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## a diagram of the whole new world

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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  
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## ABSTRACT

a diagram of the whole new world

by

Caleb D. Mammen

Claudia Keelan, Examination Committee Chair  
Professor of English  
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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.

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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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