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## The Three Saras

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THE THREE SARAS

By

Peter Golub

Bachelor of Arts  
University of Utah  
2005

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**

**Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
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## Thesis Approval

The Graduate College  
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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Peter Golub

Entitled

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Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Examination Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

**The Three Saras**

by

Peter Golub

Claudia Keelan, Examination Committee Chair  
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There are two important foundations upon which my poetry stands: 1) Epistemologically I am an empiricist, not a realist; 2) my poetry is not empirical. That is, it operates in the realm of the thought experiment –the laboratory of the mind. This demon is a good analogy to how I write poetry. I usually get the urge to write a poem after thinking about a question, or a fact. In Maxwell's *gedankenexperiment* the fact is the second law of thermodynamics, and the question is: What if a demon partitioned the fast and slow molecules in a box?

Hence, there is this *gedankenexperiment*, and this is the general movement of my poetry. The poems begin with facts and/or questions, which arise from contiguous, often disparate events. Like Maxwell's demon, much of my poetry, and I suspect poetry in general, performs the activity of organization. But this is not all –the poem is an experiment. When writing a poem the mind puts things into a system, or takes them away, and then observes, and through observations transforms.

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## The Avenues

*For Brenna Gardner*

*My mother says we acted out the funeral of Robert Kennedy,  
And walked serenely around the corpse*

-Mark Rylance

On Sundays while I am still in bed  
And my phone rings with my mother at church

You clean your house  
And the cat hides under the covers

Cleaning my house, I came upon an old manila folder  
That had some pressed flowers, your photo, and two pieces of paper

I read: "Games in the trash" and "Sandwich woman"  
Notes for a poem I've forgotten to imagine

Outside the sprinklers make evening puddles  
And a tree of birds is a choir for the early summer

The black and white photograph shows you looking  
Out to a parking lot with a Chevy Caprice

Your head turned away from the camera  
Waiting for the taxi, which we missed and then had that old man

Drive us to the airport for \$40 even though a cab would only cost \$20  
We missed the flight and your mother didn't pick you up at the airport

She distrusts us now, and for good reason  
But does that mean we are untrustworthy

## Eastward and the Orangutan

### I.

Eastward and the orangutan sing a song  
In a bar outside of the world.  
They do not engage history.  
The internet has been down for two days.

### II.

They are at a wedding.  
The bride looks stunning in her  
Narrow notch lapel with boutonnière.

The orangutan takes a sip from a 32 oz. plastic mug  
Full of vermouth.

Two women sit chatting with Eastward about his new film.  
The women look stunning  
In their narrow notch lapel with boutonnière.

Only Jojo notices the sadness in Eastward's eyes.  
He can hear those ghostly Morricone whistles  
Which his great-grandmother would send across the Atlantic.

And where did they bury her?  
And why am I making another order?  
And who is Jojo?



## Haibun #1

When the belt turning the dynamo finally broke  
The light slowly dimmed to a faint red and then went out.  
In the quiet room you could hear the breathing of the men  
And the crying of an infant somewhere impossibly far away.  
In the bar, in the basement, someone placed a candle on the piano  
Which was being played by a young kid nobody knew.  
But when he walked in and touched the keys  
Everyone shut up and raised their heads like hounds.

When you start naming essentials you realize that everything is essential.

## Haibun #2

During the coup  
The boy fell in love with one of the officers.  
After the wave of suicides and executions  
The boy found himself  
Located near the back door  
In a bunk with a pillow.  
He and the officer made love.  
When the world was destroyed  
And the camp burned to its foundation  
The two escaped  
And lived in the country for a brief time.  
The officer caught pneumonia and died.  
That February the boy moved to the city.  
He finished a trade school  
And later married.

When you start taking things away you realize everything must go

## Morning Haiku

### I.

when i dream of myself  
it is no longer in a bed of roses  
or dappled with lavender on a calm may morning  
sipping a light beer staring at the approaching day  
no  
instead i am close to roots of the trees  
and the shit left by the neighbor's dog  
my eyes with the mowed grass  
knowing nothing  
not even madness

### II.

it is not  
a capricious womanly desire  
to leave and find some impossible freedom  
described by french philosophers  
trapped in their own language

nor is my equanimity  
the result of masculine indifference  
commonly construed as fascism  
or the need for future justice

no  
you know almost nothing about me  
and I hang from a branch in the garden  
spitting at the effigy of your father  
laughing to myself  
shitting in the bushes  
sparing the bugs  
as if they were friends

### III.

the etruscan sun falls like a mask  
over the hills

the generosity and enlightenment  
the dignity and splendor  
the piety and public spirit

of this country baffles me  
there seems in the future a plan  
that is entirely beyond me  
an organization lain down  
guided by the hands of the divine

IV.

in this particular poem two sisters play  
at being sisters.

One says to the other  
--sometimes I feel like mine is the deaths head  
--what are you talking about, you're like so weird

V.

## Translations

*for my mother*

The giant jellyfish washed back and forth along the coast  
Sleeping inside it  
Hell made a pass at me  
So that I strove to push myself over

One contradiction at a time  
Until a house appeared  
Where people walked up and down the soft stairs  
Looking for something interesting

“Life,” the boy said, “Is the act of evading boredom at the expense of sanity.”

My children talk about sleep  
And their grandmother who came from Moscow  
Going east  
Past the monolithic waters of Baikal and the Pacific  
The San Francisco house full of leather bound books on botany

Today  
I wait at the café  
With my books, music, and clothes

May 9<sup>th</sup>

*For Anna*

On the way home I imagine  
You sitting at the kitchen table  
Next to the bright red flowers

In one of the black and white photos  
Piled onto the kitchen table  
You stand knee deep in mud next to the Moscow State University  
Smiling like a kid on Christmas  
Planting trees into the bright future  
You were 25 years old, which is my age now  
Now some 50 years later you wait  
For your daughter, who is my mother  
She has promised to come  
And drink a glass of cheap white wine  
In honor of the great struggle  
Which has come to mean almost nothing

## Thinking of You in the Morning

With you I feel it is the 1920's  
The dirigibles take people  
To and from their unfulfilled desires  
The whores and leeches wave kerchiefs  
To gathering crowds in the sky

I feel it is the 1930's  
As America cozies up to its Great Depression  
And Joseph Vissarionovich kills millions in the name of steal

As the fun and presentiments gather  
And rotten fruit drops from the orchard's trees like a million soggy turds  
I gaze into the distant future  
The war  
The millions drudging along in the filth of some degenerate demiurge

The 1950's come along and you are still yet to be born  
Neither were you born in the 1850's or at the time of Christ  
Everything seemed to be Red even though no one quite knew  
What it meant  
But this hidalgo would rise and fall to its own logic  
Scrapping up millions of large cars and thick refrigerators  
Into the homes of unsuspecting families

The music raged against almost everything  
Possibility spoke at my father's funeral  
Our families in the accursed land of the Reds  
And your father the same as always  
A white figure at the end of a pool  
Waving his finger like Uncle Sam  
"But dad," you say, "The war is over."

The 1960's roll around and we can already hear  
A bit of Philip Glass in the background  
Throbbing with the abortions of white hippy girls  
And again the rage, the rage of the blacks, the communists,  
The women, fags, and labor  
"Back in 1915  
Anarchy; Salt Lake City; a school; a park; a flock of swans"  
Of course in the midst of all the commotion  
The most important thing, as is often the case,  
Was forgotten:  
The streets sprayed ashen with DDT

Memorials are raised for the brave past  
But no demur against the future could be heard  
And concentration camps were simply renamed  
By laissez faire as the bright future of the world

It is a prop out of a Hollywood film  
About Roman life  
Yet this encapsulated time  
Which had survived  
Its own violent demise in this one individual room  
Possessed properties  
From which you and I were forged

The 1970's brought on the McNamara age of war  
And gooks shot niggers for liberty and peace  
Yes we are all these  
These unkempt men are all our fathers  
Vituperating us from monolithic walls with tiny names  
They fed upon the Chile verde of the Oriental South  
And shat us out  
My love, they say, they did it all for us

The 1980's are a spectrum  
You sit riding its tiger tail  
I sit at the head with my plastic paladins  
And my dyspeptic father, who thought  
—America, America, America  
Your mother, with her quiet greed  
More sane and more determined  
Had also dreamed  
And lay you like an egg into the desert heat  
A nest of Barbies, lights, strippers

A Chinese mitten crab, a Russian olive, a brown tree snake  
We grew  
Picked up the work  
And learned our lessons well  
The Soviet Union fell with a euphonious crash  
Termagant children at the schools  
Mistook my crucifix for Satan and beat me  
Where were you  
A four year old locked in a closet  
Dealing with your small shame

What works, has worked before



And now it is our time  
Put out our little twisted bowls and ask  
A little more, dear sir we promise to be good  
Good God, we've barely begun  
Give us a little time  
A little patience please

## Iberia

1.

the trees outside do not seem to notice  
the shit that is human history

Joseph Wissaranowicz steps out into the cold  
steaming with his ax  
his boot steps in the snow  
in the frozen black mud ruts  
leading to the sty

moths die in the hands of his son  
the animals beg for the night to end

and who do they beg  
these "animals"  
where do they go from here  
there is no history Joseph Wissaranowicz  
that is to say there is no story  
language is pretty picture inside a spandrel

the rampage of life does not begin nor end  
in shutting no circle  
opening no doors  
things are  
there is no judgment  
just the incomprehensible sense of motion  
and the moaning of the living

2.

it may come as a relief  
that statistically things have never been better  
we can live in peace  
wandering drunk along autumn avenues

3.

a big man  
is lonely  
he learns French  
a woman loves him  
he want more

he writes and writes  
composing a history  
equal to his size:

don't worry there are still  
things left to buy

4.

when will the holy constitution break  
when will the players make  
the rules by which the play unwind  
and you have seen your wife  
and you have seen your wife  
and you have seen your wife  
unable to make right  
the things that you have done inside your life

we speak  
at best it could mean anything at all  
call me  
and tell me all the secrets you have kept  
the things that your fiance will regret

what have we done  
and can it ever be amended  
by all the laws we god  
or otherwise  
there's little to surrender  
they'd like to say  
but who would want to take us anyhow  
I'm speaking now to all of you  
the people and the angels of the court  
if you did stop your actions now  
how would your family lay  
across your past

America moans  
like an old yak in the February woods

the vertical expression of a horizontal desire  
if a pig leaps on a man in sexual excitement it is not an offense

## Sun Mites

My hope is like everyone else's  
I just happen to believe in a small local avatar  
Who happens to be my lover

.

The guitar singer  
Wins over the hearts  
And says the right thing  
The girl who is his lover  
Walks a narrow path to their home  
On the shore of the North Sea

In America an 18 year old girl dreams about him  
She weeps a little in her sleep  
In the dream he stands before her  
Holding a long slim mirror

.

In the film  
A song plays  
As the girl gets on the back  
Of the motorcycle

How trivial  
You are so young  
Moving shyly through my memory

If all memories were like this  
It would take me an hour  
To write my home address

.

The tiny dog  
With the long tongue  
Is named Yoko

If she were a person  
She would compose music  
For well known animated films

Most of these films depict  
A future  
Where the dog Yoko  
Could in fact be  
Turned into a human

.

The night grows anxious  
As the grey day seems to be taking  
Too long

The next time I see you  
I want to hold you up  
Until I fall over  
From exhaustion

.

My life and everything else  
Are equal

At least when it comes  
To the cross hairs

If I were the president  
My vision would be obscured  
Because my life  
Would be greater  
Than everything else

.

Between the sheets  
And the pillows  
I taste different  
Parts of your body

When I turn on the light  
You hide  
In the nest we've made

I search for the right words

Dom Vasco da Gama  
Contracted malaria not long after arriving  
In Goa and died in the city of Cochin  
On Christmas Eve in 1524

Thanks to him  
The fifth largest country  
In the world  
Speaks Portuguese

Sometimes I wish  
A Portuguese pirate would  
Establish a trade route  
Between my small words  
And your large heart

At 2:40 pm  
My friend writes:

*bom dia, grande tristeza nacional  
é la lingua portuguesa racional?*

Since I don't speak Portuguese  
I don't know  
If he has made any mistakes

## Upon Waking Up

I sit and wonder  
if you'll ever come to your senses

but then what might those senses be  
and who are you anyway

sitting at my bed  
gazing into your ipod like narcissus into the pond

my future children giggle at me  
my dead pets purr at me in the shower

I came across this poem  
and I thought of sending it to you

because in every poem I come across I imagine  
the "you" as you

forever chasing it like Nabokov's evening sun  
with the father's last book, with orders to burn

you are a sparrow  
and I am the forlorn kid

thinking: is it ok; can I really be in love with a bird  
I mean is this kind of thing allowed

can I stare upon hours at this creature  
for reasons unknown but corroborated by science; is this... legal

but then, like everything else after the enlightenment (that factory of ideas),  
I understand that bird watching is not only an age old practice

but also a sign of age  
I am so old, I think

And you  
You are forever so incredibly beautiful

## FERTILITY MASK

*In the service of life, sacrifice becomes grace.*  
-Albert Einstein

Let's eat the moonlight's raw sea urchin, run  
out of sleep. To cover our faces  
in new green leaves, give  
each other the bells of wet earth, we'll  
have the probability of hope.

I'll undress in my cranberry thirst, blossom  
lilac, you raise the body's temperature,  
father our hunger  
to feed outside ourselves.

We will be in the oriole's bright eye. But nothing

can be done to swoon the universe slipping from our sides, nothing  
as simple as desire. We shall dream  
we are flying the snowdrift praise to the heavens' downdraft.

What I want in me is oncoming. I cannot hide this affliction of light.

You know it's almost the afterlife, where  
everything is unimpressively beautiful. There,  
my body gathers the seed, behaves the season  
when all beginnings come  
like the translucent hands of the dead  
pressed, still warm, on your forehead.

Time is not so long,  
let us begin the end as soon as possible  
so that we may remain children, always running a little ahead  
of everyone.



\*\*

In the parking lot of my body  
I have come to hate my body  
And all that it requires of this world  
In it the flat dry carcass of a blue bird  
Is lifted by the desert wind  
And blows up a girl's skirt  
Her small brothers from Germany  
Are upset because in all the good war movies  
They are the bad guys  
And the heroes beat grandpa with a stick  
Saying, "Bad, bad, bad,  
Dirty, dirty, dirty"  
This is before the howl of a thousand  
Howling monkeys bursts the old man's eardrums  
And he stumbles back to his wife  
Def, raving, nearly mad

## The Elementary School

i.

The spider  
Lowered on its web  
Into the dark green rug

ii.

I pick up your son  
From my elementary school  
Where Sarah muses over a pizza  
And Mrs. Buckman takes a bucket of fleas  
Out with the towels  
The janitor is sick and crazy  
His baby whines his wife is lazy  
The hygiene products taped to his door  
Are lower class  
He reads the Odyssey  
He dreams of Philip Glass

iii.

I need a certain time  
And then will coexist us  
I believe and I hope that we will  
A very expensive friendship

iv.

By the time I pick him up  
Many of the kids are already well  
On their way home  
Good girls holding hands  
Boys thinking about their genitals  
Pick rocks and blades of grass

At home I call you

—Just because I'm staying home  
Doesn't mean I don't have plans;  
It is a Friday after all.

—What, you have a date?

pause –Yes.

–With whom?

–Fred Jordan, you say, a little blasé.

v.

Sliding the pin threw the goldfish  
Pulling off the spider's legs  
Like small radios the machines  
Of the world still manage to go on  
In some way  
When dismembered

And it is not cruelty  
This wanting to know  
How many pins  
Can be slid through a goldfish  
Before it stops swimming

Maybe the Christians were right  
Or was it the Greeks  
Chained together with different words for  
Duty and class  
That life is a series of undemocratic  
Obligations, which only descant hallucinations  
Dispel for short intervals over the holidays

vi.

What freedom  
Show me liberty  
And you may very well show me  
A conscription

Alone, in this monkey of a body  
You sit as I sit  
You have no choice  
Does duty call you now

Has the state apparatus ever really worked  
In the same way that it's hard  
To associate the corpse with the bride

Or stool with lemon meringue pie

My lovers lie scattered across the world

My children sharpen their minds

The car is still

I want to take it apart

How far do you think it will go

Without tires

## Teachers

*For Anya Plutynski*

With the unfolding you look back toward your life  
A minute away from the next  
And then

Incredible

You have some insatiable feeling  
and touch for everything  
Like a pregnant girl

Drawing it from the ocean and literally  
Handing it over like a baton

She is making them all  
Painting serrulate leaves between the spandrels

## The Pelican

Let us suppose the mind is a legion  
With a thousand varieties of sausage and vodka  
And also that a beautiful girl is bathing in a moon lit river  
Suppose you are standing on the sandy bank  
Smoking a cigarette near a small fire  
In the morning you wake up covered in dew  
A huge bird is but a foot away from your head  
On the way back to the village  
A woman with gold teeth  
Asks you to help her carry two pails of water

It is your wedding day  
You are truly the luckiest man in the world

## December

At the end of the afternoon  
With the final bits of winter light hitting  
The plants on the green ladder  
Which stands on a table  
Next to all the bookshelves

I sit on the couch  
And do a little vacuuming  
And write this poem  
Which is only for you

I would like you to imagine  
Something impossible  
Not a miracle  
For today these seem  
The bread and butter of reality  
But something impossible  
For instance imagine  
That my mother is both calling  
And not calling  
That she talks to me about death  
A thing we know nothing about

Now imagine all the girls of the world  
Small, potential women  
With violins and other musical instruments  
They are practicing  
Floating a little  
The things around them

Imagine one of them growing up  
To be the president of the United States  
Imagine she is a Roman  
But with an Audrey Hepburn nose  
And a heart that swells like the ocean  
With melting ice

Imagine her greatest struggles  
That she leads the country into an impossible war  
With no sword, no battalions of brave young men  
Whose loyalty and love must never be questioned  
No, she is alone  
And watches the remaining light fall through the air

Full of planes and other machinery

But even this will pass

Eventually disappearing with the last history book

Macerated in the flood



## Kombucha Dowry

the beginning of it is a name  
the little girl asks  
are they all like this

must I be in love  
with a girl so terribly young  
and beautiful

Carlos the photographer  
is still younger  
must I model for him

the large German women  
speaks in diminutives

I feel a little disembodied  
I live in a desert city

the wind howls coolly outside  
through the falling sun  
my plants are good

my life is a happy mess  
full of failure, which  
canceling itself out makes  
a salad of small successes  
I tape it to the refrigerator  
the wind howls and howls  
it gladdens me  
I wonder who it's scaring  
who waits alone  
in the middle of the day  
waiting  
embarrassed by some childhood memory  
with their pants down  
and toothpaste smeared across the mirror  
--for Christ's sake!  
there are no rules anymore

the police are ninnies  
the sages are the police  
only time falling  
unevenly

over everything  
50 years is nothing  
and I am already the most important prince  
with the biggest herd of yaks  
licking each other

what is your dowry  
how can I please your father  
so that you too will know  
this wind  
this gorgeous howling wind

## The Three Saras

I.

there are unused icons on my desktop  
I look through the window past the yard of blond girls tending to goats  
the horses bat at the flies with their loose tails  
where my lust lays lazily in the tall yellow grass

the grass is a field of echelons  
the ant climbs higher and higher drunk from a virus waiting for a cow

in the morning I find Myself in a service  
trailing behind a procession of female acolytes in black robes carrying thick yellow candles

God pats me on the head  
as if I were an autistic child  
happy with a piece of soft cloth against my cheek

I remember that I am in love  
but forget with whom or with what  
it seems like anything could be the place holder  
but at that very moment I start to yearn for Newton's Genomial  
why  
a factual exposition raised to the power of loss  
the "thing" thing an acquaintance once called it  
when he sat on a green hill in the middle of the night chewing a power bar  
I tried to explain to him the trinity of Will, Social Will, and will  
I was 19 I had been reading Schopenhauer and had turned the cranky philosopher into my  
very own chimera  
I wanted the world's problems to be my problems  
but I was so good at making my own problems that I soon got lost  
which problems were whose  
was the girl my problem or her own

I like "girl" with a rolled "r"  
the "I" drowns in the "r"  
almost like a proper name: Girl  
"Hi, my name is Girl Friend," said the girl as she extended the cup of coffee.  
"Patrick McCoy Friend," I replied. There were not many things going through me head, and  
this was probably the reason I gave her my full name without noticing that we shared a last  
name.  
"Oh," she said somewhat delighted. It was then I noticed her legs. I am not a tall man –5'5  
and a half to be exact– and she was shorter than I. Now, there is nothing particularly special  
about this, many women are shorter than 5'5 and a half, but her torso was slightly taller than

mine. Her legs were short, noticeably short, and rather pilose. She reminded me of a bear. I have to admit my first reaction was one of revulsion, but this was six years and now I am rather enamored with Girl. We had our fling –it lasted three-fourths of a fortnight–, and then we went on to being good friends. Today we share a spacious basement apartment in a brownstone house. The house has a large yard, and the landowner has let us plant a good sized garden, which produces generous amounts of eggplant. My work is going well, but I almost never write. We are so busy with the details at the school that I scarcely have enough time to weed the garden let alone work on that beast of a novel. Last night I dreamt that my computer had come alive. Well, not really but that it would not stop. In the dream I tried to turn it off, but it would not turn off. Then, programs began to open themselves. It opened a spreadsheet, and then proceeded to past images into the spreadsheet. The images were disparate and made me uneasy. There were naked girls holding lacy parasol, there were images of my family, there were excerpts from the novel, images of myself, political photos, assassinations, meals, logos, death, and on and on. I tried to take the battery out of the computer, but it kept going; the images grew smaller and smaller until they themselves began to make a mosaic. The image slowly percolated in my brain; at first I thought it was a city, but then I saw the clear features of a female physiognomy. I backed away both curious and horrified. Just then my bedside alarm went off. I awoke and ran to the kitchen to see Girl behind my computer checking her email. I stood in the doorway naked except for one red sock scrunched at my ankle.

## II.

our greatest lover has the hairiest legs

our villains are also very short but nearly hairless

I watch them carry grey cats out turquoise doors to the ring of the phone

the pile of old dresses, shirts, skirts, scarves, socks, gloves, hats, lays at the feet of girls

the pile of black cards and archetypes is on the bookshelf

the red mite, the red iguana, the red wheel barrow

the sun setting on a white sand beach

tourist boat chipped blue

I draw a card

fear

we are comfortable with each others' anxiety

the smashed wine glass is a testament of our ability to cope with the perfective aspect

the room is full of p's  
I for instance – prepositions – a book of verbs – a recording of Chinese  
a conversation about the share of angels  
giant barrels of cognac  
the spirit of the thing is overwhelming  
I am a small lord among them –like an article –a hubcap on the Anglo-Saxon tradition  
a flat tire in the future  
the autobahn free of cops I hear, I hear I am in love with a girl from Panama, where brown  
tracks are made by green trucks carrying red dirt over broken sun glasses,  
and I do not remember  
the colour of your eyes  
they are like a box of lady bugs  
insidious, uncanny, commercial

### III.

the demonstrations of the mind can be astounding  
it crawls over the landscape like a symbiote in a popular film  
like the symbiote it is not impervious to the past

which amounts to the same thing as pantheism  
except that in this case one starts out not as God, but instead works toward the big “g”  
until the iron is so hot it has the properties of the fire

the mind is like a church  
it is an evolving organism  
meaning that it has a mind of its own

when you stand in the church  
you praise God with the language at the mind's disposal  
and catch yourself

“What tremendous wings you have!”  
“The better to see you with, my dear.”  
“My, look at your heart –it is the color of fire!”

that is why I learned to play the French horn  
this is why I coach myself daily in the art of plucking your heart strings  
I be busting your nuts and bolts like closed shops collect chimney dust

in the 19<sup>th</sup> century the chimneys stood high over the city  
the cities weren't very high back then  
and in my dreams a moon could be mistaken for a dirigible  
after I worked  
hard manual labor involving hills, dirt, and cyprus trees

I thought of my death

I thought of the phrase "you'll catch your death a cold"  
my shovel struck a snake  
about a foot long

it whipped and writhed hyperbolically  
I felt a pity  
tossing it into the tall yellow grass I thought of fitness

I am not a fit man  
I often dream about a public scene in which my genitals are exposed  
and there is nothing to cover them with

I cup them with my hand but this seems inadequate  
I yearn for something else  
but I cannot beseech the others with my busy hands

after tossing the snake I wonder if it will ever eat again  
and if it eats what will it be  
will it grow to the size of the clay boa constrictor

which swallows things revealing their shapes  
like the shadows on the caves of our ancestors  
ox, bear, French horn, desk, Blaise Pascal

IV.

many great mathematicians of the time  
wrote more about religious axioms than mathematical ones  
of course they wouldn't see the difference

the Hippocratic oath  
the monastic oath  
you once told me that a nun marries god –what about monks

what about all this writing  
which goes on and on but never really begins  
it feels good to write something for nobody

a child is not born for anyone  
it cares nothing about the pain it causes its mother  
only when it is packaged up

given a gender, a name, a date

he or she begins to feel the guilt of the world  
this is why children want to be superheroes

not simply because there is great power in long underwear  
but because there is an instinct to save the world  
to right the wrongs –redeem the sanctity of everything

they are little lords –arrogant, intransigent, capricious  
“how much longer am I to be with you” he or she will say  
“not very long” is usually the implied answer

for they soon learn that to be a hero is boring  
and those who stay in this phase  
grow lecherous and fat

derelict Buddhas suffering through the poverty of the world  
biting their nails to the rhythm of technology  
never fast enough

those who move past this stage begin thinking about sex  
but not in a cartoon sort of way  
no, they think of houses and cars and possibly bicycles

most never grow past this  
some rethink even this prerogative and begin hating their cars  
they change their diets to fit the seasons

and some even begin thinking once again about their costumes  
clothing themselves in acronyms  
songs from the beginning of the preceding century

ring out like church bells  
Prizes are given  
grants, elections, wars

sometimes you catch yourself all alone, saying  
“wait, let me try to explain. it was different. I am your prince.”  
but the crowd thins into the narrow streets of a capitol you’ve never visited

and the door swings open  
it is your wife framed with her back to you  
arms full of groceries

and you nearly weep from some loneliness  
you once felt at the sight of animals at the zoo

your hands, they feel more than your heart

a leucocyte catches a glimpse of him from time to time --  
“aren’t you supposed to be on the upper floors?”  
“what floors”

the steps are sharp  
if they can be called steps at all  
filled with concrete to prevent instant flooding or collapse

but these efforts are more to account for dire times,  
not to be mistaken for an attempt at a real solution  
for it has long been decided that it is better to go along

to put up an insurance one holiday at a time  
the task of compiling a set of corroboratory axioms,  
outdone only by the attempt to live

for Pascal the theory was almost accidental  
the probability that a man would turn to God via a truth table  
is equal to feeling the grace of God at a bazar

and faithful to what  
a set of axioms? one’s own belief in an afterlife? the parent instinct?  
go ahead, if you have made it this far you can at least look at your faith

which we wear like a pair of hand me down trousers  
we have always preferred thrifting to shiny metal hangers  
the old dumb fashions fad out and grow charming

the wisest of children start out as old men  
grumpy, conservative, with a love of order and decency  
rivalled only by old women with too much money, or none at all

it is curious really, how order must exist, how we must exist  
for a moment the hands seem completely unfamiliar  
much more beautiful than these hands

but it passes, like all things it passes and a new thought comes and takes the place of the old.  
“crocodile tears” a cultural curiosity  
a childhood reference to crocodile tears heightens the reference

there is a day somewhere inside this morning  
rummaging through papers looking for a scrap of paper  
remember that not only this has been lost, and needs to be finished



finishing, finishing, finishing,  
and then finished  
a pun, life at

V.

“your stories get worse as you tell them”  
to recite is an atrocity, but there are far worse jobs in the colony  
these are the jobs in the colony

at the center of which sits a man  
drinking tea  
with an asymmetrical hair cut, listening to Janice

they give me money, I am greatly indebted to them  
and to the girl who did not betray me  
who left my career free of her babies

they give me money  
I am greatly indebted  
they await. the beautiful synonym, much like children await a reward at the end of the chore

the dog is everywhere  
even five thousand feet above the ground  
it's in the suburbs and in the capital  
we all agree –the day, it is inevitable  
but it may be the last  
absolute –the last dog day  
drowning in the air and then  
no more, sleep apnea perhaps

an ancient tea drinking smile smiles  
what a content, a satisfied, satiated physiognomy  
with windows, may be shut  
the light stops there  
nothing it can do  
beyond the cellar door

the warped boxes full of stale miscellanea  
hold the bottom layer of the air  
as Susan plucks away at the piano with a golf club

she sees your pain:  
My masculine... wanders through Helen's landscape like a wounded animal

She directs it to stagnant water, dry leaves, a square house  
My voice, recorded, catches the childish lies of my character  
It rises and falls with such –exhausting motion  
And falls on equable ears –three women in a boat  
Swimming in leather swim caps, naked tattoos, pierced genitalia  
They are impeccably cruel and fair  
Alone, I look into my box of wet cloths  
The touch of it brings me to milky tears  
An unlikely combination of lust and loss

we do not drown  
a minute, and another and another pass along  
it seems to never stop, zero's paradox –we don't get many phone calls for a halfway house

the paradox of liars  
pandora's box the barber's paradox  
I am unhappy and on the same side as you  
we watch, we think, we construct occasions  
which let us laugh at all our milky expectations

and Carlos Renier smiles at us from his mechanical heaven  
the great man with the brown boyish eyes  
like quail eggs gulped down by japanees children before rehearsal

whose language is hard alien music, I go too far  
a hyperbelly full homemade songs  
a talented young man is eating his eggs

but Carlos with his hands covered in machine grease  
the great pediatrician of machines, pulling them from the black machine womb  
delivering giant screeching babies, cutting his hands on fresh cogs biting with new electricity

assisting the great progenitors with the beatitude of a german flight attendant  
we cannot help, but help sometimes  
try as one might he will always help someone, even your death is useful –one man's trash is  
another man's treasure

always help someone  
“Praise the Lord, and pass the ammunition  
and we'll all stay free”

nothing to be done about it  
there is no end to your generosity  
our ammunition rains down like swallows in oregon –brilliant green, yellow, red

we many build, erect, define,  
postulate, consider, propose,  
ostentate

principles, laws, codes, tenets  
correlations, corroborations, axioms  
proofs

fence, wall, dam, levee  
religion, disciple, discipline  
minister, election, erection, constitution

we may even consider that god is on high  
he will see you  
you will die

we may even consider evil  
we may even say "and deliver us from evil" or "and deliver us from the evil one"  
or better still "and deliver us from ourselves"

in all likely hood evil is real, another word like  
"dog" or "kitchen"  
like "the dog is in the kitchen" or "the kitchen is where the dog is"

or "you can't teach a dead dog new tricks"  
semantics, semiotics, syntax  
it's like the color which bees see

their aesthetic sensibilities  
the flower's sex  
it covers the mind with questions

the gestation period of theories  
pillars of light  
traveling from the sun, through the kelp forests, to the shrimp which move like crystals

VI.

I am myself all along  
watching myself listening myself smelling myself  
touching and touching, eating and eating and eating

fork, brush, fork, brush, cup, plate, cup, plate  
and let us not do evil  
dead dog, new trick

semantics, semiotics, syntax, bees wax

bee art—their aesthetics, sense of duty, ontology, ethics  
the flower's sex

it covers the mind with questions  
and ideas which form theories like the pillars of light in the ocean  
a temple  
a goddess which starts up like a grindy machine

sand is everywhere  
religion is a virus, a cultural plague a social parasite  
not as virulent as ebola

more like chicken pox  
a chicken pox tonic  
get'em while they're hot, get'em while they're young, while they're going

you gotta set the right mood for the occasion  
gather up the kiddies into one basket if you will  
the morning star, the evening star, the soar on the inside of your mouth

the brown dwarf, the brown star, the brown wharf, the brown star  
which you might kiss, which you might dance flamenco  
in the throws of passion

when you record in the throws of passion  
what love  
that's it  
what love

it is relentless  
a beautiful woman  
beauty is timeless—but we grow tired

we complain, we bicker, we toss and turn  
we collapse into our hunker down patience  
out attention, our appreciation

the need is almost always greater  
than the sum total of our computers  
always going on, unfinishing, undoing, like the voice of the radio

never a final answer  
they wouldn't permit it  
not science, not an explanation, god forbid

but of course they do  
yes they do, that is, some of them do  
they say "you will be saved and you won't be"

"...he is the wrong man, he is the wronged man"  
approbation, reconciliation, contrition  
we subside, we forgive, we contain multitudes

almost everything is forgotten  
some make great efforts to keep it at bay  
to keep the pony of history going —this is how it goes

bum bum bum ... bum bum bum ... bum bum bum  
iambic, trochaic, dactylic, dyspeptic  
amphibrachic, anapestic, anapestic septic  
septet septet did you forget it was september

in contrast to english russian lacks secondary stress. lomonosov himself soon recognized that iamb so  
f this type severely restricted his creativity. he began to allow pyrrhic to substitute for iamb. as a result i  
ambic came to be defined less by the strong syllable than by the weak ones. it was not essential that all ev  
en numbered syllables be stressed, but rather that all odd-numbered syllables remain unstressed.

a punch and judy game at a cock and bull story  
history rides an equestrian  
a marriage rides photographs

the four ponies gallop round and round in the blue ring  
they brandish their swords  
the riders' heads aflame

the children giggle with delight  
they strike each other with their hands  
their feet like pistons beat the ground

VII.

Hello, Hello  
Hello I must be going  
I've been asleep on this stiff bed too long, like a corpse in a trunk happy to be tossed into  
the river

And what river might that be  
why be "tossed" into anything

we are in constant competition aren't we

no, and if we were this particular competition wouldn't amount to much

it is faith nonetheless

yes faith but in what?

in the different leaves on a tree, in the pages of books, in the imaginary friend, the imaginary intergalactic lord, who is both arbiter of the wicked and savior of the meek, how would you have it? sticking your grimy hand down a rabbit hole looking for the day...

R-a-b-b-i-t

When the day reaches Salt Lake it is a pale yellow  
worn by the markets in Tokyo and Beijing  
the eleven times zones of Russia  
the autobahn, through the super highway over the Atlantic ocean  
it is all almost over  
the package is at the door  
the kids back from the war climb into their shiny cars  
the Pacific glimmers past Hollywood  
with one foot firmly in Peru the chaos subsides  
the meccas and africas of the world are brushed away by the caribou  
the sacrificial bees  
carry the remains of the day to an island on the back of the leviathan  
where lewis carol waits impatiently  
"where have you been; where have you been my love?  
cannot you not see; cannot you not see we must be going?"

yes. the day. I awake into it. it comes so early. I see it before I fall asleep. boys play soccer in the street. they yell, in the voices of past lovers. I go into the street –it is the president out with the local crowd getting prepped for the next round of debates. "what are you doing here, in my dream?" "I am only passing through. But tell me are you very tired, or in a hurry?" "No." Upon this my mother steps out with a fire hose she directs it at the street – she is cleaning. The president and I walk to a nearby café. I see Sara from the English department. She eats a chocolate croissant, and smiles up at the both of us. I am jealous. Nobody seems to notice that I am with the president. He orders a small latte, I get an americano. We walk out back, to sit under the pergola. Shade is the soft side of a shadow. As we sit, talking about the Arabian banking system, Josh walks up. "You are in Italy," I say. "This is your dream remember," he replies, "Besides were you not just thinking of me." "I was thinking about Blaise Pascal. I want to write a story in which a young man kidnaps his father. The father is a Christian priest of some sort –a man revered by his religious community. The son kidnaps the father and tortures him saying, "I do not believe in an afterlife, in heaven or hell, but I believe that according to your religion you should experience hell. So, I will manifest hell, the best I can." The son feels wronged in some terrible way. He reads from the Bible, some passage about brimstone. He puts the father through the passage the best he can. The father is silent he does not protest, he does not

beseech or cry out. "You see," says the youth, "I do not believe in hell or the afterlife, but you do. My wager is this: If you truly believe in the afterlife, the rules of arbitration, the final judgment, etc then it follows that you will be condemned. But through your suffering on earth your sins will be absolved; who knows, you might even be a kind of martyr. I on the other hand will surely be condemned for these actions, and the feeling of justice I feel now is not a mustard seed compared to the punishment I will receive in the afterlife. This is a test of your faith father.; even if there is no God you are still granted a generous belief." The president and Josh think it's an interesting idea. The president offers up a decision square in order to see if he understands the idea correctly.

<b>I.</b> No torture and no God: son: 0 father: 0	<b>II.</b> Yes torture and no God: son: 10 father: -15; if father truly believes in God: 15
<b>III.</b> Yes torture and yes god: Son: -100 Father: 100	<b>IV.</b> No torture yes God: Son: 10 Father: -10

I say yes; Josh says no.

"There are flaws with every value, but the one that is most blatant is the pay off in square three. You are assuming that the father has actually wronged the son in some way. Fine. Granted. But then should not the negative score in square four be added to the positive score in square three; and should not the same thing be done with the son's score as well?"

"Yes," said the President, "But this does not change the outcome of square three in any significant way."

Suddenly there was a loud bang. I jump up in my bed. It is the afternoon; boys play soccer in the yard outside my window. The bang was the draft slamming the door in my room. All the windows are open, but there is no one home. The sun breaks through the maple leaves creating a collage of shadows; the wind moves them –abstract expressionism. The blood jumps all over the body; I listen to my heart with an old stethoscope –it almost purrs like a pigeon. I have a pigeon heart. A bird which uses its cracked feet as much as its wings –an urban quail. A woman calls, and calls back. "Is ----- there?" "No, can I take a message?" "A message?" The last is said with a kind of lost ennui. It's like when the bums would come to our church asking for food, and the priest would always reply "Would you like to read the Bible?" For reading is a gift, and the priest was asking them to give when they came to receive. He would of course invite them in, give them a bowl of soup and a glass of cheap wine. They were grateful. One, a man in a wheel chair who had no arms,

would be wheeled to the front door of the church, and left there until someone happened to open the door. If the person who opened the door wasn't doing anything urgent then it was their task to wheel the man inside, ask him to read the Bible, and offer him a bowl of soup and a small wax cup of burgundy. The man would eat slowly. He would not read. Everything seemed a great effort for him. He stank terribly, and once, while I fed him, he wet himself; a small puddle formed in the seat of the wheelchair. I watched the little lake grow larger. I looked up at him. His eyes were closed, he seemed to be smiling.

\*

\* \*

I am not in my bed  
the alarm goes on and on in the adjacent apartment  
I say "I hate themes"  
which immediately turns into a kind of kitsch theme

the plastic jewelry from last night  
sits on the dresser  
the birds sing  
creating what some might call a post modern fugue  
though there is nothing  
men have always had alarms  
just as the cat watches me from the table  
slightly obscured by the sewing machine

I do not know if I am sick enough to vomit  
nor if the islanders will break into my car  
poetry is a joke  
I try and remember a joke about Brezhnev  
Lenin showed that you can lead a country on the basis of revolution  
Stalin showed that a country can be led on the basis of fear  
Khrushchev showed that you can lead a country on the basis of a shoe  
Brezhnev showed that a country doesn't necessarily have to be led  
Gorbachev showed that you can lead a country without necessarily having one

authority is made more ridiculous  
the drunk at my window  
who yells about your fucking mother  
I wait for a bottle to be smashed  
the birds sing and sing  
there is the train  
vying with the cathedral bells

VIII.

taking care,



taking our individual epics to bed  
each a mansion of superstition and prejudice  
there is not one without an anthology as old as the stars

a thick anthology –nearly each cell a scholar  
the reds are too insouciant to care –they are the bike messengers of the world  
depending on which kind you smoke  
the halcyon, her blood, is wiser than the shrewdest lay-we-r...espond

we tell the girl speak up, she holds her cheek against the window  
her lover shoots himself, the neighbor goes upstairs

and while I write this thing Olya the mouse  
is in her cage  
gnaws on her cloth hen

I read Milton in the textiles  
in bitch's swamp  
near Kuzmin park  
where I go jogging to alleviate my love of cigarettes

during all this  
so much has gone and went  
and then I hear my uncle cursing  
he waves a newspaper above his head

look out! –look out, above you!

the flood began  
in drops  
to rivulets  
then streams

I thought of Noah  
a wet jungle  
my aunt switched off the electricity  
I set down pots and pans  
she said  
your bed fool –take to your bed  
it's near a beam  
the water on the ceiling met at the beam  
and in a stream fell on the bed

walls, water  
mattress, floor

the wet commode  
a pile of clothes  
the ties and socks undulate  
like snakes in water

i heard the man upstairs deplore  
the plumber came  
a drunken scene  
a bathroom on the second floor  
a busted pipe

floor, flour  
kitchen, worst of all  
the soggy boxes quickly filled the hall  
a double stress  
kept a thick rhythm  
the metal tubs  
made a sweet melody  
I thought of Swift  
how madness comes in floods  
the pipe turned off  
it subsides

with tubs and rags  
we scuttle like a pair of ragged claws  
tis June a boy in Baghdad burns

what can we do  
we laugh  
my uncle climbs the tin roof  
lays down newspapers  
and the down comforter

he sits  
smokes

she leaves  
to her sick sister

IX.

the provincial gods  
left  
those who stayed  
worked (mainly in insurance)  
paying homage to those

lost  
everything  
more frequent  
floods and fires

with time even the whores got real jobs  
some took to real-estate  
others to nursing

My cousin walks in  
"Was the computer damaged?"  
She hands me an ice-cream cone  
Goes to work on her finals

X.

the voice of the girl on the talk show  
you know the one with the problem  
the judged one  
usually leads to a kind of revulsion

not so much of her  
but of humanity in general  
but of course of her  
that she is representative of the species

we make money in funny ways  
often via mistakes  
money, children, Poems by Polina Barskova (tr. Peter Golub)  
cruelty can only come from the side of justice

beware of the people who forgive everything  
but are rarely forgiven  
beware of the hippy sitting at the blue table  
watching the girl in the brown dress

beware of your girlfriend  
and her girlfriend  
remember if everything is fine  
than there is no reason to bother them with the details

people are jumpy  
incredulous cowards with cars and phones  
there is no reason to study the fuzzy surface of the screen  
or to call back saying, "what you said was wrong"

but it goes on  
a slow cycle  
glowing a deep dynoflagellate blue  
about an unfavorable condition

the metro canyon winds  
carry the flavor of rush hour into your mouth  
at times you find yourself crushed against a girl's breasts  
or a man with something hard under his jacket

at night you almost fall asleep  
leaning against the bookcase  
all the books are about her or that time  
the overweight security guard watches the girl in the brown dress

her red hair sticks to the ice-cream cone  
she is almost tempting him  
he is almost in love  
daily he watches –this is his job

the students of course have forgotten him  
he has disappeared like the trash in the street  
or the rats in the subway  
sometimes I notice him, but most of the time his presence is induced

last month I saw him sitting behind the counter  
with the woman who sells juice boxes  
he was right next to her but she didn't notice him  
he watched as people bought their juice boxes

a child came up  
barely seeing over the counter  
he was alone  
“apple,” he said

the woman behind the counter raised her eyebrows  
“apple?”  
“apple”  
“no apple”

the security guard sighed  
the boy seemed to notice  
he looked up  
before leaving

"cruelty can only come from the side of justice"  
"if I lie down on my right side I can't hear you"  
"you can say"  
"colorless green ideas sleep furiously, after mr. smith boiled them for his wife"

a play;  
phone call  
voice –anyone home?  
five year old boy –no.

probably should have said yes  
probably the voice will come  
the voice might not come  
both alternatives seem unsatisfying –scary even

so the boy waits  
phone call –be home by midnight  
boy –I am home.  
sound of dial tone

you arrive twenty minutes after midnight  
and the door is locked  
and the fat hedgehog has had his fill of dead bees  
and it is raining  
and mud lots and lots of mud

you fall down into the net of the hammock  
wrap yourself up in it like smoked ham  
you, in this condition begin to dose off  
julia about the thing, toothpaste (there is no more)

you say –no more  
american blend  
hamlet smoked too much  
alliteration is on your mind, so is the square

you get out of the hammock  
go down to the square  
to the only open store  
the square is lit by old yellow light

a wedding party  
dances round a bride  
who stands in rain and mud  
clutching her dress

a girl, (there is of course always the girl)

in a polka dot dress  
she turns –pirouettes even  
on top of a puddle

the word is a pivot  
take your hat off

upon your return at 2:00 am the door is open  
eight hours later you wake up take the grocery list  
on the way to the store you see a woman carrying really nice gardenias  
along the perpendicular street passes a procession

slow old women  
carrying gardenias  
follow a light blue 1950s school bus

you join them  
b/c the store is on the way to the church  
the street is bumpy and small

a man  
told you  
that he drove the bus  
after you asked him what he did  
“I drive the school bus”  
“in the summer?”  
“usually about once a month in the summer”

your friend had to explain  
you wonder where they will bury him  
is there an attraction  
is your friend still mad about the wedding  
you should call  
all of them  
when did you last have a good lay?  
when did they?

the goats walk with their trimmed horns  
their ears and the professor  
have isomorphic traits  
the professor tosses a plastic tricycle into the fire

a black cloud of smoke rises into the not weeping willow

XI.

*My body is a cage  
that keeps me  
from dancing with  
the one I love*

there are as many Dmitries as there are Peter Sellers characters  
most of them have shaved their mustaches for tonight's cameo appearance

they pedal faster and faster keeping the bomber in the air  
as the woman in lace walks along the wings

I stumble in and out of their arms  
with a clumsy language

is the 21<sup>st</sup> century really almost over  
already?! *—it all happened so fast—* I feel, I am a bit nauseous

I think I have a headache  
my language keeps me from saying what I want

my little hamster heart is full of lies  
my arms are heavy; my hands need pedicures

I stumble in and out of your rabbit house on the thirteenth floor  
my mind is always full of questions

for each question I eat a slice of cheese  
I drink tea with milk and sugar, childlike

I am grateful for my ability to know you  
I pity the fact that I am unable to know you

it's like bird song  
we call it "song" but maybe they're just cussing

maybe their songs are just as alien to them as they are to us  
after all how could they decipher the meaning of that mechanical squeaking

after all they're all bird brains  
so when I say I will come and do not come

I feel guilty but maybe you are still happy  
then again I could break my neck, and never move again

or you could break your neck  
diving into the ocean floating back up like a dead sea lion

I say "we will meet again" but what if my lies are true  
what if the world really is a membrane rotating around a hexagon

and Hollywood actors really are biological automata that run on *Krispy Kream*  
what if my lies have been trade marked

if so, if my love is a patented mouse trap  
ready to set off the doomsday machine at the drop of hat

if the man with the razor really did  
"just want to help"

if the crow outside the window is a dead boyfriend  
which means that my dreams are correct

and I really am a small woman full of babies  
who drink too much and hate themselves afterwards

if I am a somnambulistic  
who feeds off the parts of animals

if I say I have a toothache and you say  
"potatoes, especially fried potatoes, are poison"

then I don't know how you could ever *forgive* me  
for how much *would* can a woodchuck chuck

if the strings on his lyre are nylons  
or cat guts

or what if he never wears underwear and sleeps naked  
in a den of lions with boyish blond manes

what if the lion is from Canada or Ukraine  
and works as a computer programmer

we are all members of the board  
and last night we voted 6-2 against the terrible woman poets



we kicked them out  
threw them overboard, jumped on top of their sand castle  
kicked over their snowman, threw their ice-cream cone to the sea lions,  
pulled their pig tails, made fun of their glasses, and last but not least  
we called them names

*neo-formalist whores! we shouted*  
*you two bit ninnies! the only thing uglier than your mother is you!*

by then I'd practically wet myself  
by then I'd called and said I wasn't coming  
I was waiting for a hangover and lost my metro pass  
I am sorry that I didn't show up and say good-bye  
I hope Africa treats you well  
I hope Africa gets better  
It's sick I hear  
I hear it is 1969  
*I hear I am in love*

## XII.

I am the age of rock.stars.  
in which the momentum of gradual failure builds into July  
breaks over August carrying bits of the summer across the Atlantic

it is this anticipation that keeps me going  
or is utterly paralyzing  
it drives me to and from you

"I am an American"  
it doesn't dance like it used to  
now I find I am dancing with the Catherine of my play

not very excited  
I try to be attentive to your presence in the bed  
but like the fat husband in a British film

I am preoccupied  
thinking more about her PhD  
wearing terribly thick glasses

with those girls dancing in the back  
black spandex, bright yellow dress, dark skin  
--ungulates, beasts

whose cells build many chambers  
despite the alcohol and smoke, it awaits  
the use of the reserves

it builds  
like a five year plan  
carefully orchestrated for an even number of days

“the economy has to be economical”  
i.e. efficiency is more important than reality  
and so, she is about me

waiting, in bed, the museum, at home with the kid  
she sits on a white bench smoking cheap white cigarettes  
she looks like a boy thinking about the older man she slept with two years ago

about her job, his job, their job together  
at the park  
disposing of the debris that came down the mountain

“I have no car,” she says  
“I have no job,” I replied  
the tiny flies in the bottle, window, are like the insects

who lose their wings upon contact  
and switch to a crawling regime  
“You know that girls don’t like me,” she said

I watch them dance  
guilty as a lecherous professor  
with fancy sunglasses –a birthday gift from his daughter

I didn’t use the ticket in my pants  
I always go to the movies slightly drunk  
and catch the eye of child too young or too old

you even wake up in the middle of it  
bewildered looking around as slowly as possible  
trying not to attract attention

“what am I doing here?”  
don’t be hysterical  
you laugh to yourself –be historical

life is ending

and your friends don't care  
"I am married," you say to the person who dances ridiculously

she is in her underwear standing on the table  
with men who are her mirror  
I throw plums at them, I am entitled to my fantasies

my fancies,  
a drink, and a drink  
on the brink a ta brink

and rape in your nape  
rises falls to the tape  
of your mother's disgrace

her breasts and the lace  
the problem is fine  
you repine repine

rewind rewind  
to your mother's disgrace  
his hands on her face

it seems to be everywhere  
maybe it's not  
the problem with me is that I see it everywhere

that this place is full of rape rape rape  
which is so uninteresting  
there must be some algorithm we can turn to

you are quiet, when I think  
punctuation makes a drink  
poets make a poem

critics say  
this is a poem  
it's been crafted and refracted

it's been chipped, packaged, and sold  
not a forgery —M.I.A.

in the day dream  
friendlies clap  
"where are we?" "check the device"

Utah! there are people still in jungles  
there are people with blue gods  
who have many headed children  
near the rusty green garage  
when they came the people praised them  
then they died of some disease  
then the gods took all their money  
then the preachers stole their cheese  
they were made to make a grave  
skinny smelly moldy slaves  
then they fought amongst each another  
then the gods wanted cell phones  
now they mine for little power  
which is charged with little gnomes

like the gnostic spirit drinking  
you don't give the man a tip  
you don't treat him to a brandy  
you don't tell him how to live

I have grown accustomed to it  
I've been lying all my life  
dancing dancing like an ass  
I have no desire for it  
but the trench was filled with pass  
so I walked out, it was dirty  
so I walked out, much too late  
now the singers sharpen their guitar strings  
now the baby holds a gun  
things were worse and now they're better  
skeletons...but people do  
and the music that is constant builds and builds my mind for you

talented was the pianist  
dancing with the handsome girls  
who are brown, and sweet, and smiling  
dancing round the good pianist  
just imagine him with them  
just imagine he's a marble

but this is not what I wanted  
and leaving it is what I wanted even less  
throwing plums and tomatoes at the musicians doesn't make it better  
depression is boring

happiness is boring  
beer is fattening  
cigarettes are bad for you  
success is tacky  
money is poshlost  
health is bourgeois  
films try too hard  
movies are the only things tackier than success  
girls want too much  
boys want girls for a limited time  
the internet is a commercial  
the peacocks at the aviary look like zombies  
masculinity is brutal  
femininity is cliché  
nature is everything and this doesn't mean anything

I am waiting for my function  
I deserve my just desserts  
I have walked through filthy deserts  
I have seen a man play games  
with his small, he is a doctor, with his daughter  
on the swing  
and he takes the luck right out of your cigarette  
the same music is played thousands of miles apart  
I am a fascist, thinking  
I want to eat the people's freedom party  
I am plump and well in the Holocaust Museum

Brecht is languid in the kitchen  
playing from a clock which is also an alarm  
I said it once  
and I'll say it again  
I am sick of dancing  
or am I dancing  
is the pianist dancing  
what if he wasn't handsome  
what if the girls with him were ugly?  
I am almost convinced he is very good  
someone has to make the music  
someone has to help them dance  
only me in my dark corner  
who ignores your fancy pants  
you want me  
and I want money  
but who does money want?

a conditional, no definitional  
secondary, primary  
colorless green  
music is not exactly like language  
a sound is a sound  
it doesn't "mean" anything  
the word "midnight" means midnight  
a diminished fourth  
is the sound of a blueprint cache  
of an eviscerated aristocrat  
the tribe has spoken  
the elder wants a casino

the best DJ just happens to be his brother  
in the morning they get together  
write a song for their mother  
it is a day for such acts  
to buy groceries and hats  
your family is like their family  
except that their family is better

without their music you wouldn't be dancing  
even if you aren't dancing  
it's not their fault

their songs are little simulacra of sound  
they build a little homunculus orchestra  
in the H14XyXX region of your brain  
the first cigarette is always the last  
he takes your luck  
you go home and look at the screen  
self diagnose yourself  
have her pees, warts, cancer, and diabetes  
you stop to investigate your hands  
they are fat and pink  
you wonder: How could anyone love these hands?  
the last cigarette is always the last  
your childhood you now remember as a promotional joke  
you remember the first time you put on a condom –it wasn't pretty  
the cutting edge of science is cutting edge  
it has been shown by science  
step back and relax

"the progress moves"  
says the VJ to the DJ

"our mood is a mode; we are the architects of emotional axioms"  
answers the DJ  
"what do you think all these were like?" asks the VJ  
"walking I suppose, from one place to another"  
"who of them do you think is the most Lucky?" asks the VJ  
"now you are getting metaphysical, luck is an abstraction"  
"I just wanted to know your reaction"  
"reaction to what?" asks the DJ  
"to the state of the mob we've created"  
"when we get paid, I'll buy you a drink  
for now lets just keep things running smoothly"  
"hmmmm"  
"now what?" asks the DJ  
"who pays for all this?" asks the VJ

There is thunder outside  
as they converse a girl and girl walk outside in raincoats  
they traverse across the wide cobble stone plaza

the rain is capricious  
it wants their attention  
it wants the rock.stars to write about her  
it wants lovers, like soldiers, like arboreal stories

they walk through the rain  
for whom they huddle tightly  
against the wall with the graffiti

he scribbles until the thing is entirely empty  
illegible inky marks that run like a herd of buffalo  
possessed by demons  
they flag one another  
and the wet flag freezes  
the lascivious army  
it turns the walls into bathrooms and paper  
a paper city of 90 degree angles  
with paper angels, paper food, paper weddings,  
she is lonely as a poet  
he is hungry as a lamb  
they are hopeful i.e. desperate as an Olympic gymnast  
too oceanic to care about war  
famine, disease, religion, and other figures  
of global economic collapse  
religion waits for global economic collapse  
the hydrangea is full of weasels

for they be fixing everyone's troubles but forgettin mine  
someone must've told them I was doing fine  
words fall  
and they huddle together  
the rain rains  
black branches are from Iceland  
that raise your eyes  
your smell is in my eyes  
my eyes lay next to your heart  
your heart is next to your heart  
around the facades constantly being restored  
museum over museum over museum

### XIII.

my small world is made up of many cities  
from a distance it looks like a large layered cake  
close up it's sounds like a discothèque

my friends don't call  
but when I do they always say they meant to  
what can I say the graveyard is full of lovely people

my father's are artists  
conmen if you will  
who were born at the right place with the right women

and you may not agree that people are goats not sheep  
many agree that the only thing that saves us  
from global economic collapse is lies

but I will still txt you "sweetie I had a wonderful time  
sorry I couldn't guess the name of that placebo guy"

you never listen  
and that is probably for the best

the poets pile up  
around the drug plane full of the dead  
and money

for poets are people too  
who spend the days just like you  
the only thing that separates them from you is that:



well, you know...  
the country is made of filth  
just the kind that breeds chrysanthemums

the ultra lounge for your philosophers  
is the ultra lounge for my small ladies  
the brown is brown and not even we can change that HA!

are you gonna take that  
I hope so  
I hope you understand that I am the better angel of your imagination

the insects play  
we cause a lot of trouble for the ecosystems around us  
the olympics were a good idea

of course when I say you I mean me  
and when I say me I mean kant or thomas more  
and when I use a proper noun it is just a place holder in the stochastic equation

some of them are old  
some of them are new  
the grey bird, yes, they are homogenous

my sons and daughters have died a long time  
I visit their grave with lots of flowers  
the blue buses full of old ladies greet me

all the fires come home  
and you are still out among the references to 20<sup>th</sup> century paintings  
our parents have fallen asleep, where are you

the apparition I am in love with  
as I have already said is brown  
as I have said my email has caught some bug

it's all very touching  
your boredom is as sexy as a modigliani  
my persistence is a version of contemporary marketing

the unlucky drunk cripples  
are the same  
they pile into the cathedral of public transit –the holiest of places

I don't know what to say

drunk at night I revert to my 19 year old self in love with a girl  
and south america remains remains a smirking colony

it is easy to be lonely  
just take a good look at the family pictures  
those black and white war photos full of hope

we are  
yes  
you and I –we are

it is not fast and hysterical anymore  
when we wait the anxiety is now familiar as the zoo  
and the zoo god the zoo in baghdad

stuck in the muck  
the wooden wheels keep rolling like bad movies everyone watches  
and that everyone, you gotta look out for their experiments

dying dying dying  
trying trying trying  
push push pushkin

I don't want you anymore  
it is too sad when you are with her  
love me

o the words  
they are translated into bad bards  
for retarded children

and I'm too tiny for an addiction this big  
it swells like an ocean  
whispering wrong french in my ear

when we play ping pong  
in grandpa's backyard  
overgrown with stinging nettle

it's not you scratching at the door  
it's not me scratching at the door  
but of us always comes crawling back

the fake plastic leaves at the new bank in a poor country  
wear the young journalist to tears

wouldn't you, a vegetable stand, I mean who fucking blows up a zucchini

did you completely forget your god and father  
you have a sister  
there are no brothers

the daughters in charge of the festival  
are also the ones to turn to  
when you know...the flood

### A Series of Mutations

I.

a verdict without cassation  
is a body you will not touch  
...echo resonance response  
all same  
the curtain hanging on the superstring  
slips off her body  
down the lake  
a lamprey  
lights up the room  
you say

the face-value of this milky water  
has been good enough for thousands of years

fire, offended, she cries  
he says she's capricious  
deserves what she has

clamp normative numbered real  
plywood phonemes  
sememe fiends  
friends with letters on their sleeves  
not the frozen scabs of country  
nor the bosoms of hot babes  
gender house engender gender  
gene's word for mathematical chaos

collateral subordination  
composite morphine genesis  
stochastic exogenesis

ATAGGATA mitosis  
stenograph of protein  
twisted insignificance  
upon builds transcription  
the mother tongue O yes we are her kin  
and it's not race but language which absolves  
the racist nationalist tribe  
which dumbs its cretin head into the mind  
alone but not  
if only ash  
recompense  
up-tempo  
plain forest marsh  
exogenous intone  
pray god for us  
my hypocrisy sounds like the harp of an elf girl  
the one who sings about the sprout and the bean

my neighbors snore like my gerbil  
my gerbil snores like my neighbors  
and the book of right on it was write on

this is an old song  
these are old blues as old as milk  
[pause] communication  
I am building my small book  
chemistry  
moths really

XIV.

when the cycle finally comes around  
I fall asleep behind the shower curtain  
everything in its right place on the radio

it is late in the afternoon  
the pacific coast  
the morning news plays and plays

the salty waves gleam in the sun  
of the sunglasses  
she's reading a small book in a big house

the guests stand with red plastic cups  
talking about a movie

she walks outside

alone

she

runs –to and from the waves

I watch her from my balcony  
the room is almost all empty  
a large fly buzzes

I feel as if everything were broken  
words are taciturn  
the silence is like a church bell at the end of August

I watch her  
running to and from the waves  
who does she belong to –where are her parents

the coast is entirely empty  
it is just her and the sea  
they balance the hot day

she carries something  
back and forth  
a messenger

I have no money  
no real job  
the love I once had has turned into a pensive meditation

my anxiety  
misplaced somewhere with my fear  
what is one to desire if he has no fear

if I were god what would I wish upon the earth  
what kind of justice is the just kind  
what can I say

the music becomes incomprehensible  
your judgments are the same  
if at least two people agree with you

you think I am selfish; I think I am shellfish  
you say creep; I say poet  
you might consider me discrete; I am alone in my dumb paradise

my permanent vacation

the money of course  
the money  
it must come someday, right

soon or later even africa will drive a prius  
the warts on my hand will cure cancer  
и на нашей улице будет праздник

in the mean time: we lick our wounds  
check everything for viruses  
some woman's breasts are ripped by a royals royce

surgery machines  
start their quiet electric lives  
violins and dentist drills greet the morning

death  
simple, invisible, intimate  
the dead sea waits

the day is hot  
she works  
look I know, but you have to understand

you have to work  
you have to wait  
she will call you

XV.

For Anderson, that means he can leave his Las Vegas condo before dawn to head to work,  
while his wife and newborn child sleep, content he will be on the ground in Nevada, not in  
the skies over Iraq.

There are too many horses you dead computer  
It's always been about truth and love

the product of rock's most famous collaboration  
and fashion "It" girl  
are working  
together  
But they're more than just songwriting partners

"I'm happy we're doing the Peter thing now  
He is a childhood for both  
involves much precocious playing

"we ended up at Mariah Carey's house,  
wearing matching outfits –pink fur coats, inside out

the super Tuscan materializes  
an intense, almost productive  
repartee

have you just been being bitter to me  
did you sleep last night  
I was wearing a 3.5 million –Van Cleef  
I really have to go

he dandily turned himself around  
in white throwback Gucci loafers  
and a cream suit and tie

he assesses her  
voluminous paisley caftan  
found at a thrift store in the Hamptons  
a pair of brown suede bootsies

almost like a pair  
that's a beautiful dress  
you look like a butterfly, a muse, a poet  
I  
I'll keep going on forever  
do you mind if I go out

it's always been about truth and love and logic

give it to us  
we're waiting

I am leaving this harbor  
it's inhabitants seem to keep forgetting  
it writes brokenly  
the connections don't hold  
but things don't fall apart  
they turn on each other

you look so together  
so not fucked up  
give me five!

I wasn't true  
you don't even know  
you don't know what was true at all

we are very close  
you and I

Panna cotta is served  
they ignore it  
entangled in an artistic embrace

и улица окончательно зарастает и превращается в лес, причем земля очень крутая, будто это холмы, и мы - отряд малолетних голодранцев, подстерегающих аборигенов в кустах и швыряющих с горы какие-то гранаты-не-гранаты, бомбы-не-бомбы. и сами мы в общем добровольцы, пушечное мясо-самоубийцы, потому что носимся с этими гранатами и бросаем почти под себя



## My Gramophone

In the novel I am writing there is a day on the lake  
But it is not about a lake or any particular day  
In it a mother works for a small real-estate company  
Hidden in a shady court in the city  
Her son lives with a woman or a man  
I have not decided  
The company is called *Giant*  
And the small woman  
Who works there considers most mediocre people her equals  
And her son, who is a political science student, considers most people his inferiors  
He is incredibly convincing  
And his mother has yet to date a man who was worthy of her  
The mother dreams for the son and the company which she started  
She leaves cans of food out for the cats and 40 oz. bottles  
For the bums who feed the pigeons  
For this they love her  
And protect her, mainly from themselves, when she takes that walk home late at night  
She is a mother to many  
Her clients sometimes think they are being cheated  
But she is always exceedingly generous

As she walks home in the novel I thought about my own walk this morning  
When I was thinking: the son found his mother to be rather uninteresting  
The son thought his mother was insecure  
He would sometimes lie and say his mother had a master's degree  
When she hadn't even finished her associates...  
As I thought and walked  
I came upon a red record on the sidewalk  
Scratched and slightly broken

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