

1-1-2008

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
December 2008**

UMI Number: 1463506

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Thesis Approval
The Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

August 15, 2008

The Thesis prepared by

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Entitled

"The Three Saras"

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

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ABSTRACT

The Three Saras

by

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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 9th

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 "l" 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 19th 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 iambs. as a result
iambics came to be defined less by the strong syllable than by the weak ones. it was not essential that all
even 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

besech 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.

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

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.

worked (mainly in insurance)
paying homage to those

the provincial gods
left
those who stayed

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 21st 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 20th 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

VITA

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