the wind is leaving survivors

after driving toward clarity: the bridge
the bridge again: I am light
fathomless and formed

here in the landforming world
speech and speed indefinitely formless

the vision reckless because tireless
I am tired and that is all

a futurist poem

seemingly the existence passes the train
a mystery whose or how is
seemingly the train rattles from nowhere
maybe dawn, color, someother thing

its actions are determined by the greatest possible gain
the train is an idea
we are here
existence sleeps under a blanket

Siberia meditation

Parting requires songs; when you meet, there are better things to do!

- Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

when there is a life without time
and the water you will forget
after this a hell which becomes better

then the hell of winter and the underground
which is the ice unending
taking you silent as bread and meat

now is the world you have lived through and missed
the forever and yesterday
the embrace of a friend
who leaves for the rest of time in a moment

with time in his pocket
the kiss on his lips small

the existence of the mother is forgotten
fragile bends and curves skinned deep

as for the father, sewing jackets and damming rivers
a tree in his eye, his closet is existence

the sister I think lives in the closet
among the great migration of pain

walking into the world where grief turns to humidity
the weight of the air becomes us as a prayer

a galleon becomes into the land
it a garden

we are the discoverers of the known world

once I owned a galaxy
prayer satisfies hunger like a stone
I ate the galaxy and I ate myself in turn

farewell welcoming what was

we love
we have eaten
I love a man

when sleeping grammatically
make friends out of your food and eat them
so when you kiss you have not lost

all day the flowers fell, then rain
the death of a hero is always a mystery

as if streets become highways going someplace
as if eloquence were lost over distance

so when you kiss do it precisely
the longest time on earth could save your life

trees singing songs of cold and sleep
frost in the morning on a branch glistening

there is no other way to begin

the windows frozen over
no better way to say goodbye

and then ice formed over all the people

There are mountains in the north of Thailand.
High mountains with fog. Sometimes, if the temperature drops enough,
some ice will form. This is big news throughout the country.
- Thibault Feuillade, a friend from many places

there was light, sex, apocrypha
secret words for the melting

when you go into freeze look back
then look forward when looking back
a code for the secret love of apes among foliage

what is the exposure of their fucking
step into the shining world
never repent
burn your friends

you are now among the best language
your life of wishing for ice
and thick games of heat and rain

into the sky of buildings a river of lights
across the courtyard lighted somethings, a woman

today we walked 12 or 14 kilometers
looking for light and air

today we are free, tomorrow
we are beautiful again

tonight we were the lost flight and lightness

tomorrow the train comes for the first time
adorned with flowers and in good company:
the last actual gods of our time

yesterday the rain, time made of bread and meat
I should have been a monkey

the known world is vast, improbable, a real thing
the land is below
the weather will change

I am sure of it

*...no one regretted the destruction
because the house shook with a healthy earthquake.*
- Gabriel García Márquez

home

in the beginning, destruction
vast cities of sulfur and wind

this god angry and that one loves to dance
there is wrath and a deep sense of art

the creation of the world is false
and not unordinary

in the beginning of the book I don't remember

the forces of nature are willing
and destroying our lives is simple

remember we cried for going
remember we laughed for everything

the city is a desert and the desert isn't a city at all
driving into your heart is a kind of magic

looking to the known world alive and awake
you stir on the sofa

your mind is the stuff of science and lovely
in your hand a dream of painlessness

you have no conception of the world without
you are not awake

the rest of the story is valid enough
a man becomes lost
he falls into a well
his dog is courageous

sometimes the earth splits because of grammar
which is sensitive
which has eyes and a heart

which we know best will turn on us
at the last moment we are alive

we humans always lose our love in the sea
where there is foam
and loving the birds of paradise
is a long fucking intent on migration

and why not, why loving, why swim

swimming just might change the world
and the world is no better than now

in the end, a woman buried beneath stones
her hand is a language itself

the final wishes were foretold
she forgets the house; she is unborn
her children are silent as the heart

the important thing is that at one time she existed

human rights, a poem about touch

when you are taking my soul away
my soul resists and my soul speaks out
about beauty and death
about politics and about climate

you can steal it
I can't stop you
you will not be detained

remember where I live and remember the light
bend my legs back
break my hands and feet

my soul is still mine
sailing around the world
not alone but thinking

in your heart a moon hides the size of an actual moon

the guesses of astronomy and time
breaking open the reality of a city through stars

your eyes the size of pebbles and growing
slate rock and emergent as dawn

go outside and look up
find the real world above you
a soup of black, stars
and today becoming what it couldn't before

never again will you dream of horses

the city sleeps with you instead
forgotten architectures and windows

writing on the trees predicts heaven
the real earth and time promise otherwise

galaxy is another word for here and now

my hand pressing against the window
promising the language of fingerprints

for the next million years of my life
I'd like to be a horse

count me among the lucky

with a short life
compared to iron ore or mud

sometimes the beautiful world is a lie

for my great-grandfather, Edwin Roe

the old man in the photograph died
his mouth wide open

not long ago we walked on water

he told stories of the coal mines
before the end of the world arrived

I don't know why many people were afraid

we didn't feel a thing

the glacier is keen with angles
from the ship I watch, a cormorant
my eyes needing beauty and food

until I die I can eat ice

you try to convince me inside
it is cold
you are in the world slowly closing

in my eye a plank leading across the water
fish tormented by the possibility of the water
the sun is a painting on the water its angles distended
water on the earth is better than water in the eye

my mother is lost in the water
my father swims unlike anyone
the water is a symbol the meaning of
swimming below the plank in my eye

imagine you are an insect and die singing
where in the hands of a human flitting
your heart is a pinpointed mystery

the wings almost silently alive
story of a thousand eyes closing
half that many opening again
and closing because singing exhausts them

you wish for these eyes
you forget and in the waking have slept

to a man I met on a bus in Las Vegas

again we are strangers but close
I fall in love with your hands
your thick black boots and bald head

I promise I will forgive you for forgetting me

you will become an animal
a man on the street without fondness or luck
you can always return

I have forgotten you also

**surely your hips are a map to somewhere
maybe the North Pole or Prague**

surely your eyes are an opening world
I want only to believe your hands open also
and surely willing and wandering

I want only to attach myself to your climate
surely the rain will fall on your head
cleansing your body of this poem

asleep, I write a poem

I forget black magic
how to cook, how to walk
your face, your hands, your footfalls

I forget time, the universe, god's name
geometry, how to hunt, how to write

I forget the dream

Videograms of a Revolution

after a film of the same name

the day our comrade fled we were filled with love
we wanted liberty, songs, a long fall

it was cold as a patriot
we determined our rebirth

the soldiers had received no orders
streets and plazas rained with the dead

the alive fleeing the past

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