

1-1-2008

Romeo Bones

Ron Paul Salutsky
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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ROMEO BONES

by

Ron Paul Salutsky

Bachelor of Arts
Western Kentucky University
2001

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing
Department of English
College of Liberal Arts

Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2008

UMI Number: 1456365

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Thesis Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

April 10, 2008

The Thesis prepared by
Ron Paul Salutsky

Entitled

Romeo Bones

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Examination Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

Romeo Bones

by

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Assistant Professor of English
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Romeo Bones is a collection of verse exclusively composed while the poet was a graduate student in the Creative Writing International Master of Fine Arts program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. The manuscript has three primary divisions— and two intercalary—which respectively confront otherness, subjectivity, and past/present self, each not to exclude the others' resonance.

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PREFACE

Lest it be misunderstood that the person whose name appears on the cover of this document takes unequivocal credit for the production of its contents, some prefatory notes on "authorship" are in order. It must also be understood that the electron is no more certain of its condition and process and destiny as it slices through its orbit than Heisenberg was when he tried to make determinations of such from a comfortable, objective stance outside the system of the subject he purported to observe.

In "The Death of the Author" Roland Barthes subverted authority over a text: "the modern sriptor is born simultaneously with the text." In the long shadow of New Criticism's notions of intentional fallacy, Barthes's voice further dismantled notions of the author-god and its dynasty of privileged meaning. "There is no other time than that of the enunciation," Barthes continues, "and every text is eternally written *here* and *now*." Barthes's attempt to democratize critical interpretation notwithstanding, the implications for the sriptor are obliteration of self, and subversion of ego concern in the act of writing. But how?

In a language poetry language is material produced by...what? It stands to reason—and *reason* here is the appropriate *modus operandi*, dealing as we are with material—that only material is apt for production of material. The Law of Conservation of Matter, however, reasons that matter (material) doesn't actually produce matter, or add to the extant supply of matter, but may form matter into a

different state or shape, some such transformations involving tremendous amounts of energy. So, the author—material himself and subject to some sort of death that doesn't infract The Law of Conservation of Matter—is a material arranger (or even a conduit through which material is arranged), gathering from a stock of culturally approved language materials.

The alchemy of language poetry—or even what Helen Vendler calls Jorie Graham's "ambitious pursuit of a new poetry, as 'material' as it is 'spiritual'"—is finding a combination of materials whose reactions with each other will transfer energy to, rather than demand energy from, the reader. Considering that the very act of reading demands an exertion of energy, the poem is obliged to return to the reader at least as much energy as the reader surrenders to its reading, lest it become a sink, or something so dense not even light could escape it.

Grammatical elements that imply semantic movement—prepositional phrases, simile, the hypotactic motion of subordination, or even the motion of Latinate suffix and prefix away from the word's core/root, for instance—must be handled deftly, carefully, such that as little as possible of the poem's energy is latent in its transfer to the reader. This requires an attentive reader, and language that is well-insulated, suffused with potential energy.

Poetry that succeeds so well suffuses the reader with energy that the reader himself is powerless to resist the urge to write, must channel his surplus of potential energy back into poetry. He is also free to use his energy to mow the lawn, volunteer at a battered women's shelter such as Safe Nest in Las Vegas, NV, or make love to the next willing person he encounters.

Consider the energetic propositions of an excerpt from Jane Hirschfield's

"Leather", which has some features of language writing:

Sunlight, wind, the black, inquiring noses of others:
sharp now as the knife.

Muscled unjacketed egg.
Impossible butcher's diagram walking. Beginning to graze.

Read "muscled unjacketed egg" and try to resist saying it aloud. In "muscled" the word itself is flexed taut with falling trochaic stress on the first syllable, released as in an energy-suffusing preacher curl to the second syllable. While exercise requires energy expenditure, its practitioners well know it's a wise investment. And with the falling foot, the only energy required of the reader is a subtle linguistic push to release the word's stock of potential energy, a boulder on a cliff an inch away from barreling to earth with the momentum of a steam train.

"Unjacketed" sets off a pendulum that sends its seesaw energy to the reader. At the core is the jacket, first pulled slightly from the body with an unstressed "un", then torn completely free on the other side with the suffix "ed". Syllabically, the bow is drawn into "un", released with the hard Anglo stress of "jack", flies through "et" and finds a bit of acceleration in its final syllable, "ed".

The target-object of the adjectival "unjacketed" is the powerful Old Norse "egg", a punctuation itself, receptor along with the reader of the previous two words' semantic energy, the simple saying of which re-releases the tremendous energy the line sends it. Egg: the most potentially energetic of all things, whose store of energy is no less than life itself.

~><~

Could a poetics obsessed with the irrefutable rationality of physics find within itself a place for the subversive, supplantive nature of surrealism?

While some lackluster and uninspired reckonings of surrealism simply call it an attempt to represent the murky workings of the subconscious ushered to the zeitgeist of the early twentieth century by Freud's research, in essence it is a continuation and outgrowth of the Dadaist project of subverting the rational impulse that so infected humanity from its inauguration as be-all end-all of human knowledge and experience in the Enlightenment, to the near destruction of the planet in the Great War, and the attempted destruction of a people in the Holocaust.

Furthermore Dean Young, who has not so much domesticated surrealism as allowed it to graze in his fields, says, "For surrealism, the path toward a state of perpetual revolution is paradisaic; its negative impulses intend to wipe the slate clean so that we may enter a tabula rasa of imaginative possibility." A surrealist aesthetic is an indictment of the impulse to war, a hammer against the glass ceiling, a vote for a woman or African American for President of the United States – each begging the question "what is ir/rational?" – and a reverence for the twentieth century's most widely valetudinarian institution, the imagination. In this sense the playful is the political, and the sometimes seemingly innocuous poetry of Young, Ashbery, Simic, and Tate—all of whom I read consistently—is most powerful.

Funny thing, though, ask James Tate if

The child's eye wouldn't open,
so we captured some urine from an old goat
and froze it into a small cube. Then we held
the cube on the eyelid for twenty-three minutes
and sure enough it was cured.

is a nihilistic expression of the twentieth century's irreparable insistence on technology's damning effect on human imagination and communication, and he'll say something like, "Hey, that's pretty good—maybe you should do all the talking."

One could also use a surrealist aesthetic to represent a subject's being dropped in a foreign country where the inhabitants look oddly not unlike the people in his apartment complex back home, who when they open their mouths to speak out comes a Babelian onslaught which places the subject in a position of suddenly overcoming estrangement, otherness, difference, and dreamlike supplanting of expectations.

~><~

You hold not only a search for a poetics, but a spiritual search. Essential to any question of spirit is an obliteration of self and subversion of ego concern. Having been to the place where in my art and my life (tell me again the difference) I've found this an impossible notion, I'm unsettled in a place hopefully not alienating for either the reader or me.

I say "unsettled" because later today I'll be writing poems with a different *signature*, as Marjorie Perloff might call it, than the poems in this book, and I'll be uttering things that contradict what I've uttered in this prefatory article, and Derrida long past his own death will go on dissolving the significance of all my utterances and signatures. Long ago, in a cave on Short Creek outside the Somerset, Kentucky city limits, Jack Daws uttered between slugs of four year old Jim Beam, "My only regret is that I won't live long enough to refute the last thing I said." Little did he know he'd already done it.

When I turn in a notebook to a page containing in my handwriting a poem I have no memory of writing, I have to wonder if I've accepted Jack Spicer's advice to

“clear your mind away from the things which are you, the things that you want, and everything else...[and] distinguish between you and the poem. The absolute distinction between the Outside and the inside.” It’s good advice, in any context.

This book is for Mom and Dad, who gave me life, and to Bill W. and all his friends, who did the same.

Gratitude to Nick, whose mentorship is the fiber of these musings; to Don Revell, who made me a better poet; to Claudia Keelan, for her insight; and to Dan Thompson for his patience and willingness.

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ROMEO BONES

A violent luck and a whole sample and even then quiet.
~Gertrude Stein

Imperfect Everything

Dying Tense

*If after the manner of men
I have fought with beasts at Ephesus,
what advantageth it me, if the dead rise not?*

—St. Paul

Uno

She picks mangos with her eyes,
scans the crate until she finds the one
she will touch.

Dos

Your eyes are parrots, parrots
are touch, your eyes
are the river in places piranha swim.
You call yourself *Marly de San Parado*
but I know you're an angel
and just like the angels
I can't understand you
when you speak
so I respond *si* and *claro*
and sometimes *no*,
just so I don't commit to anything.
I hope *no* is not the only word
we have in common.

Tres

When I woke this morning
I couldn't remember if I
were in San Juan or San Jose—
unsure if it were the city's identity
lapse or mine. I'm afraid
if I bought a newspaper
I'd be even more confused

so I ask a whore who tells me
she's only an apology
for the city's pain. If you
were here you'd love
rain's daily baptism,
you'd love to touch
the avocado skin and mango
flesh the vendors peddle
from kiosks and cardboard
boxes along the street
the rain strives so hard
each day to keep clean.
Forgive the rain, forgive the city.
Forgive the whore and forgive
the poem, shameless martyr
for the imperfect everything.

An Irreversible Sense of Place

I'm suddenly in love
with the diesel chug of busses, the sharp

hoots of car horns, whatever
keeps hammering outside

the door of my \$10.00/night pension.
The HBO and XXX are free, both meek

compared to the block that surrounds
me. If the city had subtitles I might understand it,

might be able to bargain for bread,
to board the bus that will take me

to the sea, to find the one who will
love me. Condoms

and rat poison are available
in the clerk's cage,

and both seem like a good idea
until the city's overrun

with used condoms and dead rats. I've
been inside the cage once

when *el jefe* wanted to make sure we agreed
on the date I should vacate

my room. While searching my tiny
room for a place to hide

my passport I found two empty drug baggies,
embarrassed myself thinking like a drug addict.

I've picked a chicken clean to the bones
and even bit into a couple of those.

Gringos don't usually get big birds,
but the smaller for a higher price, the browner

bananas, the bigger-pitted avocados,
yesterday's bread, and it seems the vendors

are saving each until a gringo
walks up. As of now this decision to live

abroad suits me like nylon socks. I don't mind
getting lost on the bus anymore

because I never really know where I'm going,
in fact cannot be lost

having forgotten the destination,
have been kicked off the bus for reverie

at the end of the line,
so that's it—daydreaming

without getting lost, without worrying about loss
of time, money, food, water, of things

like you I promised I wouldn't
forget. It's time to walk—if only I can

retrace my steps I'll make it back
to my room tonight. If not, ok,

for now the rain takes its daily nap
and the lady selling mangoes in the park is back.

Last Night in a Cheap Motel Before Heading to the Caribbean

The clothes continue to spin on the ceiling fan,
having been washed with Castile soap in a Ziploc bag.

My Girl sounds so good on a Wurlitzer backed by congas.
I might have caught Hepatitis-B at the pharmacy

today while getting an immunization for Hepatitis-B.
I'm leaving this town tomorrow

on one of the incessant busses, missing the stop
this time might mean I'm heading

for the South Pole. Has anyone ever dreamed
at the South Pole and if so, did the dream involve

a long-legged man juggling clouds on turtleback
or was it more impressionistic, a mosaic

of shadows contingent on distance
and aperture? Which way is north

from the South Pole, which way isn't,
what's the area code? What's the frequency,

Dan, where have you gone my blue,
wide sun? It's a garden of icebergs

out the window, and my thoughts of light
behave as wave and particle. My backpack's

demanding to be stuffed, my trappings
askance on the bed around me.

My underwear circling overhead,
my damp, many-pocketed pants smothering

heat from the TV. My survival knife
trembling. My ambitious condoms

and personal lubricant donated unused
to the bedside drawer. Two 99-cent

rain ponchos enjoying their last
night together, swaying slowly

on the clothesline
to the Wurlitzer's churn.

Gulls

Dawn light humps it over the horizon
and we brush sand

from our cheeks,
the skin it takes just another nutrient

to be carried out to sea,
fought over by scavengers

whose scuttlings
make no permanent impression.

You were beautiful in your mermaid suit,
your tan line reconfigured

under my taut fingers, your breath expansive
as the blue light

framing ships in the bay,
silent in their moorings.

Nomad's Mortgage

The dwarf came to on the train tracks
after a night of heavy drinking

following the part where everything quiets down
and two people are on, or around, or lackadaisically ensconced in a

sofa and one asks
Have you ever been in love?

Have you ever hated anyone?
might well evoke the same memory,

the loved, the hated, one.
Here the ferries haul islands back and forth

while the townsfolk stand still
in the bay. Terra firma

is no longer possible, so the army
went home. The peddler leaves

a totem of bone
to be plowed by the wake,

giving much less to the sea
than is offered in return.

It is Thursday anyway
amid the cattle's low,

rain the sound of shad clavicles
plinking on the rocks.

She Who Prefers Sleeping Among Ferns

One thousand natives have congregated on the pavilion
this morning to petition the release of the wild
back into the wild. The nights are getting longer
but only because we're sleeping less.

Even our definitions have potholes—the revolting
frost heave having subjugated
our pavings. There's safety in the collective—
the clew, the copse, the shiver.

My own stupid solemnity reclaimed, slowly night
wound itself in cobwebs, cotton sheets,
dripping faucet. We played with the headboard
sash and took turns mocking howler

monkeys restless in the almendras,
our sounds and words and selves
untethered, changing in the joining,
gone as they're made. Daylight

jumped us from behind a fan palm
and the startled Golden Orb-Weavers
flung their starving topographies
on the designs of our dreams.

Yours was a map of desire, bodies
suspended mid-flight. Mine chose
less permanence, attaching leaders to the socks
drying in the backyard and guying

itself to the lifting fog. Alas you greeted me
green-eyed at the cusp of afternoon
(had you too been dreaming of that small plot
of mustard in the Himalayas?)

so I had to explain to you morning's cloudy
interrogations, the hopefulness of rice cooking
and my sad failure to keep the dew from lifting
and walking away with your knickers of moss.

Llega la Suerte (It's Your Lucky Day)

The giant is sleeping
 and Sayaka walks through the parlor.
She's more beautiful than I ever could have savvied.
 Sometimes I imagine I'm captive on a pineapple plantation
and forced to make crepes
 so the pen sashays its anxious mantis dance across the page,
praying withstanding.
 Jesus seems to be smiling, but he may simply be thinking
of Mona Lisa.
 The mountains sneak through the bars
and offer me a glimpse
 of what it might be like to breath the world
in one sudden gasp.
 If I had to choose between Mountain Time
and Pacific Time
 I'd choose both,
sit on the cusp
 debating seconds with ants,
hoist a two ton leaf onto my back and go looking
 for my queen.
How would it feel to live with one foot in Friday
 and the rest of my body in Thursday
if only for an hour? Why do I always write *love*
 when I mean *live*?
If our minor premises lose perspective
 our loves become a tyranny of chance,
an exact replica
 of the mundane, only slightly taller.
I've had enough of the waving umbrella plant's
 rainy supplication,
though I empathize. One gleaning is all we need
 from the entire distraught mess.
There are as many holes in the night
 as there are stars in the trees. There are blues,
there are greens, and then there are greens.

When the Waters Fall

we'll don plastic masks
raise our dead
onto platforms
to be hauled
to limepits
on the outskirts

we'll arrange our hands
as in prayer,
form from red
clay mud the vague
shapes of makeshift headstones

when the waters fall
we'll hide our eyes
with our hands
as we search for our homes
and those who call us
refugees will be forced
to meet us
in the streets

of oily
death
growing cess
unforgiven levees
and we'll see that the rain
has no conscience in falling
but we'll bless its attempts
to wipe the vagrant seaweed

and pondscum
and sin of inaction
from uprooted streets

Flood and

unknown faces

either side of a well-
handled bus window. Indemnifiers say

act of God.

We burn in afterlife, ignited
by inadequacies

at home inside.
A tremor of bees,

seeds sown, skinned
knees, soliloquies

sung in the name of absence.

The Lay of the Romance of the Associations

Rain makes no shadow
 until it evaporates,
 the sun excluded
from this business
 of falling. The more
 the night dilates
the better I see
 its fictions
 and moonlight's
happy treason.
 You're counting stars
 with a stethoscope
while I dream
 in tongues.
 Every time I beg
to differ I find out
 I'm closer to you.
 In one instant
a reporter comes between us
 and the next we're living
 in the past thinking
a nice frame will change
 things. This new history
 cannot be exported
nor can we continue to ignore
 the community of the living.
 We know the planet
is right in its roundness,
 but how to overcome
 our fear of water?

News from Eden, Sort of

Spring and its hesitancy, its array
and its frosty henchman. Such anxious bulbs,
unable to wait. Still others are at home
in the dark, deaf to the sun's alarm, destined
for a less-anticipated rebirth. Everyone
was enlightened by the war panel
last night, but unsure what to do.
Buy a book?

Ah, to be digested, to have given
more than taken, and cast a shadow
light on its feet. I sit in the dark
on the phone (*as if in moonlight*,
you said, always the poet), teasing you
with the prospect that everything
almost doesn't happen.
You will learn to love, you tell me.
Is love enough, or must I keep acting on it?

La Tierra Insomne

It is that thing you abhor, that thing
that can tread water yet drown
in a politely undisturbed patch of moss.
One does not age in a day, a wise old man,
now dead, once said.

There's a breakdown in urgency
(the pivotal fault of many a mediocre samba dancer).
The will misguides, we disguise intention,
line our walls with dime-store frames, display pictures intact.
Our thoughts become us, synapses stretch
to accommodate fancy. The developer dozes
natives into the ocean, and I'm helpless
to blame anyone for what they do best.

At dawn nightshade floods the town.
The dead retrieve flowers for their eyes,
that they might less frighten children.
I've learned patience from the dead,
stop dead in my tracks. Fate waits
at the bus stop.

The phone rang its fool head off after I placed an ad
seeking someone who thought they knew something
about convention, about the manner of things,
how they might be approached without disturbing
the random mating choreography of status and quo.
Hell, I might even have friends with boats
if I tried a little harder.
Seems I'm always in the company
of the incurably lonely. The lonely try harder, sure,
and I don't remember telling anyone
I have a boat. What I have is the number
a girl named Iris gave me. We'll go up
on Falta Montòn, just to talk,
and watch the wildflowers stir in the wind
while we pluck them from the dirt.

A Native of Somewhere

48 flags fly over this dirty
parcel, none its sovereign,

a pantheon of gods or more whip
in eddies, and we memorize them

with aplomb, glad to see
their motility, glad to see them

seeing us. And when we pray
for a thing, we are really praying

to the thing. And when we amass stones
for our fortress, we are glad

to clasp scraped knuckles in remembrance
of the gathering. I have yet to come

to the edge of my love, and
I have yet to recognize

having come to the edge, my love.

Cinco poemas de la muerte y una canción de amor

(Five Death Poems and a Love Song)

I

Last night I railed against rubrics
and on the way home, I died.
Twenty-two horses attended my funeral,
they were quite magisterial, to say
the least. From atop a light-pole
spat a magpie several dogmatic assumptions
on the nature of love, then flew away
into so dark a cloudless sky
he disappeared. The undertaker splayed
the tongue alongside the body
in the casket, so it could take one last long lick
of my soul as it fled for cover,
and the night stayed put, a stunned
and inconsolable widow.

II

At lunch today the Heimlich maneuver
was nominated for a Nobel Prize.
Many phonemes stood around the table
anxiously waiting to be pressed
into the service of words, but without
so much as a full sentence on the menu
even some words began to get a bit edgy.
The waitress wore a moon-length skirt
around which several fraternity disciples
revolved, reestablishing our faith
in gravity. After the queen had a rattlesnake
with John Courage and a word
with the host, the judges emerged
from the kitchen with a Stockholm ribbon.

III

To express my diversity
I joined an Asian softball league.
Sliding into third base last night,
I died. The home plate ump
discovered a new variety of marmot
that was promptly killed when a Land Rover
strayed onto the field. We wept for days
then concluded our mourning with a shiva
to beat the band. Seeing so many
covered mirrors reminded me
art evacuates the void. In its strongest
outing since coming off the disabled list
the void pitched a no-hitter,
later annulled when KY jelly turned up
in the heel of its glove.

IV

The void was raised in the south of France,
at an early age developed a sibling
rivalry with Guillaume Apollinaire.
Though I had yet to be born
when the void was publishing papers
on crises of faith as crux
of Western theater, I died.
After that went down I was faced
with the monumental task each day
of regaining faith, as if day
were narrative driven to forget
the stillness of sleep. The void and I
met on a country road one morning
as day broke through the birch.
Looking back I should have known
who it was in the sun's magnetic glare.

V

Sunday evening pines slip
into the lake, awaken toads
and ducks' askance glances
from the brush. Is it nature
will save me or is it love,
is love the human cause
most apt for survival?
The shore scattered here
and there among the leaves
makes me think I've arrived
at the peaceful flexible line
between two worlds,
the way my shadow has a home
in the wavering water.
All I need now, I said to the sky,
is a faithful listener, one who will
serve me my death on a pyre-like platter,
dimly the water, flow dimly away.

VI

Had I found true love
while writing this book
its poem would have been
here.

A Nosegay of Phlox

Denominator

*The dissociation of subject from object
is the very infirmity of the temporal world.*

~George Steiner

O'er the ramparts red glare and the bombs
keenly weeping, a midge in a moonbeam

and exactness to sleeping we don't find in everyday flight.

Hallowed be the lab rats, tamely
volunteered, haunted pipettes and hypothetical

lunches, the occasional self-discovery in the middle of it all,

the eye in the pie, each piece equally cut, each
number repaired to its chambers in the algebra hall of fame.

Shall we convince ourselves of the necessity of earnest

or play hopscotch?

Regional Transportation Commission Transit Guide

Swaying crane booms sweep the air
and its tired heat and the street alongside

quivers as if this planet were top floor
of an uninspected high-rise. Construction

workers are orange-vested announcements
to the sky making obscene proposals

to rainstorms while the heat hails a cab
into the next millennium. Remember

when it was chic to speak millennially,
time was our pet donkey, never

stubborn, that always obeyed
our admonitions to giddyap?

We saw it freezing, though,
the esprit de corps of the world

slowed to centuries, then decades,
then days, then all of a sudden

nanoseconds were making a comeback. Time
is proletarian of all dimensions,

grit-faced orphan adopted to deserts
and conch shells and cesium isotopes

and acceptance and resilience and ad hoc
propositions to the Great Glass-Infused

Pine Log of the Universe. Now's
the hour to think in minutes,

to embrace the nick and shun the brunt,
to forget the penis envy infinity

sends. My moment can whip
your minute's ass. My watch caught

your wife looking at it while the clock's
hands gently massaged her legs.

This is not heartbreak, or masochism,
or the inability to lead with the left

in the Cha-Cha, but a musk ox and steam
train making love in your heart.

The Saga of the 203

Many years later the bus stop architect
was found petrified in concrete, his bones

arranged to resemble a geodesic dome.
Sitting on the bus bench was fun

for awhile. Now the construction site
has come into its own as a church

of dust angels, the scaffolds
welcomed into the wind's

dominion and given to sway.
Help is telegraphed from below

but no one hears, or at least no one
appears to be responding, and so goes

the condition of the universe to some.
What wind has is a bullhorn

tuned to a higher key than human ears
are accustomed to hearing. With the wind-

shift spins a weathervane
counterclockwise, contrary

to the nature of things,
we think, to the salience of skin,

the weighing down of bones,
the transmission of lycopene

into the liver, the transgression of thoughts
into wishes. My brain churns with spiders

who should have been left alone.
Which came first: the bite, the passion

or the fear? Later we learned to compare
scars before rating our pain, which wasn't

quite right either. Insufficient suffering
makes haste later, and it's hard to walk

with all our devices lying about.
I have no idea where I stepped in this,

but now I smell like it and it's all
over these useless clothes.

Anyway, now you know what happens
when the country boy tries to ride

the bus. He thinks he'll be smart
and catch one across Desert Inn

so he doesn't have to mess with
the Strip, but there's a detour,

not just a detour but a u-turn,
at Channel 8 Drive. So he exits.

In an attempt to get back to DI,
he ends up walking down Industrial

and we all know what that means.
He stops by a store for water,

a massage parlor for directions
and it's already 3 o'clock when

the handjob arrives and by the time
things are things and he returns

to the sun-licked valley pavement
he just doesn't feel like considering

the rights of spiders or
the winsome future anymore.

Sitting on the Bus Bench for Fun

I. The Bus

You seem to have a hollow lung today.
Air is not concrete, wood not enough
for the foundation of your home.
The unsteady way it sits on the hillside
makes you gasp in spite of the inspector's
good feeling about the guy wires
in your California basement.
When you move are the pictures
more meaningful,
do you take extra care
and dunnage to pack the things
you know you'll need least?
I'm tired of moving, can't stand to be
still, can't stand the way the new lease
feels like the last breathless passage in a book
I've never read. And people ridicule
trailer parks. If I knew anything about tornadoes
I would too, but always assume anything
with wheels involves a sound take
on motion, is something for which
foundation cries, for which breath
and high winds and jumper cables were invented.

II. The Stop

Jumper cables, that sweet polarization,
that sharp shock of fire when poles

are crossed, the why the fire
marshal moves the shunt

trip away from the breaker box, that sinew
and skin are equally conductive.

My senseless death occurred years ago,
on top of a barn, back when we thought

circuits could hold their own
in the rain. Little did we know

then the slick black tape that held
us together could not adhere to angst. A short

in the index efflux adjustor,
these things I'm not so sure about,

these oily rugs and misplaced
feet and alchemical ruin.

Forgive me for playing
foreman again, for nailing

the joists to the limestone,
the dove's tail to the mortise,

for tenoning when I should
have been splicing.

Third Shift

There was a glitch in the system
that allowed me to work

without pay
& I enjoyed late nights

chatting with the women
who came to strip & wax

over
& over again tile floors

the workers' steps had daily dulled
with sullen frictions

& later those nights
the shine evolved

from the buffer's low hum
as the ladies

in their navy blue
industrial jumpsuits pirouetted

the padded mower-handled machines.

The Great Chain of Being

It's lunchtime at the Earth Café and
again I'm feeding nostalgia to strangers

over muffin crusts. There's a girl
in the corner whose eyelid flits

and I think she might be winking at me.
I don't notice at first, but her t-shirt

says *I love Jujubes. All is for
the best...* said Pangloss, and were it not

for my growing disdain for superlatives
I'd be tempted to agree, in the same way

I disagree with those who confuse
darkness and death.

Everyone else blamed God while Leibniz
gave him credit, and look how well grapes

grow in Portugal these days. I took you
to *Casa di Amore* Tuesday because you said

you'd die for a good Chianti and now you're gone,
mumbling breathless incomprehensible messages

on my voicemail from miles away. I forgot you
the night you died, invented a font to inform

your eulogy. If death is a visual experience
I don't mind jumping in or hiring an artist

for a faithful representation. To paraphrase
a resurrection, this all seems so vaguely familiar.

Beauty and Pain

If we fuck every seven years
we're lovers. In between

is argon and carbon and rayon
decay. A life sentence ends

with a big period. The Big
Period is followed by an Age

of Reluctance during which
no true stance on God is made,

and several painters and writers
gain fame for inexact

representations of Something
Unholy. Or Something. The Meadows

is primed in a hue of vagrant baja
that peeks through the vacant lots.

If only iodine were attracted
to the soul we could see how

your existence stands up
on the screen. We failed

to find iodine in the chiropractor's
office. That doesn't make the body wrong.

No need to forgive the stone for so much
reckless rolling following the frost

heave. You only imitate
a mountain when you shiver.

Carried forth from eons a forgetful
sun so heavy we, like moss, petrify

when left alone. All the poets'
obsession with the body has me

confused about beauty and pain. Don't
forget how Magritte's choo-train

came charging from the kitchen,
how *Guernica* was imitation

of an overgrown cow's tongue
prickly pear. Don't be silly.

Don't forget to shave, *El Jefe*
says, and check your pain

at the door.

99-Cent Store Candles

I feel I've known you longer than two weeks because you don't have a TV she said as my cat licked her sandals.

We climbed the heights of midnight-thirty, watched the pines wave in the wind outside the balcony window.

When it was time to let the day in you slid the curtains and closed the patio door so the children

walking to public schools wouldn't hear us. Here *us* is a fragment of sense, painted wall, smoking biplane,

forward manner of speaking. In the charcoal sketch of us, the road disappears just beyond a red brick

configuration the audience assumes must be a house. It's really a theater near some docks

but the docks are contingent on a touch of cobalt in the pavement. What's missing, then, is a scene in which the war

veteran is reconciled with his saxophone. The tenderness, o, you say, of the utterly impossible. We are all contingent on a touch.

Horsemen

There's a point where the Russian mafia takes over
in my head, importing strange
new ways of exporting snow
to tropical regions.

I try to convince them
they're headed for trouble.

No Way they say

We're the only trouble in this town.

So I settle in for a snack,

maybe a little tv,

adjust the rabbit ears until Bob Newhart's cute little stutter
cuts through the static,

turn my thoughts

to the halide valence of light filtering in from the hall.

Good News about Jesus Juan Neuman

It's fancy meeting you here.
I should have known
by the way you held your cake
that it was your birthday.
You've been known to revel in upheavals,
negatively capable and prone
to sinkholes, with or without
an acceptance speech.
It's not so much pollen
but the thought of having allergies
that gets you down this time of year.

I still don't know what you meant when you said
Kierkegaard may as well have stuck a bone in his mouth,
or that your family loves each other differently
than mine (excepting the support-group tenor).
So much for the reunion and the spicy black bean fritters
I'd been working so hard to perfect.

We know our disabusive glare
overexposes the photograph,
that our numina are only willing
to shuttle us from one darkroom to the next.
Your will dissolves, alka-seltzer in a jar,
air gasps for air, we for the unutterable.

It's the old one-two, the fact we feel
frog-marched into our existence
without so much as a grace-note to prepare us
for the first full measure. But what does it matter,
in the end, if you've been pushed or pulled?

You tell me your dream date
involves attending your own funeral
anonymously. This has nothing to do
with amusement parks, nor does it account
for human suffering. If we believe everything you say
pretty soon we'll be marching out the door
in backwards motorcycle helmets.

Which is not to say unprepared
for a volatile future. One day this poem
will need annotation to explain
what a VCR is. I mean, was.

Just because you're apprehensive about corners
doesn't mean you're paranoid. You just never know,
like being the hypotenuse in a love triangle,
predictable, yet infinitely variable.

When the roof flies away in the storm
I'll finally let the moon inside.
It'll be perfect: no one will show up
for our secret hors d'oeuvre soiree
and we'll lie awake all night
spitting pimentos across the room.
I'll browse your eyes for traces
of a former life, spend the rest of the morning
throwing shadows into a 14-speed blender.

Propagation

The heliotropic receptionist,
and 10 kindergartners beating

wood blocks. The miserable
euphony of thermodynamics.

This school of ill-repute,
so well-attended

I should like to teach there.
Fundamentals of frog wisdom

to flies, and the poetics
of connectivity. Grace,

a nosegay of phlox.
Best to keep to oneself

when going to seed.
Dirt is fine

vocabulary, the truth of it
'neath your nails.

Far Cry

12 miles outside of Phoenix
I've forgotten about my heartbeat
or even that I should be breathing
while you pee in the desert, a blessing,
I would think, for whatever is
in your stream.

The stars are vibrating,
you reassure me, as do
the many things spinning inside
their respective voids, gophers
and cosmonauts, strippers and krill,
the unlucky.

Breakfast in Pakistan is
midnight at the Kremlin, a handful
of Serengeti sand is a brick
in a Jo-berg prison. Forgiveness
squanders anger which in wartime
seems a bust.

You can learn to love, or
knowledge fails where no question
has been asked. Tell me
one half your desire
and I'll figure its circumference.
I'll ask *What is it?*

For quick reference, the volume
of the universe divided
by its contents will always equal
one. You are halfway around
the world before you remember
to call home.

Esprit de Corps (Stretch Armstrong's Shape Memory)

So valuable to refract light just so,
a thousand times over. One day
he just put her in a bag and left
her in a cave not a hundred yards
from the trailer. The winded

sycamores sang in a fevered pitch,
neither one nor the other could compare
her agony to his. The drunk nun
juts from her rectory window.
The stained glass refines light

on the congregation's collective
countenance. The smile on the face
of an ubiquitous God must be round.
More a look of surprise. Or exhaustion.
Frail notes of Christmas carols

carried along on the snow. If only
snow didn't melt it'd be precious
as diamonds, fractals refracting light
a billion times over, just so, a rainbow
light's frozen antonym. On what

force of chance does form depend,
each angle, each fractal? Try growing hay
with diamonds. Try feeding diamonds
to a horse. Try stripping the field
of its dignity with a combine. Try

something else, for heaven's sake.
Try marital bliss. Try fear
of intimacy. Try six slick
snakes slithering in a haystack.
My girlfriend has the blues.

My girlfriend has a girlfriend.
My girlfriend's girlfriend gives
to charity. When her charity is refused
she feels as if godliness
has left the world unbidden

and chaos rides a bicycle
around and around the block
in unpredictable waves. Luck
is the monkey on chance's back.
Sometimes luck doesn't have a chance.

Sometimes the great-winged
gull casts its shadow
over the face of the earth
but your cancer keeps on feeding
in the dark. If your cancer

gets cancer, your virus
a virus, death becomes
the impossible dream. Cursed
with life everlasting and

a magnetic memory. Could
the mundane be any worse?
Could "See you on Tuesday"
be the next world religion?
We are what diamonds become.

Dear Buck Fever—

An Eight Part Epistle

Dear Buck Fever—

I've missed you this year
plodding through the backyard
trash cans. Raccoons are worse
because of it. You lied to me
about first sights, about firsts
in general, really, when you said I'd learn
to forget the nervousness. Nervous
and excited are the same, you said,
but I still get nervous when I walk
in the fields, there's something
I'm supposed to find but can't, in a drunk
dream reaching for my tonsils,
trying to pull back out of my body
what I've just swallowed. The world
is getting away, BF, starlight proves it,
and night's repose is never complete.

Dear Buck Fever—

It's snowing again. The field
behind the house is so clean
I dare not disturb it. I might
shovel the driveway but until
the dogs run amok out back
I'm content to sit inside and read
and watch the branches lean lower
and lower with weight of snow.
What was that song you sang
when I thought it was only
wind blowing? *All the Things
You Are*, was it? I tried playing it
from memory, but it turned into
something different entirely.
It's hard to say some things
were not meant to be, BF,
especially when our lives
appear right in front of us.

Dear Buck Fever —

I'm at an age now where a day
without true love found
feels like a wasted day, and I'm still
not sure I know the difference
between a weed in the field
and a flower.

So, don't go gouging your eyes out
sounds like advice. It was you
of all people who warned me
the worst advice is most
freely given. I couldn't help
but agree, having myself suffered
from self-inflicted advice. What
say when the rain clears
we meet up at Doc Strunk's pond
and catch us some fish.

Dear Buck Fever—

I'm worried your little book
of herbal cures has made me
sicker. I researched nothing
but my own memory
of what some of those plants are,
recalling my own days
in the field. My nurse
would have never let me
do some of the things I did,
but she's gone for the winter,
snowed in by now, I'm sure,
a crocheted quilt the color
of moss growing around her legs.

Dear Buck Fever—

I got the picture you sent of you
acting a fool in Roy Orbison's
old sport coat back when. You looked good—
The Big O would've been proud.
I was still hanging around
that crazy chick from Tallahatchie
County, the one with the four crazy
brothers. Whenever I smell
vanilla Carpet Fresh I remember
how I felt back then,
a barnacle who'd forgotten how to breathe
underwater but didn't know how to let go
of the ship. The Celica had a coat hanger
for radio antenna and two temporary tires,
both on the passenger side. I had to wear the seatbelt
so I wouldn't slide over into the shotgun,
always ran out of gas with a quarter tank
the fuel pump couldn't quite get
to. Fuck, man...fuck.

Dear Buck Fever—

The wind is picking up today.
Even the stout cedars out front
sway, shaggy fingers beckoning
rain. In these parts, rain is overture
to solitude, sends us inside
escaping what's good
for us, seeking growth obscured
from light. Most river birch grow
as twins sharing a root system, living
in each other's shadow, growing
apart. If one falls away, the other
grows as if nothing happened,
perhaps in ignorance, perhaps out of respect
for habit. If you fell away I want to say
I'd grow closer, but closer to what?
Memory. God. Loss. Today, BF,
was one more day our souls
outran us.

Dear Buck Fever —

Five crows in the hedge today,
each one a subdivision of my heart,
each one a misbegotten prayer,
each one a dead unloved cousin,
each one an autumn,
each one a rainless town,
each one a silo of mice-nibbled cobs,
each one a jagged row of tilled silt,
each one an ice floe-suspended amoeba,
each one a parody of Christ pose,
each one a rape,
each one a treatise on prison reform,
each one a mast of a sunken Greek ship,
each one a flagellant sailor,
each one a vanquished heterodoxy,
each one a proselytizing knife-wielding neighbor,
each one a handful of ash,
each one a hole in an apostle's robe,
each one an allopreening avadavat,
each one a resurrected sunspot,
each one a bull in Goya's *Colossus*,
each one a starving Catholic tramp,
each one an asphodel awake in a winter wheat field,
each one an erasure considering us,
each one history's missing heiroglyph,
each one a vehement defense of cryogenics,
each one an ellipsis in the soul,
each one a hunger conceived in a sleeping witness,
each one a pustule of ketchup on a morgue floor,
each one a thunderbolt in Artaud's ear,
each one a plainsong metronome,
each one a god's eye plumbing our folly,
each one a fish's incertitude on seeing sky,
each one a fault we find in one we love.

Dear Buck Fever —

Bright and boldly born, the foal's shiny
skin is slick when I touch it.
Hope surely dwells in the hollows
of her stick-thin legs, after all
it's the prop, the pillar that holds
us up too. The drought left us
with one cut of hay last summer,
little to graze on, and now
weedy alfalfa gets eight dollars
a bale, if you can find it.
Most everyone sold out,
and I hear the stockpilers
have taken to sleeping with shotguns
in their barns. Honestly, BF, it's easier
to rob a bank than to steal hay.
Marietta wanted to take the foal to the lake
but I told her she'd be better off using a gun,
seeing how the lake's almost gone.

Of the Limits of Love, of a Lamb's Ear

What Rain Says

The sound of one soul clapping is the same
as the sound of two souls being rubbed together,

the sound of a Chinese girl flushing a urinal
while another washes her long jet hair in it.

The hospital's lost its patience with the brotherhood
of carpenters, instead hired scabs, the only indemnity

endorsed by a halo around the sun.
The angels speak in tongues, and you don't

know if they're telling you to write more
poetry or to go build a nursery on the west coast

of the Sea of Cortés. First, you must learn to speak
like an orchid, fancy yet tender, bold enough

to be rooted in bark. Your will
evaporates, moths when a tree

falls in the forest. Somewhere
in the stars is written a holy bibliography

of the places you've published your urine, mostly
on drunken nights long ago in Kentucky summer

when the world was your toilet, existence a mishap.
Lean in, now, listen to what the rain says, the way

it pokes its fluid finger into the cracks, as if Earth
were something you could peel back and fall into

and be incubated until time to grow.

FL, we

dismember the irrepressible
cadence of highway maelstrom

and head out to sea, ah, the ambiguous sea, part
stone-mind, part rain-lung, part balloon-soul,

part moon-leashed lion, part the mother heart's
murmur, effluvescent forever. If the sea had skin

we could roll it up over Florida like a condom,
prevent the spread of what we only in the comfort

of our own misshapen mishaps call the spread
of Florida. And what's so wrong with Florida,

then, there's nothing more akin to an existential
crisis than 6:30 pm in Florida, and you need not

have driven there drunk the night before, parked
on the street outside the Daytona Beach YMCA,

rusty harmonica on the dashboard and God
knows what on the jeans you cut into

jean shorts with a buck knife just south of Valdosta.
We've come to the shore, by God, so we've

conquered the shore, you want to say,
(for puking-on is 90% of ownership

in Florida except at the county and state fairs)
and you have, now what? The sea is not

really indifferent, but rather likes you.
There's still, amazingly, half a tank

of gas and 12 or 14 menthols
in the pack you must have bought

on sale in St. Cloud, now what?
You gave a homeless girl a twenty

and four menthols, and there are three
crisp one hundred dollar bills yet

in your pocket. There's
love in the world, now what?

Two No Trump

Dance classes cost too much, that's for sure, so we've decided to learn bridge. Sitting home getting drunk every night is no longer an option. You've

even said that since we've sobered up the apartment doesn't feel so surveillancy. I won't tell you this, but I like you better with a gaunt complexion and your eyes

sunk in your head, slutty-sexy, I would call it. Haven't we just switched addiction, now to sandwich delivery? I'll never forget how messed up I felt when you turned

the digital clock upside down, sensing time had begun to express itself in foreign words. You're starting to get on my nerves, I guess I really love you.

Romeo Bones

Allergies today are puffed up
with caterpillar bones, old loves
and arbor tidings, pushed
by a humid wind,
moisture as fleeting as grief
for the death of a second cousin,
one you used to play Lawn Darts
with on sunny summer holidays
when the family gathered
and gawked at the grill, talked
of investments in appetite, the
politics of meteorology, the
state of affairs of beer, the
demise of demise now
that everything's o.k.

It's not o.k. you want to say,
and you do say, but you're
the youngest so no one listens.
Your second cousin heard you
and laughs, slings a Lawn Dart
so close to your feet
it makes your toes tingle
with the expectation of pain
and the utter desire
for utter attention. *Romeo Bones,*
Romeo Bones, she says
and you laugh but you have
no idea why.

Pretty soon, everyone's
laughing and you don't
know why, but you laugh,
of course, pretend to be
in on the joke, in on the whole
thing, the punch line
missed, the world you're afraid
might be getting away
from you, the parents
who might not be your own,
the sky that might not really
be blue, the blue that might

not really be blue, the grassy
rug that might one day be
pulled out from under
your tiny feet.

Camping

We wound down a mountain in the mountain
wind thick as sweet-gum sap

through loblolly pines waving
hello or goodbye or good riddance

we couldn't tell. We camped near a stream
because I thought we'd be safest near water,

in case we had to be born again in a pinch
near water would be the safest place to be,

and now we speak with tongues
attached to sore throats. After we coaxed

some heat from ashen embers,
the starry claws of the galaxy

tore through the walls of our tent,
mauve oddity among the leaves

and we, two matadors
in a car wash, nothing more

than Tennessee revolving around
our slovenly island in the woods

night, we became someone else's
esoteric thoughts of self, instincts

swollen with fear and suddenly cricketsong
wasn't so meddlesome, comforting in the way

it swallowed the darkness the frail
light of our lantern nudged against.

I awoke alarmed that I couldn't feel my legs,
embarrassed at the peril I sensed in the sound

of snapping twigs, and decided it wasn't so bad,
that I'd do it again and not be so gullible

in the face of nature next time, but, I think,
not now. Now it's best to break camp

and head on back to the car, turn up the radio
to fix the squealing brakes,

head back to where doglegs
fracture in the heat and bottlenecks

steal time and underfed gypsy moths
slip into hairline cracks.

Park Place

At night I sat in the pastel
cafeteria, chairs with their legs clean

up off the floor someone had purposefully mopped.
I had a yellow legal pad and a book

from which I copied the line that began the second paragraph on page 21:
Remember, you must always weigh your need for a fire

against your need to avoid enemy detection,
the words inky clouds,

little fragments of sense that avoided each other's company
and sat on the page unwilling to look ahead or behind.

I got sober in Spring, allergy season,
moon in Cancer, six months after a seventh DUI.

It had rained all April, now dry enough
to pitch horseshoes in the yard.

The shoe's cold iron felt slick in my hand
as I pulled back, lunged and threw,

watched this U fly
through the air in frozen frames, fall

in a splash of sand. The third day I smuggled a horseshoe into my room,
that night put its coolness to my solar plexus

as I lay in bed and stared at the ceiling, sweating,
my heart a shoe-struck sparrow fluttering in the sand.

Inventory

Under the trellised grapevine I count my sins,
eat not, nor separate, skin and seed.
In the heat of day I come here for shade
and at night, the same, dwell with things

that creep on concrete, tow short shadows.
Their hysterical antennae and twitching,
wet probosci taste tainted skin.
They know with their insect brains

that hate and anger and hang-nails masticate
musically and dance on the palate.
Some stop, some scurry around in the dust
unaware of their blindness, bump skulls,

move on. When my tally is full I walk away
unsaved, carry under my sole
their crunched shells: bug guts
and exoskeleton, antennae still twitching.

Pietro Nostradamus

There is a carrot and cup of tea and it is Friday
night. I'm in sweats and I shall no longer worry
about love. I shall proclaim my boredom
serenity and attach myself to an abstract concept

governing the universe, personify it, and talk to it
while my cat watches me. My concept of beauty
might nonchalantly refer to Yugos and leaf-cutters
and any notion of truth I have will fit warmly

inside a rhinestone-encrusted coffee mug. I will
realize that Hawai'ians and Michiganders
have very different reasons for moving to Las Vegas
but I'll understand also that I'm being reductive

and making broad generalizations. All my poetry
will mention laser levels and have a rather obvious
unifying principle. I will count backwards from 10
if I get hiccoughs, and maybe not even bother to vote

this time around. I will become obsessed with parataxis
and answer my colleagues in a smart-alecky manner
when they ask if I know anyone who knows anything
about hunting permits. I do, but not in this state.

You obviously don't because you said *bun-ting*
instead of *huntn*. I won't be self-obsessed but I'll
seem that way to you. What I won't do is complain
about the weather, even to myself. I will establish

a charitable trust of raisins under the couch
for the society of the cockroach. I will write a charter
of independence for a country called Boonhar,
the principal inhabitants of which call themselves

Boonharians, or Booners for short, and they will all
absolutely adore me for my tireless efforts to liberate them
from their oppressors. They will take mighty offense if one
refers to them as "Boonies." They are a very proud people.

I will pay more attention to what my dreams
are telling me, and will do my best to respond
in kind. I will faithfully represent things as I see them,
and rely more on past lives' experience. I won't abolish

anything because quite frankly I won't have the power
but I'll make my disfavor overt should anyone challenge me.
I will refuse to testify on the grounds that the defendant
once served me a grossly misshapen flan in a cantina

in San Bernadino. The defense will know I'm lying,
but the judge will allow it because she knows my aunt.
It will become very crowded sometime in the near future,
and we'll need rain, and a map, and a little more

around the edges to make the wrinkles disappear.
We'll be asked to make our own way to the exit
and there will be something very large looming
in the distance that we won't quite know how to describe.

The Future of Owls, Who Hunt with Their Keen Sense of Hearing

I sit through the dynasty of your hairdo
this rainy day in the desert. After Earth's
hot conglomeration from cosmic dust,
as it cooled rain fell for 12,000 years

and so were born the seas
and upon their shores
our amoebic cousins.
I wonder which amoebae

are coming up behind us,
learning to thrive
by plucking oxygen
atoms from our atmosphere
and turning carbon monoxide

into food. They'll find out early
it's easier to kill than to love,
that violence is sometimes love
manifest, that those who will not kill

in the name of love may never grow up
to mourn the loss of an only son.
Maybe the same god who created Earth
and breathed love and violence into this world

decided to take a 12,000 year vacation
during which it rained every day
and he never quite recovered.
There I go again straightening frames

on walls, fixing my picture in the center
of the frame, shrinking the universe.
Against what darkness do we push
when we light a candle for the dead?

What to Do

when prayer hits the floor?

One need not be
scatological to notice the pigeon shit
running down the brick
back wall
of the porn store.

Meanwhile drunk
buddha sits atop the utility box
beside the bus stop,
no grapelike
sweet-smelling
sophora dripping
from its beams to remind one
of impermanence, or immanence,
or sophora.

The moment swells around him, the sky
pregnant with sun in the south
at noon,
moment, like *self* or *us* or *so*,
a most indefinite measure,
a handful of air
seeping into....

Border disguised as distance,
language disguised as border,
diplomats disguised as bag ladies,
a march as parade,
smog as mist,
pole as tree,
me as you.

A pigeon lands on the rail
and I think about the weather,
weather happens and I think about you,
consider calling a friend.

Bends

I'm always wrong, in fact
have helped build pyramids
in honor of the Wrong gods,
soaked each million pound stone
in the wrong kind of mortar
(mortar itself is wrong for things
so massive as to hold themselves
in place) before hefting its bulk
to a higher level. Each platform
is its own continent, sub-Saharan
Pyramida, or Antpyramidica, or
Babylon or anguish, where odd
cultures—only odd to fingers whose
tips have never traced *love*
carved into sandstone
with a toothpick—have forged
their existences into private
stock markets based on
the value of a rhubarb, not
to be confused with rhubarb pie,
the idea of rhubarb, or rhubarb's
sense of self-worth. I
want to live in sand
like a flea, scuttling
between a licking ocean
tongue and a coveting
sand womb, laying
eggs in places sea
turtles might find them,
that sharks in turn
might find the sea turtles,
that I by proxy might
finally be
shit into the void
floating in the void
incubated in the void
born at deep sea
where the current
of neon coral-speak
is so vague as to keep

even daylight from hanging
its cliché dogleg on everything
where the bends is another way
of saying *STOP you're reaching
for the light too fast*, where *STOP
you must let your angelic body simply
float where the current resides*
is another way of saying
the bends.

How to Make a Forest

The inefficient forester favors
quixotic over quotidian the way

the inefficient gardener deadheads
dianthus with pruning shears

instead of scissors. In a primeval meadow
with God like a lover above me I lie,

clutched shallowly into earth
with proteoid rootlets,

my memory a bulb's, confused
by heat, early for spring's welling tide,

cumber of decadence, of beetle
dung, of the limits of love, of a lamb's ear

uplifted unto the titled breeze, of a snapping
turtle awaiting first thunder to let go,

of a blindfold, tied on, cast off in passion
the fall before, come a circle

and we play, in cattails
at pond's edge, blinded

not by sun but reflection of it,
snagged briefly in the boreal understory.

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