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Seers In Greensand

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SEERS IN GREENSAND

By

Michael Berger

Bachelor of Arts – Literature

University of California, Santa Cruz

2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts – Creative Writing

Department of English

College of Liberal Arts

The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

May 2016

Thesis Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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entitled

Seers in Greensand

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

Master of Fine Arts – Creative Writing
Department of English

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Abstract

My MFA degree in Creative Writing, with an emphasis on poetry has culminated in a poetry manuscript of 60 pages in length, written under the mentorship of Professors Claudia Keelan and Donald Revell. As well, I've had two other committee members, Professor Emily Setina and Professor Sheila Bock provide necessary counsel towards the completion of my thesis. The manuscript is directly inspired by my experiences studying English poetry and poetics in the program, with an emphasis on devotional and spiritual poetry. Many of the poems also reflect my deep study of more modern and contemporary poets of the "sacred": writers like Charles Olson and Hilda Doolittle. A third of my thesis manuscript came out of my experiences fulfilling the "study abroad" requirement for my MFA. To fulfill this component, I embarked on a couple "pilgrimage" walks through rural parts of the United Kingdom. These walks also resonated with some of the devotional poetry I have studied in this program. The longest, most engaging pilgrim walk I took was from Winchester to Canterbury in England, a distance of 125 miles that roughly followed in the footsteps of Chaucer's pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. Relatedly, my translation requirement was fulfilled through two semesters of studying Old English, which culminated in my translation of the poem *Beowulf*. Overall, my final poetry manuscript explores many of these themes of pilgrimage, spirituality, ecological mysticism and archaic English history as a way to revitalize a contemporary sense of the sacred, especially as it is connected to geography and landscapes.

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Portals

Flood Poppy

This road I reclaim in sleep,
Built from hammered clay
And the wrestling of hounds,
Both wine red in memory.
Out of a trough overrun by
Jasmine and ivy. My road spirals over the city
To see it anew, manmade sea, basin of
Granite cut with steel. Her curves grow
Lost in the derelict garden,
Glazed in spring rain.
Barbecues, tricycles, picture frames
Forgotten, then reborn. Caved-in garages
Embroidered in spider lace. Charcoal and security and
Burned Christmas foliage. Here the
City is a skeletal sway of fruit ships
Gone aground, shore-edges danced in by
Shepherds. A wind's cargo of
Cardamom and lemongrass
Caresses the body for ticks. Then to blow it
All at yard sales where nothing works.
I guess the past is over another road
But it doesn't burn anymore. Only a touch
From the summit brings sparks. As husks blown
In from an altered season, this thicket of gravel
Flowers in November. Robin's eyes of sardine tins
Launched over a gully's blossoming rim.
I step in an eyelet of bronze water about the stem of
The *oriole* flower that bloomed sideways where the live
Oak split. A road by any other name is how I dreamt it

Lobos

Distant
Green points
But no city
Spurs of light
The tide eaten tower
Clangs the shore
Mid-winter furlough
Downtown buried
We abandon the door
In a fabled East
Pink-green abalone
Trampled foam white
Carmelite boulders
Sapped in pine
Raw windows breath
Visitors besiege stone
The wild goat lexicon
Bleeds amethyst ink
Pumice cleans
Coral-cut thighs
Pursued the copper waves
A nobleman's story
Thru parlor flames
Kelp-heads confound
Sepia viewfinder
Salt cod spine quills
Achieve the dread
Woods to honor
In a mine shaft
The heart's folly

Rake sediment with bone
Ice paths leafed over
A clock ticks in the ink well
Hands cracking at night
These paths divulge
Hieroglyphic mist
Under the waves
Slough of
Brass and quartz
Instruments:
Farewells.

The Plaza

Before I was ever Europe or fallen in love,
I was a stowaway in a liquor cabinet
of liquor no one poured:
sherry and chartreuse and amaretto, leftovers from in-laws
of the room no one used, not even for
formal get-togethers.

Older brothers I'll never meet pulled
sundries from highest shelves:

White beans

Molasses

Rice flour

Cornichons.

Lit lamps in a parlor
anticipating Spanish conversation where
I detail my struggles for solvency,
my embellishments to stationary
when I know you are
reading them

on a violet mesa
under more violet skies
riven as these parlor curtains
over your apprenticeship:

our future is this homeless land (you wrote)

seeded by moths and bats

where trees are cactus and can't be climbed

without gloves on—

But on crystalline days we foraged greens
made an atlas of edibles
for the end times
cutting holes in fences

to reach the warmer parts.

An island gets
flatter when the trees are cut down so

We
took field trips to open houses
with no intention of buying, or borrowing,
just drowsing thru
foyers, dens and pantries
with voyeur's grin, sampling gleam of mirrors
what plants are kept on which ledges,
if a fridge is steel or ivory, how it
unsucks when it
opens.

This travel
that comes to mind is from room to room
in a suddenly estranged home,
what it means to reassemble
yourself from storage
stare intently at the unremembered
spread like cards on opaque tabletops,
urns cooling on Thursday's stoops,
garden huts of rakes
cock-eyed and
mud-caked.

Portals

Shake the word open
That sound harbors
Breath says unveil
How harbor blossoms

Juniper seeds scar
Ground's autumn runes
Overgrown mind
Lost in birth crevasse

Place nectarine in
Radius we touch
Fleeing center kiss
Axial salt flurries

Ships winch inward
Paint blue doors
On corroded walls
Children hammer keys

Spit woven metal
No steel figments
Future stale
Approximation

Of going anywhere
Now is primeval
Satellites tack the blood
Final portal darkest
Seen from shore
Pull leavings of search fires

At roots of legs and doors
Plant this entrance in water

Olives

My stucco home is not like the others, for its front hedges and
Bushes are hollowed into caves I hide in, counting cars.
When I stare at the map in the kitchen by the fig-tree window,
I make hidden spaces appear. Swirling blue depths hide live green
Islands I can find. Emptiness begets form, as all trees are
Observatories if you climb them. If I have a sister, she is the
Cloaked woman of that far-flung neighborhood who comes August
Nights to climb our olive tree, its silver bark muscled as thighs,
To poach unripe olives. She appears after dinner when we sit
Silently in adjoining rooms. Is she the mystery then, or are we mute
For other reasons? When I climb it, I see rain forests from magazines:
Medicine, fluorescent flowers, cataracts. Sprawled on pillows as
Ravens shake fig-heavy branches I name the Portuguese explorers
And watch her moving fast down dark blocks towards the others.

Messengers

Rustling gift I sit in
To become warm:
From kitchen's window
My mind's table
I pour myself out
Thinking makes me
Strangely thoughtless
Makes me eat fast as if
Thoughts can become
Over-worked or over-burned.
I shouldn't think when eating.
I open the window to
Let light wring me.
Mailman double parks
I eat salad and cold coffee
Watch him unload letters, parcels
For the strangers I live with
Eating by the glass I think
His hands are benefactors
Excited as a kid seeing him
Quiet lake of that truck
Plashing the pulled linen sky
Aromatic green envelopes
Deflect waves to palms
Buggy waters in a mailbox
My window reaches brackish
Green, I feel envelopes
Sliced open so thoughts
Move other directions.

Storm Gossip

The sun looks outer worldly he misheard in
the minestrone aisle caked in dust
that soup made from accident, he thought
sand slicked curves of cove goers
waterproof radios discounted
like pineapples, all the telephones suggest bananas.

The numbers dial him.

She answers in the baroque part of town
crenellated roofs of
clamshell pools under
cover of green bells
she slinks down scented halls
as if nothing had gone off
in the *outside world* vagueness engulfs her
her memory overheats into a wolf

his fingers consider large green bunches how heat will reduce them
“*my inside world*” feels tight and small (complex) like
this cabbage sustained Charlemagne’s soldiers for months

and she says:

“and the lightning was topaz! how we got caught under the clocktower the restaurant went berserk
the actors attacked the casks you tripped into the last working shepherd in Virginia everybody poked
holes in

their luggage for one more round—”

an arsenal is always empty in a storm:

sprigs of cornsilk at Curtis and Lorimer

the alley’s mauve shade made of silken moss,

stampeding elk motel vending machine handball courts

flooded church bobbing with lemons

here is where this moment fills he starts telling *starving*

of the false well and the black hen

or whoever it was she overheard

Boulder City: A Journey

We fall for the doldrums as I fell for you. I plot mayorship on a sinking
Veranda, breathe India tea fumes behind plum partitions. Fresh goat milk slakes our
Thirsts on days we both dress as tomboys. A pullman drowsing on stacked planks, unlit
Pipe in his teeth, holds postcards, half of them written to someone. The recipients are
Bark, smoke, arrows; what has designed the park without anyone knowing. How would
They know, being so preoccupied with soaps and lentils? The empty road is a shore,
Banked by muralled shops and their wilderness of teacups. No water broods here for it is Spent in
leaping shade.

When it rains in late summer, everyone turns the pages of a leftover magazine, checks into a Smaller
motel. The chairs ache with vapor. Coffee burns if you add honey. Rocks are
Buried under the rubbed-out plaques of the library floor. I look in every shop for the Curved,
Edwardian handle I first saw in your pantry towns ago. We make our minds into
A mixed quarry. The days blind like mountain lakes. If I find the handle, I may find you Dimmed by
the wings of town square.

The Wire God

I can't help but build you into a sky
No less real for its absence of fires.
Not pictures, only wet thrown language
A mother must sing, only to forgive.
Walk the charred remnants, kicked-up
Diagrams from our tattered fish fires.
Suspect anything but false remembering:
Visions crouched in alien red mesas,
Perimeter's white towers beg divinity,
Chromium spheres obstruct the transmitter
On last night when both of us bled together
In a landslide, we made *puttanesca* by gaslight
To toast the voyage's dreamy forgetfulness
Sketched fast in overlapping stairwells
Bow-tied noodle whipped sardine scales
How close our houses rub in blue air.

Visionary Company

A girl awakens the room's atoms, her eyes burning. A father awakes to reptile visions on the Bedroom wall. So he loads the car with mad provisions. The omen expands into a satellite That hounds us. Then, the lake of our home follows. Her story bleeds into unnamed Territories where kids play in the dunes to be rechristened.

Now in Bolinas the arrows are snapped gobs of agate. Rub them brighter between burnt Legs. Roadside kale and spinach bunches have no real metric. Leave spoiled coins. Soon the Seal-heads will blaze in the kelp. An alliance is a minute's darkness, the resurrection of the Water-House.

Nothing drops in the dust without becoming passenger.

These punch bowls unwashed since Easter overflow with marbles. They are albatross eyes From the window story she weaves. Now her carnation skirts flicker on the stairs that Descend fitfully into the waves. This Picture made of foam and blood is not for eyes alone.

My heart spins east, more vertigo than destination. This summons smells of wild juniper and Frostbit mahogany. Just over the glen, where there is another glen that keeps no shape.

The Gulch

I lost a toy bike in a sea cleft I

Never saw. Sudden fire edged

Hole detached star swims midday.

Unreal even while happening as crabgrass happens to

Dance without moving.

This *love-hole* changes, as

A field of violets turns lime green in light. Sun turns

Things as mud curdles under a train. What is the source

Of distinction but

True blindness? All a world becomes

Holes for the bleeding of color. I can't speak

If I don't drop my definitions. Do you want me

To speak? I ask this (I assume)

Only of salt and its undulant weave. A child, lost to

Light,

I lost this:

Round creature in a crevice and a scream never

Enough red

Glider

That hang-glider is not a bird, he said

but it is for that split second of
paradise giant as a floating pine splitting fog

a struggle in space and then
befallen by peace web of bones spread
shudder of opal air gusts irregular

jingling keys in elastic sea-shadow:
condor or spoon or plane confuses them
cello strings beyond bluff thru those Roman doors

they know that luminous motion!
ocean-drops on raised veins matted fur
darkening wind steers ancient muscle

Laughing, they haul this legend with all its bright holes
like netting across ever more vacant beaches,
clams and keys and cufflinks and thimbles
fatten their keep. He knows him for a miniaturist,

better for smuggling: falcons, gristle, hubcaps,
algae, coins and flies, many red-winged.

Heaped and vagrant shore where city light dies,
This difficult creature endures.

Saint Lucy's Night

Her feast day falls when sentries play dead
What enters like wind scours the plaza.
Strip the home of shelter and run:
All is borne upon you even walls.
Watch Her loitering holy and apart
Swedish saint given Mexican life
In junkyard & junebug pastels.
These are her sacral actions.
Shapes fit what you think are shapeless hands.
Beachhead of molten tides,
Past all churches and museums,
Embossed with crashed insects,
Find the initiatrix: *theme of the night visitor*
(Of that smuggled Arabic literature)
Shoring of blue lights against a false order
How we decorate our rock gardens in winter
Is our garland of signals for Her.
This birth lake percolates at dusk:
Haloing scum dashed by ritual quartz.
Freed by the flicker of her negligence:
The lamp at the end of the chain.
Avail the others as their walks come:
Screen doors slashed with stars,
Water fronds and moon wrack:
Keep faith in the blind to feed the refuse
Of day and keep the dark awake.

Hesitation Light

Grasses pry open the road. Let them
Sing without being heard. Our business empties into the
Empty sea and the greener path unravells.
The rain gutter is
tennis ball green and I follow it into brown
hills moving yellower past
repeating apartments gone grey.

Phosphorus bulbs of the closed grocery store's,
pulsing fruit hung, moon waxing puddle.
Stop to breathe the splintered dark.
To breathe under struggling lights, for

What I heard once about the gods.
They sleep under
unimportant wood, and prefer to flicker there.
Linen shipments stalled at a gas station, I want to stay,
But I cannot. The guard is watching, for I begin

Watching too:
But the gods I watch don't have eyes. Rehearsal of
Green silences wormed in stones: Let me idle.
If I stop here, there is another delay
Of pushing further. Another light moves, unspoken.

I want to alight on myself, as a
bird of prey at peace:
The condor that eats roses in the unknown temple

The Wind

Emerald valley of air slips
Into blue shadow, so I smell the
Fires quenched in the bronze cliffs.
Towers ride the clouds sideways,
Thin fingers of rock, roaring.
Springtime says I am burst
Open in places I cannot claim. So I won't
Be close to things without the wind.
I can't feel air's edges without also
Tasting river rapids. That green hole leaks
Darker light. I run east until
The ground splits like music. Root horns
Rip out of parchment earth and
Whisper as the shaken flame.
This green wind falls into the
Mouths of things to shake
Their hearts open.

The Wake

Bed filled with maps, bath with shoes:

They are silver or

Pink to me, shapeless,

Too warm. Days duller than normal: so

I become happier.

Something is now amiss in my life. All I smell

Is a pond moving below me. The sky too

Can live there, so I must live here. Where?

I thank the dead

For the wine that still breathes

In the unused parlor. It is easy

To find new rooms in mourning, and far

Easier to fill them.

Family comes, only to fly. But a dissection table

Holds many heirlooms, never mine or theirs. They

Are the river's. So her foam replenishes

These tables. I hold silver to my belly and see my wife's

Eyes in the grooves,

Of warmer green than I can remember. What heat is

This, in such widening circles?

For me, a child, the table is broken back

Into an oak tree, the unity

Of flight and fire restored. The sun is a thirsty hawk, of course,

Staying magically still, grasses

Below her the changing threads in

A windy Easter dress.

Awake to the noise of talons in the east. She tends towards

Yellow: the kitchen right before noon. Swish of canyon air:

No prize but falling

Crimson on the sidewalk, in a bathroom, on my chest

As it hunts the kisses of its hunter. I wake again, in a room

Without walls, only this air

Aquatic Hour

Night radio, green dials. Half-animal
Eyes. My bed flows, a thatched
Vigil, as silver hills start to shake
On the borderless blue window
That keeps the figs in flight.

This is madrigal summer, or marigold,
Caught on the roaring bougainvillea,
Stuffed in an amber cognac bottle,
Circled by hot riled dragonflies.

My heart says: the coyotes descend,
Smiles out! Or low purple clouds drift in
From farthest Maldives. All is imported this
Night. The summer is in eclipse
When music moves as smoke off
The tiles. The howls and the vapors

Are mixed up in the moon, and her long
Valley: news when you are falling
Asleep but cannot complete the trip,
Only see stars shave off into song.

So starlight flays the cotton and
Now the green voice summons:
Jellyfish, Meatplow, Houdini, Vespers:
Sorcerers of strings, riddles and chords.
All I thought I knew, I will hear again, renamed dark.

The Wind Regained

Whistling whips of silver
Crack off the red sedans,
My ears suddenly slack.
My land not mine, a wild cemetery
Eaten quick by cypress, stabbed by steel.
I walk too slow my blood
Feels jeweled, a rosary of hot
Indigo in my ears, these
Arms. It's all the red
Salt sea, in a transparent season.
Wind turns into the
Love for the gaps it sows. Holes in my
Story are glowing today. I'm going
Glad as the shaken
Elms. Air becomes my new
Arm to scratch, saffron as pollen.
The horizon rushes as foam against my
Oversized heart. There are no guardians in spring,
Only an outlandishness of space, nameless.
My heart knows its oldest teeth are out.
In that blue spit, I feel
Wolfish incisors twist, the speeches they force from
Trash and gristle. A hearse blazing
In lunch light, I imagine
A swimming pool of air in
The shape of a bronze bell,
Solid enough for all my flesh to strike.

Hecate of Old Los Angeles I

Out Lady of the chasm,
 we are your children bound
To the highway of your guts that
 Unravels out of Los Angeles
Into another darker
 Los Angeles or
Alamos or Feliz, or just, as we remember: Pangea,
 A garden built of the ruins of a
Children's mortuary. Celebrate, you scream.

Our aches and complaints are as
 dollar store mascara
To the meadows you cut
 in your skin, the folds
You've knitted into restroom visions.
 A sky isn't a body with blood
stained breasts, trampled groins, glyphic sores.
 The earth isn't you, or us
or bounded.
 And the world isn't a world, as simple as it is to
throw names at it.
 There flow trackless lights to haunt
thru blood that may be oil, in this deceiving light.
 A distant, hot ring of
obsidian, not exactly welcoming, yet all we can now imagine.

Television is no more a bonfire, even in a
 Unwelcome and suspicious sexual hotel.
Your arms snake us out of dying Colorado
 In cooked granite black-haired with mesquite.

Your emptiness gains ground on us,
 But in lilies and bees among the artillery and
The drained pools of the dream-killer mansions.

Weeping feeds the cactus until it is drunk,
 Ask gas and needles to pad our fall, our
Flowering into your wound. If light repeats, we must, again,
 Become beautiful. I cry into the road fire with
The unnumbered lips, for or a daughter and a son eaten open,
 For a beloved who blooms into mere atoms,
That atomic creature and for those very poppies you harbor.

Simple passenger I turn into this dry ochre noon
 Arms and face emulsify in mineral and vinegar lights
My lovers in another void all my books and charts thrown away
 Any knowledge I had as strayed as rainwater
And your radium blue milks the only horizon.

Wave Organ

Down a jetty of unused graves
In a city of unexplained fires
Caught inside ocean windows
On a night we are mute lovebirds
Because of how saltwater turns
Into a drowned church organ.
Green lights where no hill trembles and the wolf leers
In night-woven oaks, how essential it becomes
To watch purple-veined foliage shake with
Fingers too numerous. Houses here are eaten
With green speed of pier posts. The hawthorns swirl
Over the archways and the exits. Their heart-shaped bells hammer
Out sea hymns. We ask mewling waters in the night to
Bed us: the mineral kiss that begs clarity short of oblivion: not that
Words are measurable when they mean such things, or such
Non-things. I ask your wet and flickering hands
To feed us nectarines in well-bottom pitch, where
We do not tell fruit from flesh. Listen to the albatross
Sobs of the wave organ! Drink deep red
Knotted kelp swarms grooved for bumbling hearts.
Funerary quartz assembles a shore carnival.
Even our woe, when it washes over us, becomes
As shell mounds, as November's beaches musical

Interesting Luck

Ice skating noir: six films featuring the miraculous “Belita”:

in one, she lands a dazzling triple axel thru a house-sized skull,
an omen for some horrific, off-ice violation, and
yet I might not be remembering right at all.
I will never forget that tiki-horror skull in mid-grimace, her indestructible
legs kicking thru it, music gone sinister, ice-dust in doctored lashes:

Erotic in that cruel and innocent way, how movies
were then, whereas the actual crime, even never shown,
is always sexier. Her buttoned-tight enemies watch
Belita conjure up an unseen crime in her sword-heeled shoes.
They try to decode her lunges, strides, feints, loops, & swirls; above all, that skull-piecing climax
which should leave no room for doubt. But it does.
And it’s already too late: if she stops carving ice, other blades will drop.

We also watch, from the crimson-velvet movie balcony, an empty February in the
Castro. We feel in our thighs how shattered we’ve grown, so we
envy the robust fatalism of Belita and her enemies,
that edge-of-the-cliff lust for moonlit drags, predatory kisses. They eat offal wrapped in
newspaper, then run off into any advancing shadows, while the
people we live with plot against us, so our
balcony heart knows all
societies advance underwater.

After the movie, up a bald hill to the bar, I find twenty-five dollars in a mangled shrub under
a creaking orange light. *Such interesting luck*, she said. You always had it. I see the roguish tilt of
her hat under the big moon, lard-yellow over black bay water. It’s how hats, like her smart
brown bowler, are always described in crime novels. But *interesting* means exactly nothing to me.

I dream, those winter nights, of crime that doesn't hurt anybody, only changes them: she is such a criminal as that, as I am to her. Feels criminal to always pick free cash off the ground to buy rum punch with. *Interesting*, she says. Referring to my luck, the hours that have nursed me along. And these arid silver hills with their stripped metal fringes, I never sick of walking, even when she's gone.

You met me, didn't you? We made this, didn't we? The moon is under us

Descent

Spoons jammed in disposal, underworld
Splash of toad ponds
Shimmering under my
Kitchen floor. I never make a home
That is not vibrating or flowing. You need
Scars from a forest to
Hear another body rustle. All I hear is invisible
Fire. Pile of library shadows
Flutter as if flames spit near. This broken sleep
Warns of earth igniting my garage,
Cutting my green glass into mist,
Shaking my ceiling into an infant galaxy.
Where I would prefer
Boundaries of linen or my shopping mall sex
Dreams, now I want this creek bed
To overflow with light. Once
I walked a dusty red-lipped basin hearing the
Hiding waters
Watch me. Then I ran where the dream
Again broke the surface.

Di Chirico's Plaza

Soaked blouses, suede slacks: lemon water off a fire escape,
Thermal towers of laundrettes, cut by steam trains,
City of sinking hotels, darkened orchestra pits, which
Was my marble block. We flowed fast, the buildings bled.
Rainy gates of your mouth, mid-stern at midday,
You crouched as a *hydrant*, flower-beast, in a brass-
Silenced horizon. Bobbing hips smear night's ledger,
Two cracked jade porticos, stalled in ruddy shadow.
Night's Commander strips the heretics of shade
So only saffron air remains. *Recess*, a glorious decree:
Holes in time's-table. Windows bright across disinterred
Squares flare with midnight treble of fish-netted hips.
Autumn strews the plaza with trampled pocket watches,
Antennae and umbrellas repel a ruby-flushed moon.

False Kisses

In hell-red lipstick, as advertised, matched by torrential blue jeans, boots of volcanic black, the custodian kissed us in a copse of sycamore. Her remembered lips mocked, saliva hard on mangled bark like snail juice. Rush hour shook the grass skeleton of the afternoon as we made comic sprints to the bathrooms turned torture stalls, sounding like tortoise shells. I grew alone with pebbles and bug jars as kids played rhyme toss and sand tag. Ask me of home I said perfumed trenches in falcon-brown Ohio, where the whine of rockers invited the nightly barrage of glowworms on the Roman pillars of the patio. I buried soldiers by the tulip bed, gave my worry-stone lavender rubs as told, and fortified my arms with sandbags, dubious presents for my parents. A chalk drawing of a musty orange urinal on the sidewalk of our canopied neighborhood, where aspens crossed in the middle, the sun a snub-nosed pencil point. Pendulous burn of a swing-set was gearshift leather in adult hands. Bronzing and elder city of popsicle hunters, morning shutters opening like librarian's eyelids, how these dreams reconstituted as an orange left out after a refrigerator fire.

Hecate of Old Los Angeles II

Our lady of torch whips,
Let the road's vines choke us but not
Till darkness yet.
Lure us into sacred sewers where
Old hearts are cooked anew,
Just until they smolder.
You spit out sky in pink and white thistles
We cut our ankles or eyes on as wild rabbits.
Earth favors your beacons at all hours, in varying
Visibility. "The heart" is the cheapjack metaphor,
Yet not the fires that contain it.
At night, headlight canary companions,
A heart can move into infrared.
Does that change our names, our natures?
We are the children of an incinerated mother,
For any temple must get torched
For her trash to awaken again. The temple outside, yours,
Endures inviolate wolf-blue, the fur that outwits the frost.
No monster are you but as close to the monster
As we can plunge. We are praying in hot noise
With the gnats and smoking too, those blue-boxed Gitanes we got in Peru,
Reminds us of a perfume no flame has ever worn,
When we lost our credit card in the duty free store, and we
Are spiraling fast and unblessed on a black-flaming road.
We had gone there, gone everywhere, gone finally into your zero,
To hunt down that missing friend, this eternal errand,
Dropping us in a surprise night forest, along train tracks that
Careen unrusted from the creek.
(Pretend we are fishing for jewels
In Switzerland and not dying of calmness in the south.)

When mistakes tracked us with the
Fury of Arctic wildflowers, as every friend gets lost, and
Every feast spills off the rooftop of an abandoned
Cathedral. Ancient Los Angeles bleeds from grape-colored
Hearts, the colors of grape juice, tormented by azalea thorns,
In-thrusting medieval swords, skewered covenants.
To fall for a saint is to
Ask your body to change:
The first night I felt the cracks in the
Ceiling flare cobalt, I knew Mary had many names besides “mother,”
That darkness had many hues besides zero.

Peradam: The Mountain Cycle

Heirlooms (*After Daumal*)

Remember

There is a well in a forest that will find you
 A cellar where the irons are heated
There is a forking at the verge of two cities
 A murmuring in the forest that is deafening

There is an underlying tide
 Where castle grows replaced by castle.
Things cleave away in all things,
 Water is never content to rise.

Toss these flecks of reason
 to dance about them.
Thru us Noise moves, taut as bowstrings,
 Aimed at me in all directions
I must never arrive.

Am I to be stretched between song and flung?
Breath, an invisible earth I am buoyed along.
 Remember this song even in duress,
To live as if living is something *sung*.

I turn into a thing on an edge, hymning:
What keeps me from caving in.
 Sound is this distance surpassed,
Divine alembic of horizons and paths.
Hammers and strings are never missing
 Earthly floors are rigged with them

Wolves are never muzzled, knives never dulled

For the sake of plain song.

What is a voice but a thing changing the

Shape of my mouth. Nothing is a mute agent

When I open myself.

Sails

Begin going naked and very red:

satchel, urine, lobe,

the blue notations,

distance collapses names into wings, to
screech
mists move redder and
my mind today sleeps in unfinished stone
hangs on the temptations of
the waves I prefer to drown
in muffled words.

Love throttles the tissues stretches the canvas,
gilds the edges in abalone glitter,
diminishes, returns.

We are as seedlings and drenched wood
is reward for a snapped finger.

What if an open kiss outlives
fresh stone? I want to know how ancient airs corral me,
bones sunk in mirage. I mingle ink and morning sawdust only a
dream in dusky curves becomes an actual shore
All raw fabric at my call,
no desire to churn the record or state the names.
Undone stones, their unfinished waters set me.
I bake the bread in the run off and
garble about the posts:

Immeasurable grain

cannot be seen this close and can be held

The Melons

At the goat level, we find the coal-black rose: a star-shaped gash in a white wall. Numbers stop working, at least in sequence. Their failed union becomes ultraviolet petals above the fir line, days past you last feel real hunger. Never are colors as estranged as these, a chameleon liquid that quit heaven to infuse the flowers of this turquoise floor. Savor the frozen melons, as segments of the next animal you must befriend. It was the same in Trieste when I skirted her shore one night: a red and undulant tableau of Byzantine domes above the water where no Trieste stood. How is it that those currents still shoot back the taste of the invisible? A crevasse always feels green, even with ice bronzed by dung and blood. Any thrown rope bridge is baby's breath, as flushed as lilacs in a hailstorm. You will gather faith in what remains of the rays. Change your colors to change levels. From the shoulder of the goat glad sheep run, and their lambs can only birth eagles, their eyeballs as crystalline as the sea without salt. Our cold fruit shoots fire into our muscles, as scree blossoms pink under boot. You can go no further than shipwrecks, each on each, enshrined in each other's ice, the yellow music of the ascent.

Hawthorne

Pungent red stalks, then loss of hats, seaward.
Hollow clang of onyx leaves, as the chapel
Grows out through its acacia bells.
Expect purple buds to
Burst, our sexes to reverberate, where a trolley
Disintegrates into the furs. Dunes rise with
Tossed greens on top.
We drift with the ashen cliffs, as
They break agate mirrors over her swimmers.
Wear crushed
Pulp for strength, to dive wisely.
Folk-lore is fruit-lore: the
Chapel grows beautifully stained! Mauve amulet
On your redder, threadbare swimsuit: so your
Heart can sing contralto to the tides. Put the blessed
Petals under your pillow to induce
Mountain dreams. No possible vertigo
After those scalding shores. Earth
Always interferes if you stop
Thought in its tracks.
Shrubbery is
The maze we say surprising things in. She lies
Hard against the foam, forcing a stand-off between
Hearts, the sea's as large as the wind's,
And as nameless.

Rene, in the Grass

Thru the canal in the meadow
I hear your boots explore statues.
You came with last year's cactus, caught
Naked one July midnight,
Bloody and laughing. I used garden hose
To tug you into softer poppies.

We fed you figs from the radiant arches
Over the eastern bedrooms. I remember
Crows when I remember your sweat, as hot
Francis stands a car's blue, his staff wind-broken.

Francis came with the yard, became her exit eyes, though
Blind as garden saints become. I took you in the
Lake after to feel what my fox feels. Know pain is only a second
Moon. Another fire from before us stains her.

So my letters are saffron, for they are very old now,
Crisply turning in an ongoing room, always aimed at you,
The rose prints you left in the grass.

Fuschia the pilot light leads you to kitchen water.
Cataclysm is crystal mounted in some bad dream. Don't mourn
If the fox drowns or the olive wand snaps. You and I Rene
Shall outbleed the cactus, and
Outlaugh Francis. The meadow's yellows
Hold untold paths.

Cruciform (Lesser Alps)

On the three a.m. bus from the salt flats:
Luminous wounds layered on the sky
Let the cries become their maps.

Lunched by the adobe bathroom on
Egg-stuffed potatoes with salty lemonade.
I rarely eat as such an animal as sturdy women

Compose dripping mud walls, happy babies in puddles,
Topaz water drops on their brows. What I am seeing, or think,
Is my own relief commingling. Wherever it goes, I can follow.

Machetes skitter the bus floor, their masters sleeping.
My companion shakes out pills to stay calm: Valium and Percaset.
Passengers scream when our wheels reversed on an edge:

The edge always interferes, we think, but cannot say how or why.
I commit to my fear and its passion for nothing. I am married
To green air that precedes me. Useless anyway, but for my plunge.
How can I help a mountain's shoulders? No pills, no leverage.

I smile when I watch the road's glassy rim glow:
That crystal-colored beyond: a vastly untalkative chasm.
Busses gone directly off the cliffs we read in
All the papers, too much to read in them, too many edges.
I open my own book of errors as the wheels correct, and some
Byway of gravel resumes. Everyone laughs then, commingling, fleeting:
Euphoria of real air we can still speak to.

Peradam

Gather blanched snow fruit jeweled pulp
Amethyst protuberances burst hill's ribs
The summit buried in leaden water
You only hound its musk in sleep
Dreamt this mountain that never was
Awoke with Tibetan froth on my tongue
No way to stamp its mist from memory
We move among obscurity streaming off a peak
We all dreamt the heavenly obstruction
Of steep tawny grassed slopes
Tree colored tents medicinal oratory
Marketplace in the ambrosial hinterlands
And those clear blinding stones
A good place to hide is this difficult mountain
More than difficult but drowned

Other Wolf

Anniversary of my sleepless self

in the meadow of sick moon.

A face happens inside me, then

escapes with dew on a moth wing. I remember that oceanic taste:

A sacred joke

takes root in no holy city.

Myself in an ogre's dream bled by olive spear-thrusts

spilled black wine I come adrift in shards.

No word reveals our

unseen wings my letters my unregenerate pollen.

Still and tomorrow *the forest is incessant*

My accomplice breaks a

crescent thru darkening oaks a weather balloon tied to her wrist.

A place by the name of *Adamant*, she says, exists.

No, she amends, there is a no-place called *Structure*.

But there are rumors, waving their hairs,

underwater: in our burnt arms

yesterdays' mud still fresh from the wreck.

Island Lore I

Sophia flew away last night
Under a cloak of ashes. The city
Had blown up her final saint.
You were in my arms,
Weaving myrtle. I counted pink

Windows on the sky, almost
Notebooks tilted on end.
My mud was fresh from oarsmen,
And my lost house was where I left it:
At some foamy inlet of a dream

Interrupted or invaded but then
Blue at the edges to be rewritten.
This temple will burn down,
Wherever cotton we wake in, so
I go to a liquor store to buy a gun.

My name is not written in the stars.
But what is known is that one
Will survive the fire, she always does.
Behind history, she revives
Inside some rabid child. Not a doll's

Wedding to rig high. Not a rafter hung in
Sulfurous yellow: There grows a border of
Over-told wickedness where grows the
Uprooted attic level with the looted cellar.
From the shards of the burned tabernacle,

A muddy report of rifle shots, and
An unfed child twirls her blue robes.
The Mother is reconciled with her wood.
The daughter of fire remains to destroy the story

Rene, in the Alps

He answers the knock

even though he is working.

Everyone recalls his dignity, that remorseless goodness,

When the blessed Alpine ground is prepared

Draughts shake the photos of the dancers

in Siberian farmyards. Mesmerized

by the scriptures at their feet and all metal fallen.

Snowed luggage in moose down.

Notations from the East. Frozen rivers in Latvia.

They ate mussels on the shore after the opium wore off.

His night is forking paths from lexicons to embers.

His lungs can't match the nitrogen of conifers.

How the needled peaks recede from his quill.

The hut would be meager without Vera who is

Studying harmonic spheres in the straw bed.

The leaden door opens into pulsing whiteness.

Oxidized draughts the Latvian rivers our Russian farms.

The station was chaos, his friend says.

You look unwell. Unwell, he said, but working!

They embrace in fur and steep the Peking tea,

Vera appears as a peasant framed in umber glare.

They recite difficult syllables from the Rig Veda.

Two day pass and, without returning to the work,

Without knowing he will not go back

To the mountain, his lungs collapse, and we remain unfrozen.

Leonora

So little of sand stays diamond, straining gold from nickel. Such shifting sands assume
Their own alien color. The sky's pinks sour to purple. Day wilts in the west, yet that feels
East, an exile's word as crimson as the shawl tossed heraldic on the sage bush. Scarves with Blouses,
disused, discolored, dipped in vats of healing water. Slop pails: scorpion houses. Ruby-eyed birds
joke on the adobe wall. My razor land opens and howls. Steel Clouds on forests veil telltale arch of
entrances.

To go there from here: a question of extending a dream. Into what remedy ?
More dreams for certain, so my eyes are pried open by the salt glare. Fulfillment and with no safety.
Toes wed their pregnant rocks. Desert harbor of interred flags, ripe in iron rich water that tastes, as
one's blood, of another mountain. But no, the untested dream: feel the silk's blue current initialing
the pores, palms. It's a question of blithe spider legs, a horror of un-relatable, unfinished units. They
use my Clay room for a loom, kiss a keyhole path inside, parading their dead. My legs love them,
Especially at my burnt and bitten ankles. My porthole warms them, as it does those empty Mesa
wells. They say there is no mountain here or there: only legs weaving into sun, roots And, finally,
mud. And how that blooms into the way up.

Lionessa

the tawny storm of your mouth flung you
where the borders bleed poisoned water.
So the healing is
violent, as magic is, when the squares
get circled by the sun.
The other country is the
flowering of your yellow symbols, writ
backwards, into fertilizer, into erasures, into pods burst
auroral afternoons, of a dye that flutters,
fast, between rose stems,
blurred memory of autumn, thorns blackened
by the feast, a new needle
to carve hymns with.
An Arkansas black apple tumbles out of
love-twisted sheets, kicking the spider from its idyll.
A common name for
Name is hole, a womb where persona burns up.
The uncommon
Name for escape is *spider*.
Or sand is better, preface to any
Movement.
Kid's telescope, watch Saturn's earth convulse.
Vehicles never could carry the weight
Of magnificent sand my world bleeds.
The ingredients of creatures, Leonora,
Mauve diadem of alternating currents.
"Nobody dares ask me if my myths are lies,
As nobody begs sand to smother a rose."

Maurice, in the Country

It happens in the darkness of the country when I try to
finish what drain my inkwell. This work is penitence
for all the wood that breaks away from me. I smell through
cedars how the wars I've outlast have fled into an Arcadian
north, butting into a mountain that is never mastered.

The weapon on me, in you: the vestigial bolt, welder of the
present. This plaza, stump haloed, flowers. I try to
forgive how perpendicular we go. Nothing swerves, or
atomizes. Nothing errs as true speech, when it flees.

No time but a demolished, fertilized now. Projectile makes land.
A lightning hacked river pushes midday haze, all words in.

My killers are *strangers* as dim to me, as narrow as
birches on the Rhine's ghostly banks. Rifles awkward as oars
pulled by holy immigrants. I dream smuggler's vessels in
southern jungles when I am afraid. Coldness gone of

Socratic argument, only connivance with tendrils and escape.
Fear unimagined persists as worms. A courtyard freshly carved,
toppled chimneys in reddening dust, brotherhood dissolved.
What is *strange* about them, in neutral hats they tip,

I can only give a *sign* of fast green water, radiant, sourceless:
crystals that blossom away from a star. I never now conceal
or reveal what they are after. Nothing, so far as it is spoken.

Autrui

A maple leaf starts to work, plucked off the yellow mountain, bitten with
Storm. Listen to the ridges flutter as a soaked harp. Anywhere

By night, you hear trains race thru birch groves, splitting them into rhythm,
A red wind that makes your heart rise, as you imagine darkness lifts

Off moss. But words are no use in the morning. Hairs

In sink are useful, as is the butter you boil the lemons with. Gather
Up your leavings, don't cringe and don't gawk, either. Between

The lights you can see, and the others underground, the peak flickers, and not
One that will cradle you. Only beyond, crouched in Orion, is any kind of guide.

Relics of Cold

What remains colored in a
postcard on the vanity: this

lake of trains I kicked away to get
a hawk's grasp on sweating flowers.

Lower myself into sand through love,
At the base of the cordite range,

To germinate with fog, and become
A quartz picture of what is abandoned.

Nutmeg with saffron wrapped in parchment, I sulk
To Vera on borrowed show-shoes,
Chanting Vedas.

Down villages of failing organs and
Carbon snow and boar meat, blended in the

Lava of today's and yesterday's horrors, what becomes

Blue into sacred tomorrow.

Bryher

eyes pierced by the evidence

there are more commitments

Let the long blue wardrobe

Answer suspicions in socks

Someone left before you moved

socks that are bone variances

pictures of sylphs under a foreign moon

I hear my walls turn three ways

Stars the constant answerers in

Hear heaven shaking under a yew tree

These the pages fallen off

Images comfort then afflict

Live among the contractions

under a ceiling fan I read afflictions

reading to sleep in pictures of

gods torn and changed in a room

where people live by themselves

forward into each other

women above me laugh and shake and holler

Their television is low voltage cooking.

Balcony drips with rugs a way of

never understanding what is left

.

Every system I prop up has fallen away

yet I come back to scant breaths

too convinced there is an unknown
that I have some right to name as an origin

some right to enter to still think myself separate.

Scramble the syllables to dismember the letters
I must let affliction become its own wellspring

observation must collapse at the threshold
relent into that which cannot be named

for then it grows radiant
in a room where it is useless.

Sentinels in the Dark. Pilgrimage Poems

One

When you find a green shell, you find a way.

I have a net to cast over a meadow.

For each star, I catch a whisker of grain.

Needless to separate an oak from a steeple, or
Shade from a hawk wing.

Learn to love

A tiny word cut into the earth.

Linger on a lamb's face as on an ocean.

Church curtains rustle with the East.

Their sickle moon, a blue hymnist.

Clear angels turn with noon's hills. Round land, holy from
heaviness, plateauing sun christened by hunters.

The gates welcome

The red animal, soaked in strife.

Iron whines for egress

Rhythm ripens a shell.

Counting shells every hour with cow droppings.

To step in everything, to hallow all life.

I am in a vineyard where the raven finds the snake. A shell is a god's nest,

if we know the words. The only road to town is illegible,
buried in hedge moss, arrowless. Creek hisses under cars, the music

from before the hills swerved. Fox floats with orchids Her paw prints
carve chalk earth, her lair I navigate with blue rocks.

The red tail is a promise, and I won't keep them.

Two

Navigators rush the window,
as the telephone and the light dies. With bag, boots, shells and
twenty miles for peaches in a haunted chapel.

First grey morning in plum-walled hotel,
island pigs yelping, or late bats,
statues black and chipped with storm from a courtyard.

The town is further than was told, and
trains are not leaving tonight.

At canyon's copper margins,
where the grass is chalk,
you may hear bells
keep yourself towards the bog,
that sloshes beneath the war memorial and the egret pub.

The coordinates fall from a tanned painter's mouth.
He is restoring an Edwardian cottage, the kind
That feels like a Dutch oven. My map crinkles in his crinkled hands.
I look lost, he says. But happy despite.
Layers of sediment, of memory, of direction, of what peculiar
Meadow has shaped and beaten out in his desiring hands.
His throat reddens with the memory of
A Greek voyage he made with the wife.
A nearby cow
Watches shadows twist from a dusty wind.
Those silk eyes
Dam the water of a different light than mine.

Three

A rustling corridor discovered
And it's barely noon on a cloud-muffled day.
Heart fills the belly with insect glee.
No food but old apples, nuts, crumbs.
I am licking my own sweat.
Nobody can question me now,
Nobody expecting an answer that is.
This is a
Hiding place you saunter down, almost as a
Fluid roams the
Lymphatic system. My flesh softens with
Funneling shadows, mind slows
To the tiniest shaking of thorns.
A rambler is anything that disappears into a grove
When the grove didn't seem accessible.
Secrecy can be stepped through
And on and over. The other world is many-branched.
Ragged-robin shoots violet in the rotting leaves.
Those pink signs lost in the ground
Once were green shells nailed to a pilgrim's board.
And "*without meeting another traveller*"
Some broken song conveys me forward
to a rampart of *greensand*
Where my robed ancestors hid from the wood brigands,
Not knowing what to fear the most.
So we endure by making hiding places
Until the faces rename themselves.

Four

Descending from Box hill, spattered in meadowsweet,
The Adonis blue butterfly bathed me
In wings –a blue turned water-pink.

A rotten sign is burnt onto the sky.
Matters not if it's rotten, the message blazes anew.
Dusk, stranded on my feet, and these ridgeways are
Moving from plum to cobalt to pitch. My muscles
Are switching colors with the hills.

How I teeter this minute means
I'm deciphering new signs
Above me, over an outcropping of serpent tongued trees.

The inkwell hour, I think, an overflowing and

nightgoing Earth flings hieroglyphs
On sky's mauve curtain, till dark drains them.

All of us ranging into
the tall, sharp grass, slantwise, as foxes seem to
do when they are glanced at.

The earth is a village
Swaddled in branches but waking hungry
To a lack of compass points, ground blessed with tiny
rooms the maples cool.

If this is darkest water she lets me through.

Five

A bridleway – either for a horse or a woman on a horse –

Spirals darkly

down gravel gulfs

one of the darkest

detours I made,

at the spot where the “Garden of England”

becomes the checker work expanse of Mexico City

From an airplane.

Every hour a person in a blue or violet shawl

Resumes her post among the shaking stalks.

The creator is the echo of the created: some dirt stuck on

Torn wings.

They merge into a horizon

The same fire cabbage green.

Again through upturned soil objects groan in wind-cut

Sun. There is always country to sink into, teeth and grime and ankle.

I watch myself

Leaving, never exiting,

Shelter of bark, cave of fur, pool of wings.

First olive, then charcoal, then the ocean’s mottled ivory above

Where the hill is the sparking of hooves, black with shadow.

Fronds, then splashing rocks. No transition but procession of redder leaves.

This chapel sweats ghosts wood carved from a buried star

Six

fuse with the material

I woke myself up singing—

to meander *is to plunge* between pastures where the white horse is motionless.

My unexpected companion
Saved me again from the hornet pit,
Until I found trust was forever leading
Me, fidelity to the sonorous things a field
Hides.

Cleanse the blood with hourly quests, and keep a creek
Glinting on your right. Watch a yellowhammer slash
Blackberry brambles. Drink the rest of the indigo mist.

Where the tired falcon eats foam you have arrived
At a turning point, in axes of burnt maple and moldering oak.
Purple vapors over unending country, farmhouses blurred.
Take the sunken avenue, I was ordered.
As if the canopy becomes reversed sea—

The afternoon a thread so thin
Carries me to a town whose center is a castle you may not enter.
I accept sheep cheese and curdled tea at the inn by the mossy barriers,
Sink up to my knees into the creek—

A thread, tied to a cow the cow plant child of the hill

Umber satellite.

I am leaving myself here, and there,
Tied to a corridor between two farms.

This force I never pronounce

Still calls, when I call

And when I don't.

The call is

A clamor of leaves, *sentinels*

In the dark, shells where there is no beach.

There,

where a hill breaks apart in

glittering ditches

I grow woven.

Seven

Today I had to climb a few jagged fences
The path, or its passable mimic, vanished.

You make the way out of what is available
You blaze a trail from the barriers you become.

A wind-broken city at dawn. Land's End glows in engine mist.
The train is a ghost corridor. Stores winch open, revealing.

The infancy of doorframes. All stones idle.

Eight

Paths interlace into the picture
of a green redeemer

Green man is slow but commits:
The green woman is him, finally,
Aglow

She stoked the inmost fire
So it danced outside them
In all the dead ditches.

Pain to be gathered is dancer's kindling:
seedlings, acorns, shells, pellets.

A small gathering in a muddy hollow. The Roman snail
Is the color of topaz, the herald of the blaze.

A congregation the size of beetles awaits the new colors.

Skylarks bobbing in darkness a masterful accompaniment
To a drowsing town.

The wood was shining as I angled
Down the beach of St. Martha's hill, finely ground agate
Biting open the graves, releasing the musk of bronze afternoon.

The beginner feels the grass play with her toes
The beginner asks the river to gild her hair.

So the weaver is present.

From the bridge
She asks the musk orchid
To race the feather down the water:
Thinnest leavings are still of love's foundry.
All mud or wing accompanies her long swim.
So many husks clatter the canals. There grows, in time, mossy passage.
The strings

Are plucked among the dead, headstones suddenly
Shot with warm rose light.

A white rose on the tomb for the death
Of the King:
Graves changed, obelisks of red moss, this velvet of transformed
Things.

Nine

A tapestry hides a fire-red door on a hill.

The hill rose for

That color to form. All rise

By accident into

Shapes that are meanings.

Threads are the scarlet from a bottled fire

You bring into a crypt to seize vision.

The hill is made

Of woven airs and signs that ignite

Through the hedges.

So the moon comes to veil her village:

A gold hill in a family of grasses leans

Long into violet.

Clouds burn apart over

Empty ponds, relics glittering their shore

As risen water ripples the fields.

I taste shore rot in the bleached rocks. So white

They turn flame blue in an alcove. Fall ahead of

Myself, swerve with colors,

drop apricots for the Roman snails.

Feed the air with my oiled arms.

I plunge the key into radiant orange sand.

Harp strings shake the oaks in midday.

A raven jumps, talks, sings,

Summoning the alders together. Winds spiral apart

coal-dark fringes. The path drops into the clay.

Ten

Threaded in salt light
I hunt the source that
Candles the clouds
Ferns rounded by night,
Smolder.

Eroded walls grow from chalk, as coral twines an eddy,
The moon-eyed mares are eaten by dark lights,
A trick of the grove, sentries collapse into bark.
Shadows make high tide over a land of fosses
Where the perfectly orange flowers flicker.

At an *escarpment*, stone arm for falcons,
Planet tests her echoes in me,
blue the distance diluted in
tincture of yellow-white. .
Sands no color now.
River blue in time.

I feel in my knees a
Tremble of green debris
That makes these russet edges
Vibrate.

Seek heart as the gnarled root
frazzled ends to never untangle
reds never separate from the sea.

Snare the water as a fox, deception of unseen paws,
makes blood boil into a dirt and tree music.
Symptom of star-shine inside a pale birch spear

My eyes wired open by branches in feather hail.
Movement is a whisper of women waiting in the barley.
Their silence is the country's heart broken clean by wind.

If the holy way went through here
It has gone fallow
Become mulch

But what dirt does not refine itself:

When has redemption not been overgrown?

Grasses can be towers in half-light

Eleven

Blood is brighter when I'm alone. The fronds swell with light,
Caught in my matted hair. Fitted as creek breezes to the ear

The rust in the canopy, ringing out –

In interlocking branches blood-rust spreads to sharp edges.

The canopy hums russet.

Egrets leap from the fungus into the margins
Of silver-blue scrub. Variants of stone,
Their minds are sewn to a remote
Valley: the gleam that jumps beyond, a footnote to the
Wood's vanishing.

River is a serpent or a baby inside
The eye of a bronze-cast horse,
Cooled by the chestnut tree, her amber thicket noise.

She dispels the obstacles of space with
Only a single eye level with Andromeda.

Twelve

High spine of chalk,
Topples into fossil-red valleys:
The ribs of the woods curl over this
Jade-green ridge of rock,
The ribbon that pulls me
Into low smoky clouds,
Where my mind can't go without
Changing its voice. Here gravel is
Garnet rippling as a creek under foot.
These different types of grasses promise
Different breezes if I have the nose to name them.

Descend unknowing off
A mulberry terrace,
Dark agate glen below, lower curves
Blind through pewter glare. Where was that
Warm hallway of yews? That way
Drops out of apple-filled air,
As a name of an old love drops, my
Map burnt into my eyes, then rung
Out in watered-down song.
The song of the trembling wood.

I am: *"broken open to reveal a dark interior"*

Nothing exceeds breakage, only resumes its cuts and blows.
An inward-dancing dark, shaking cave the mind abhors.
Retreating soldiers dropped snails on the path, warning

How the woods will return

In altered voice.

Each tributary of the road another

Shrine blazes in knotted-up shrubs, negative shine where acorns

Become bluer.

I long ago cut

The thread to circumscribe this swamp.

Let the woods soak:

Now the reeds, and their sharp tresses close about my

Unheard name.

I feel the brambles woven into

Isolate sky, an unfolding pearl

Without real white.

Thirteen

Three p.m. warm amber eyes:
A stag leaps from a rotting
Cone heap. The flash of entrance
Is not wisdom yet, for it takes many
Turnings
To make a turn, only to start another,
Then: A perfect yellow blemish
And the larches are hung in red parasites
Like antique lamps.
The man said: *I am an emotional simpleton when it comes
To animals.*
Out of earshot, the animals shifted the granite into an
Ogre face.
I was of two minds, I said to the paper.
And at least two minds
Weave the road together. On the way, any way,
A heart is a furnace lashed to the back
And the back burns with the sky: the circuits
Grow fused, as sand melds into the shell.
Elevated grasslands breach the church shore,
A sunken cove of corn-silk sand.
The *brome* blades sway among sandstone, a small,
Foggy sound of ships among clover.
Twilight comes at the 11th hill when
I smell the after-dark pushing the violets,
Foretaste of cool
Waters in the
Stems.

Fourteen

Kindle my backbone with ivory light:
Eleven hours and two days on rising pebbles. All my
Friends have beautiful hounds with tired smiles.
My skin has the feel of emerald bog water
Baked long by the yew trees.
An ancient, downward ditch I follow
Is a twisting and constant re-encounter
With denser, more knotted forms of
Earth. Forest bowels are rose-hip mulch pit
Drizzled in fur. Here I rebuild the
Present circle in a vision where I round a
Mossy wall into hot azaleas,
Lifting my head at the half
Opal moon cradled in thin ash trees. This
Moon is immediate, flush with fiery stone,
Flecks of blue plumage.
I move on rolling land polished and
Chipped as a lens,
To see it closer is to hear myself
Sinking, with light, back beyond light.
Here the soil
Holds water as crystal on a tongue, and the water shakes
But never dissipates. The
Turned earth is the veining of passing animals, battle hairs
My shade blends with, a biting and salty
Musk that invades my muscles.
In my limbs my blood pleads for
Distance that takes a forest shape.

Fifteen

Pig, my love you are the name of the Invisible,
For you eat anything that's real. And everything is real, you said.
All flames copper and pumpkin this incense hour of day,
Wavering sea curtain of the road, dirt baked mandarin and
Stamped by fleeing boots, when it appears that our

Field wears the silting skins of an ocean. That slant light
Falls fluid, and the charred leaves suck the shade from
The tors. I remember, happily, poverty, bones and islands, now to
Fall in a humming pasture, more alone than the owl: I will sleep with
Chestnuts and their broken lambs attending.

In a trough of late spring we grow spider orchids
And you don't eat them, Pig. You drag them between the pews,
Bathe them in the ashes and bifocals and hymnals.
The raw wooden hut never misses her infants for long.
A hunter, her goats, the laundress and the unwell
Crawl inside to watch the reverberating name,
Each imagines the different name, slant and smudged,
Not written on anything, not stained

By any jewels or bugs. Aloft: how the river-fed air
Suspends the weakest rocks, soundless, then rouge.
The longer I hold my arm still under the
Noisy flowers the bluer this storm becomes.

Curriculum Vitae
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Education

M.F.A. Poetry, Currently. University of Nevada, Las Vegas.
Bachelor of Arts in Literature, August 2002. University of California, Santa Cruz.
Honors In Major

Employment

UNLV English Department, Las Vegas, NV.
August 2013-Current. Graduate teaching instructor. English Composition.
Interim Magazine, UNLV, Las Vegas, NV.
August 2013-Current. Reader and co-editor.
Red Hill Books/Phoenix Books. San Francisco, CA.
May 2009-Current. Manager, book buyer, and blogger.
Goldstein, Demchak, Baller, Borgen and Dardarian. Oakland, CA.
July 2006 – Jan. 2009. Legal clerk, mailroom assistant.

Awards

\$5,000 Creative Writing Scholarship, Poetry, Redlands University.
Nomination for Dean's Award in Literature, UCSC..
Semi-Finalist, *Diagram*, 2010 Essay Contest.
Finalist, *Diagram*, 2014 Essay Contest
Finalist, *Subito Press* 2015 Prose Manuscript Contest

Publications

5 poems from "Leaves from Soma Beach," *Bombay Gin*, forthcoming 2016.

5 poems from “Leaves from Soma Beach,” *Nomadic Press Journal*, forthcoming 2016.
 “The Elevator” and “Postulates of the Night,” essays, *Eleven Eleven*. Jan. 2016.
 “Vermin Psalm,” *Bad Penny Review*, October, 2015.
 “Conches, Comets: A Love Memory,” *Jenny*, 2015.
Ravish the Republic: The Archives of the Iron Garters Crime/ Art Collective, non-fiction book. Punctum Books, 2015.)
 “Behind the Rink,” essay, *Word Riot*, 2015
 “Vigilantes,” poem, *Five Quarterly* (online), 2015
 “Unreported Lights,” poem, *Whiskey Island*, Issue 66, 2015.
 “The Gates,” poem, *Dogwood*, 2014
 “Pilgrims,” poem, *Pank*, Dec. 2013
 “Night Fire,” prose poem, *The Bolt Magazine SJSU*, 2013
 “Letters From Soma Beach,” three poems, *Ragtag Magazine*, 2013
 “Art At Work,” essay, *The Rumpus*, 2013
 “Bartending, Booktending: Three Years At Red Hill Books,” memoir, *The Rumpus*, 2012
 “The Beautiful Nightmares Of Roberto Bolaño’s 2666,” essay, *The Rumpus*, 2010
 “Isabelle Of The Dark Brown Fists,” memoir, *The Nervous Breakdown*, 2010
 “The Heat Of The Town,” short story, *The Legendary*, 2010

Editing and Teaching Experience

Volunteer writing coach, *The Caring Place*, Las Vegas, NV.
 Writing tutor, UNLV Writing Center, Las Vegas, NV.
 Founder, *The Iron Garters Crime/ Art Collective*
 Editor and founder, *The Salted Lash*, art and literary magazine.
 Staff literary blogger, *The Rumpus*. 2009-2012
 Fiction editor, *The Splinter Generation*. 2009-2010
 Writing tutor, 826 Valencia Writing Center, San Francisco, CA. 2007

Performance Experience

Performance reading, “Sex, Death, Laughter and Disease,” Center For Sex and Culture, San Francisco, CA. August. 2011
 Editor, researcher, collaborator, *Liminal Performance Group*, SF State, CA. 2007-2009

Performer, *Leviticus*, short film, City College Film Festival, San Francisco, CA. 2009

Performer, actor, writer, *Sutro Stories*, New College Experimental Performance Series, San Francisco, CA. 2007

Academic Conference Papers

“*Ravish the Republic: Radical Intellectual Strategies*” *In Service To Nothing: Intellectual Inquiry in the Open* symposia. The New School, New York. 2015

“Culture Against Control: Genesis P-Orridge and Hermetic Strategies,” *His Master’s Voice: Digital Utopias and Dystopias* conference. Krakow, Poland. 2015

“The Prismatic City: Delany’s *Dhalgren* and Perkins’ *Evil Companions*,” *Endnotes: Disquieting Desires* conference. UBC. Vancouver, Canada. 2015.

“Pleasure at the Margins: On the Risky Worlds of Samuel R. Delany” *On The Brink* conference. University of Reno. Reno, Nevada, 2014.

“The world is a midway and cities are its sideshows” *Utopian Studies Conference*. Utopian Studies Society. Montreal, Canada. October, 2014.

“The Metaphysics of Urban Planning: Cortazar and di Chirico and the Magic City,” *Far West Popular Culture Conference*, Las Vegas, 2013.