

WHERE EAGLES DARE

The East Bay Poetry Summit Lavender Issue, 2013

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JOHN COLETTI

Dukes Up

The Easter egg hunt
inherently cruel
religiously obscene
“I see one.” “Let me get one.”
tears. like that.
an epiphenomenological account from like organisms
teasing @ the homegrown
in a banged-up locker
that convince me, at the end of darknesses
that I want to enjoy being family-kept-spilling
I never understate
& demonstrate daily
the capital shock then “wooded
& won by wireless”
weeds I thought more beautiful tilted
like a panix’ serpent
calming
core doubts. it’s been a little rough.
pancakes at midnight
pancakes at day
Medieval reenactors
dragging
that one aria
from Turandot
around your eye. forever closed
the tingling of clean, crystal lights
then I laid back down. don’t rot: sayeth Beaker

ARCHITECTURE AND PSYCHOSIS: Notebook decompressions: World Association of Cultural Psychiatry: Congress (3): London, March 2012

1. The effect of the built environment (prisons/neighborhood structures) on rates of affective and reactive psychosis.

Is the patient an ultra rapid CYP 2D6 metabolizer? Why is accountability more often undiminished and less often diminished in the black and ethnic minority populations?

A black man (citizen) or black man from other part of Europe (non-citizen) or black African man (citizen or non-citizen) is three times more likely to be indicted of a crime; similarly, why is compulsory admission to a psychiatric facility 6% versus 2.6% in the local white population?

What if a patient has a decreased capacity to process certain compulsory medications? (See: BME populations). (Also: CYP2D6 allele frequency in Curacao.)

Who assesses the pre-trial reports that might result in compulsory admission to a psychiatric facility?

Singh 2007: British Journal of Psychiatry: BME patients disproportionately detained under the Mental Health Act. See: The killing of Jonathon Zito by Christopher Koomis on the 24th of March, 2009. Track: Koomis care history and diagnosis. Consider: misdiagnosis, discrimination, differences in illness expression as related to higher psychosis rates in BME populations.

“The extremes of the spectrum are increasing.”—The beautiful, extremely young Dutch psychiatrist in an ill-fitting pale yellow linen suit who starts to sweat as he shouts this last thing out, just before his study of the Dutch prison system and an analysis of the psychosis rates of the Dutch native, Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese, Antillean and other non-western populations gets the biggest take-down of the conference.

I left the building to sit on the cemetery steps. This is the NOVO cemetery, an early immigrant Spanish and Portuguese (Jewish) cemetery in Mile End, surrounded now by the campus buildings of Queen Mary's College.

My mother used to teach art, music and poetry in primary schools almost entirely comprised of non-native children, both in Mile End and Bethnal Green. She'd wake at 4 a.m. to make the unleavened dough for our evening chapatis. Then, in tennis shoes, a sari and a black and white fake fur coat, she'd commute on the Metropolitan Line to Liverpool Street, where she'd change to the Central line. Her nickname was Demented Panda. Because of what she wore. Who she was. Her height. Her weight. Her hands.

2. The plaques are pristine. They are made of a milky, hygienic marble.

The medical building glitters in the pale silver rain coming off the Thames. A non-wave. Evaporation. Hockney's California transposed to a London afternoon. From the hospital I went to the Tate and saw the Hockney. My friend once saw Hockney unloading his paintings from the back of a car in Santa Barbara, outside the art museum.

It was pouring with rain. I pushed open a gate and walked down to the Thames—afraid to slip, yet enchanted—by its roaring waves. The Thames is a tidal river. It is pewter, slate, violet—all the colors of the top-down world. From the Thames I went back to the hospital. Hospitals refract their contents; they are not built to retain illnesses, but to dispel them.

Document the corridor. Cure the corridor.

Hockney elevates then sections the medical building, an activity that also gives intense pleasure: to whom?

So love the pink, blank sky. And the palms.

FRANK SHERLOCK

from **Life Is to Blame for Everything**

Are you w/ stupid
of course you are
hearting melancholy in ways
I wish I had
the nerve to The kids are going
crazy on Deindustrialized
Bandstand It's got a good
beat to pop & lock to from
the soundtrack of the former
worker The controller
drowns out
soundsystem unrest
miner strikes &
back to jobs just to
do it over again
Caught in the followspot
of LEDs the fury
depletes through its own
exhaust My name is
blank & I'll be your server
Welcome to Le Club Duh
Doing time in a tool shed
on the ham-head side of
town the security organ
is tickled & has become

aroused Marching band
dope music the drug of
choice is shame
The counter-highs
of dissidence are speakered
through subliminally in sexy
translator voice These are people
contemporaneously
alive within us
They are card-carrying
members of People
for the Ethical
Treatment of Criminals
conceived during a democratic
convention Read
these as party record
liner notes from 1989
Not to be out or
in just off The dj
architects threshold trance
on an icedrift twice the size of
manhattan We cannot
help but keep moving on in

What Does Poetry Mean?

It means something. I've already known myself through it, but I forget. I've enjoyed the sounds of the words I've put together, which I'm modeling after how other poets and singers and talkers put their words together. But it's not enough to do it once or twice. I try to fall asleep and instead of doing that, which I need to do, I write sentences in my head, or address you, my friends, the people that I like to think with. I feel our struggle to think together, inside and outside one another.

I didn't know how I was feeling until I began speaking. I knew that I was feeling; I knew that I had lived through something terrible. I learned the structure of feeling through this. We made a structure for feeling. I listen for how you might like to be heard. I oscillate between thinking that what I have to say is the most important thing to say—I think about that sometimes—and I think about how important it is to give the gift of my ear.

I say this on the heels of a day reading Romantic poetry. I wish speaking and hearing weren't so important. These verbal and aural necessities seem so much the product of the failures of my own upbringing, I hate to imagine that they are collective voids. I don't think they are, if by collective I mean necessarily shared by all.

I started writing an essay about what poetry means and I finished by thinking about psychoanalysis.

The Gypsy that Remains

I wake up thinking, "my art is not research." I recall how I spoke about my final project at Bard. I was filled with emotion and pride at having accomplished something I never thought I would. I didn't have great ways of talking or thinking about it, but I had an excellent sense of what I was working out. It seems to me, in hindsight, that loneliness, and more specifically, abandonment and neglect, were hard to make interesting. The writing felt small and so did I. I recall being overweight. Desperately sad summers and hearing two friends make love through the window. My mother was in a car accident after my first summer at Bard. I couldn't write anything but these poems about small eyes in my hands. And the poems were small in the middle of the page and nobody thought they belonged there. Those and then lots of poems about comas. It was around the time that Terry Schiavo stuff was happening. I'd never known anyone to be in a coma and now there were two: Terry Schiavo and my mom. It wasn't the same, but it didn't matter.

There shouldn't be any doubt in my mind that my work and experience at Bard would have been different if my mother hadn't been in an accident. The accident accelerated mourning I was already doing, since in many ways she had disappeared from life before this, but it also made all my feelings, which had been looking clearer, more confusing. I had to talk about everything in terms of "before her brain injury" and "after the car accident." "Or before the accident" and "since her brain injury."

I was feeling guilty in ways that I never had before. I listened non-stop to "Dreams" by Fleetwood Mac and "Gypsy" by Stevie Nicks and "Autumn Sweater" by Yo La Tengo and "There is a Light that Never Goes Out" by the Smiths and "This Night Has Opened My Eyes" by the Smiths. "In a river the color of lead emerged the baby's head/ wrap her up in the news of the world/ dump her on a doorstep girl/ this night has opened my eyes and I will never sleep again." I woke up in the middle of the night in the hotel room near Bronson Hospital having had a nightmare that I'd been hit by a truck and I woke up knowing it was my mom. I smoked cigarettes the whole way from Ann Arbor to Kalamzoo. Kristi and Daniel drove me. It was after a reading by Anne Waldman in the Residential College. I remember swiping my time card at Shaman Drum [Bookshop], thinking of the phone conversation I'd had with my mother where she suggested we go to Traverse City together. She was campaigning for Ralph Nader and I hated the idea of spending time with her, let alone traveling up north with her. My dad had called. Everyone had tried to reach me, but I'd been listening to Anne Waldman, so my ringer was off.

I didn't know what it would be like to see her. She looked like anyone with her leg in traction, tubes in her nose, on a respirator, having had glass cut her hands and face. Her leg had a metal bar through it and yellow stuff was near the hole in her body. I didn't know my mother could look like that and still look like herself. I could hear her voice in my head, but couldn't get it to come out of her. I couldn't get her to open her eyes or hold my hand. It was awful when she didn't look at me, when I breathed and she didn't smell good. "Gypsy" was one of those songs that was always on the radio when I was growing up. It was the kind of song that I would fall into when I was switching channels and looking for anything to hear. I never knew who it was by. I didn't know what it was about. "A memory is all that is left for you now." I knew intuitively that the song was expressing pain. I felt that way about that fucking chain gang song. Is that the Pretenders? God. That song is also about memory and loss. "I found a picture of you," she starts. Classic rock stations are what you bump into when the hip-hop and r&b stations have commercials. God, I love radio so much.

DOLORES DORANTES & JEN HOFER

de *Estilo*, de Dolores Dorantes (ManoSanta Editores, Guadalajara, 2011)

“11.-Una hilera de nenas esperando. Una fila plagada de preguntas. ¿De qué lado del pensamiento te ronda más la muerte? ¿Cuántas piensas que somos? ¿Cómo viniste a ser nuestro maestro? ¿Fervor? ¿Racha de pájaros? ¿Disfrutas al cerrarnos la boca? ¿Esto es ambiguo? ¿Puedes oír los códigos que somos?”

*

“12.-Orfebrería incrustada con dolor sobre el cielo, queremos dar la vuelta. Queremos que nos tengas bocabajo. Tus códigos ardiendo. La zona que no puedes pisar. Queremos que nos sostengas blandamente. Hilera de fosas y secuestros para tu consumo. Rostros intercambiables. Piernas de muñeca. Cuando tú quieras el cielo abre la boca. Cuando tú quieras el cielo se voltea y te esconde por encima de nuestros arsenales. Nos cubrimos nuestras caras de niña. Somos la guerra”.

from *Estilo*, by Dolores Dorantes, translated by Jen Hofer

“11.- A line of girls waiting. A row overrun with questions. On which side of thought does death most haunt you? How many of us do you think there are? How did you come to be our maestro? Fervor? Gust of birds? Do you enjoy closing our mouths? Is this ambiguous? Can you hear the codes we are?”

*

“12.-Goldwork inlaid painfully onto the sky, we want to turn around. We want you to have us face down. Your codes burning. The zone you cannot tread. We want you to hold us up pliantly. Line of graves and kidnappings for your consumption. Interchangeable faces. Doll's legs. When you wish it, the sky opens its mouth. When you wish it, the sky turns and hides you atop our arsenals. We cover our girlish faces. We are the war.”

“13.-Somos la guerra y somos el refugio. El cielo abre la boca para que escondas tu granada. Te esperamos latiendo como minas. Por debajo y por dentro. Por debajo y por dentro. Por debajo y por dentro somos un mar de nenas de ceniza. Somos adolescentes armadas cruzando la frontera. Amo, maestro, lo que no se nos dice. Ciérranos. Móntanos y manténnos vivas”.

*

“14.-Danos una botella y acabaremos con tu mundo. Préndenos y el fuego correrá como plaga. Llegamos hasta tu oficina. Hasta tu máquina. Llegamos hasta tu silla de maestro. Hasta ese mundo que ya no es el mundo. Donde nada se toca y nos besamos. Unimos nuestros labios de niñas mojadas con algún combustible. Danos un bosque. Danos la presidencia.”

“13.-We are the war and we are the refuge. The sky opens its mouth for you to hide your grenade. We wait for you throbbing like mines. Below and inside. Below and inside. Below and inside we are a sea of girls of ash. We are armed adolescents crossing the border. Master, maestro, what we are not told. Close us. Mount us and keep us alive.”

*

“14.-Give us a bottle and let's be done with your world. Light us and the fire will spread like a plague. We arrive at your office. At your machine. We arrive at your masterful chair. At that world that is no longer the world. Where nothing touches and we kiss each other. We join our girlish lips damp with some kind of fuel. Give us a forest. Give us the presidency.”

LAURA HENRIKSEN

Paradise Garden

Out in space, that shit
ain't right, somewhat
less valuable than a ticket
to someone who thinks they can manage.

In the other world the way I
foster communal living is great
until someone becomes legendary
drinks the whole gallon in one gulp.
The rest is campfire.

Looked through my visions to
my visions' visions, a vestigial
ritual from before I was
formative, paper and plastic.

Around the globe and under the fridge
and then after the party to the hotel lobby
where I'll leave you for a moment
by a stack of folded-up boxes
come back with knowledge, petite fours.

Tunnel after tunnel, the time
I showed up to around the time all the ducks
emerged from the water, returning
the bread with vengeance and regret,
around three minutes.

Silver Strike Lanes

Doing Sedona's powerful
attunement exercises
religiously talks a lot,
comes on cold watered
down goes driving
into this night unchallenged
in the hallway, put it back.
Drawn strength
from a drinking fountain
on the floor of the hypostyle.

Problems, stand back on the deck
and make your peace with your problems,
finish your beer, looking out
over Browns Woods, the wildlife. Complete
directions never occurred
to me to mention.

See the half moon over the Western Beef, I understand,
I mean, I appreciate the suffering, wide-eyed
the way hypothetical, coyote gathering all
or something like it, not your average
payphone apostle. All this remaining agape
after the campers drive off, crazed
in the air conditioning, stars
screaming if you find
yourself falling short in a Chevy
or a Ford, above you at the all night
Classic Diner, meanwhile thoughts of Silver
Strike Lanes rolling over me, that three-game
series. See you cigar on the fifth of July,
calling your daytime phone
as the light in me appreciates the
light in you, tongue country, lost
rhinestone from whose saddle.

Got a date with destiny's taxidermist
in the kitchen, washing dishes, I can see
for days and days. Raising expectations and
the consequences of being too rowdy
on the field march step more common
than your all purpose flour, it's an evil village
where our talk goes the distance. With every
effort another noise complaint. My real people
threshold, life and livelihood, high water devil.

It's a far cry
from this kind of life
dirt in your pocket. In your hand,
I could hear its footsteps
on the opposite side of the house,
quicker than a deer head
falling off the wall, why
you acting out? Remember,
summer's what you make it, on
to the Heidelberg Speedway.
I made you this diorama
of the seafloor. I don't know
how to tell you how crazy
I feel about Elvis.

MAGED ZAHER

The bridge rubs its use value
Awaits its pretty ghost worrying about rumors
The river is surrounded by enemy combatants
They are hiding as abstract pets
Curving the corners of reality
Crossing it daily into job security
When I wake up the space needle will be gone

*

Wiring medicated better
Than an offshore crime partner
Inventing a death helmet
Privately political
Planning the next sip
Pen drained
An anthem slows down

*

Death might be rewarding
It is an addiction to buoyancy
The outcome of a date
Is a promise to avoid metaphors
Our claws
Are dirty with beliefs
Your turn to deny
That sewage are everywhere
A certain adequacy can't be proven
Before a poem
Is drawn on a napkin

It is a dry river
But you can still sing on its banks
I promise
The engineers will never know
We will manage our insomnia
And follow the damage
In an affordable TV
Meanwhile sneak a cigarette or two
Behind the backs of the dead

*

This is morgue style bravado
I am proud of this calligraphy
And its paper cuts
My ancestors slaughtered yours
Anchor yourself
For Jacuzzi time

*

Leaving minor room for failure
This is a straightforward future
We are bankers
We are also romantics
Despite the sore genitals
And the shadows of doubt
To be honest
We are all fucked
So, let me exact my revenge
One line break at a time

JARED STANLEY

Public Poem in Three Parts

I sicken myself with every
kind of unwillingness
in the steam room, at the gym
where my belly drains out over
the towel at my waist, sitting
with other gentlemen, slightly
bent forward, our hands on our thighs,
our arms slightly bent, with water
dripping from the ceiling; the
whole place smelling, as my nose
gathers it, of eucalyptus oils.

*

To tell it light, at the speed of touch,
the life had become pathologically un-magical: (pedagogically medical)
our sensible bodies raveled and unravelled stillly,
in feral, high altitude sunlight, in domestic shades
too, and, more conventionally, alongside fingernail
clippings and emails from Albuquerque, the voice
tone of the radio correspondent equating test scores with
fuck, whatever. And if that's true, is this
activity some kind of rich, dull afternoon of life,
groped at in the shadow of the Herman Miller
Aeron Chair, some respite, that M&M ground
into a square of plastic carpet?

*

Pythoness, I need to make touch happen with you.

Girlfren, I would weave an arras, to hang along
the gate through which we pass from our youth,
toward our more majestic selves, our kerchiefs,
how we encourage the use of shoe polish on each others'
shoes - I iron your shirts in the morning, you take me
to urgent care in the afternoon.

Yvonne:

To wake with you is a singular joy. Waking with you produced within me a bounty of joy. To wake next to you is to experience immeasurable happiness. To awaken next to you is a bounty of exceeding delight. Waking with you is to be happy. Happiness surrounds me when I wake with you. How glad I am to wake with you! How exultant I am to end my slumber in your arms. How relieved I am to find you at the end of my slumber. Your waking brings me nothing but joy. Waking with you is a banquet of happiness. Waking with you is a banquet of happiness from which I feast. Waking with you I am so happy I embarrass flowers. Waking with you I am so happy the rain keeps itself cinched up in clouds. Waking with you I give away all my possessions but happiness. It feels good to wake next to you. I fill volumes of happiness upon waking next to you. My dear, Yvonne, how happy you make me upon waking. Upon waking I find myself full of unbounded joy. There is not a heaven I could wake into better than your company. A triumph came with your waking. Each waking in your presence is to receive a gift. To witness you stir in the morning is to become the embodiment of joy. To wake with you brings me an indelible happiness. To wake with you is a golden feeling. The beatitude I feel upon waking with you has no bounds. Vexation veers from the room upon the opening of your eyes. Bliss buzzes like power transformer as you arise. When you wake, despair halts its factory. Felicity is the fire of your waking. The enjoyment I feel upon your entry into the day is boundless. To harbor the many ships of my happiness as you awake is no small task. I build a museum of each moment I watch you rise. To know you will be joining me this day is to hazard happiness. Happiness harasses me when I wake with you. Waking with you: happiness! Every other happiness feels inferior to waking with you. Delight is in attendance upon our waking. I feel intelligent with bliss upon receiving your company each morning. Niggling night to new Jerusalem when you wake. Your waking is an anodyne. Yvonne, how happy I am to wake with you this morning. Somber slips quietly

out of bedrooms when waking with you. How glorious to wake at your side. How outstanding to be in your company as you wake. My joy is matchless on this mattress! All is optimal and best in the world when you wake. Punctually, a happiness rises in me upon your rising. Beginning the day with you is a delight. To gaze upon you in the morning is an unarguable joy. To wake with you is correct, nice, right. What music plays as you wake? To wake up with you is to watch contentment descend. As you woke softly my heart beat loudly. As you moved away from sleep, I moved toward happiness. I feel evanescent as you wake. This morning, composed carefully, was carefully felt. In your waking my happiness is published. In your waking each rumor becomes a recital. In your waking the rest of the world becomes scenery. In your waking the firehouses go on alert and the sprinklers go off to cool the lawns. Colors fall from their strings about the room when you wake. In your waking the solution proceeds the problem. In your waking, I pace back and forth in the room of my heart. My heart feels over-peopled upon your rising. What a superior feeling waking next to you. How excellent and proud I feel upon your waking. The rich theft I feel from my poor heart as you wake. Results turn to full blown theory when you wake. Our togetherness in the morning brings endless joy. In light I find little to hold; in light that moves too fast; in light that stops at my skin; in light that could travel forever through nothing, but in light I find you.

This is Poetix

This is how to take it apart, phoneme by phoneme. This is equal parts cryptography & spelunking. This is a lunar eclipse, a solar flare, a meteor shower. This is a tear in the space-time continuum. This is the impossible colonizing the possible. This is a delicate flower, a bottomless dark. This is a childhood of frontier porn & an ingrained aphorism: *life is hard on the prairie*. This is the number of dream-hours necessary to prevent sleep-deprivation psychosis. This is four. This is communist tactics, unread sonnets, & the weight of the world on my desk. This is lunch (rice crackers, pistachio butter, black licorice). This is mind-bending versus soul-snaring, this is reason versus purpose, this is Haitian earthquake versus Duran Duran. This is subtext. This is taxidermy. This is tesseract. This is how nothing inert remains. This is French literary theory, this is Gail Simone's *Birds of Prey*. This is the Devotion of the Seven Sorrows of Mary. This is sweeter than revenge. This is a season's worth of pomegranate seeds swallowed over & over. This is three hours & counting. This is words tangled under tongue. This is peppery smoke & my aching mouth. This is how it steps on your hand, yanks your hair, brings you to your knees. This is terrible in the literal sense of the word. This is how brief periods of relief get briefer. This is overwhelmingly divine. This is failing beautifully. This is the dark mouth of living.

Poem for Weaving

for Pattie McCarthy

A fresh morning's confrontation with various seed fruit & our vocabulary taking a decided turn for the Anglo-Saxon. A fear of biblical foods: figs, dates, olives, et al. A preserve of oranges & crushed sugar, prepared by the physician to Mary, Queen of Scots c. 1561 to keep her seasickness at bay (for *marmalade*, read *Marie est malade*). A resonant image from a book or bookplate, now only partially visible, now & again drowned, now temporarily lost. A postcard from Our Lady of the Pines, the smallest church [insert season]. A kind of ruined worship. A once upon a time pact to do it recklessly: trade sons for knowledge, spin gold from straw, smoke to keep warm. A defensive armory of charms involving iron, salt, & religious items, unstrung saints, a scapular of moon & seaweed. A boy in the center of incandescent marble, a boy in a cloven pine, a forest full of boys in trees. A stigmata of superstition as sigil, a pretend accent as signifier of wit. A case of mistaken identity, a story made entirely out of hair. A mouthful of plum. A Cold War nostalgia, a fancy for the contrarian. A welching on this, that, & the other. A practice of burying the dead with their choirs, rather than with their families. A cracked mirror, a dropped stitch in time. A broken network, a code knit by hand to fill the achy silence. A pocketful of bloody martyrs, a state of temporal grace. A prayer under breath: *the world is our cloister— we shall not want.*

Yew Near/Yew Nork

Freezing for fashion,
starving for cabs,
we support you who've
come not easily to town,
catcare and up for
our impatience about
what transpired under
the whatever-trees, this
outside door sticks,
you have to throw a kind
of fit on the semi-public
stoop, do you love me?
do you love me? do you
love me? now that I can
dance? However severe
we're who are linked, I put
my joy somewhere for safe-
keeping and now that
somewhere won't text me
back, you know what's
unfair, what's unfair is being
third, being twenty-third,
I'm just trying to like
gather up these rosebuds
real quick, the where (not
pictured) in Kristin's
"where it might be possible
to let what is dead be dead,"
the visual in Anselm tells
me Paris wants poets
to restore "the visual sense,"
I was in that auspicious
auditorium in 2003 but left
on or in the wrong arms.
When I go on vacation
(rhetorically) I pull the knobs
off the range the cats once
crossed and lit, says Erica
"Are we in hell?" no, a reading,
but this misleads, they hold events
in the underworld too and we'll go,

or beautifully flake, come on
you can't seriously hate the
street, passive and vulnerable,
I have 5 bucks this morning
I went out with 63. If one's
told don't stop, don't stop,
one mechanizes, jaguarizes,
Robert Kelly on Paul
Blackburn, "A New York poet,
as they say, happiest in
the middle of things, a stranger
to scorn, it was all around him,
and he could handle it," in both
senses I guess. Are all
my friends' lungs, not pictured,
black as a steak? Time won't
stop but cinch up, one more
night and her friend would've
been swallowed by the snake
that for a week had spooned
her so nice she'd outright
dismissed what she called
the "stereotype about reptiles,"
in terms of the visual
human beings like circles
upon circles, or so I gather
from the carpet I study
during therapy, the future
tucks something cold and
smooth in my hands, lo, the
knobs of great double doors
through which I'd call passage
chimerical but see that consists
of, get this, head of a lion,
head of a goat, tail of a snake
but also head of a snake, not
pictured because out beyond
even image under ripstop
gore-tex parka of dark myth
the message from a stricken
hand tumbles only to land safe
in its cradle of rubber onto
pavement, step 1: build
a prison, step 2: climb in,
panoptic gaze watch me in
shred of morning hear
the child remember to pretend
she's a person and breathe.

ANNE BOYER

ALEXIS DE TOCQUEVILLE

Even the traffic complains
in *the language of trade*
 sub-woofed gossip, sirens,
 2chainz & gentrified
 sexts

We volunteer for the rack
on which we stretch ourselves,
bring our own coffins
as Hannibal brought
elephants.

What great fortune to be born
in the homeland of dimming
and drone-light,

in the empire of anti-poetry
at its dimming,

to be of all anti-poets the most anti-poetical
ourselves mostly eviscerating against
and dimming,

eclipsed in anti-chanting
from the anti-center called "Kansas"
which you might mistake as no place
but which resembles future war.

LIVES OF POETS / DIOGENES

There are poets who live as dogs in barrels
whose nightmare is to wake up
and find they live in a palace

whose nightmare is to wake up
a passionate yoga amateur slash
didactic locavore slash
pious and failing human
thin and pink

to wake up reformist
and striving
to wake up responsible
for no cosmos
and never answering
to the immortality
inherent
in

to wake up
with an award
or assistant
or liposuction

to wake up
splendid and American

while all the other poets get to live as dogs in barrels.
all those other poets
living

the whole world
also
as a dog in a barrel

woof

PRELUDE TO:

Left alone & to their own device, words might find meaning in insignificant things—an errant shaft of light along the dappled forest floor, the earth above the sky below. Each word aware of as were it on a beach the wave of crashing simplicity transformed, transfixed, awaiting change, a chance encounter, sent me. A message via god or bottle or sign. Transposed, transported by raft or log. & vision, when finally, it appears as if by magic or the works & days of hands, made something bright & clear, a shiny gossamer of light of thing. The leavening a gloaming for my heavy heart. It sends me. & are we not alone ourselves unequal to or equal? Nor of our time, limited & constrained by space & silence; & of imposed by silence, manifest by space. From somewhere, i have wandered. From somewhere other, i have arrived. & stranded—i have lost the thread of it—my returning, so squander what resources i might gather here. Alone—shut out from all but the constant roar of sea, the endless tears it weeps with me.

LET IT BEGIN WITH BLUE

1.] The endlessness of line & thin between two things. Of whiteness & of sky; by framed by cloud by framed. Of window; could with, by stand for metaphor & simile of opening & off the of, of closing off. The thin blue of off transparency & sky, the dull & dull of dull grey. That level with the clouds, with heavy rain, that with obscures the very day & on. If with & of our. Is isolation perspicacity, does opening open up the frame, or form for more than us an “indicating isotope” which in we of us contain. Had not what was had meant so much that introspection or contemplation or unanswerable yet come up as much with was as with without. & always, always feeling that the persistence of the presence of.

2.] The prospect of the outward sign. The indicates though of the there there always be through portents & of sign, the meaning, meaning evening. Where were the world outside to sing & sign, where could but the clouds roll on, & all the water sourced from hill or dale & thorough thought could bring it out to dance, be there but no outward sign. & though the hills roll thus & on or on & through for the & dark & flat that now the night time calls the evening to ascend. For here the difficulties are once more the dark & flat & that now the narrow band of cloudless sky. The world that made the evening. The land there of. The clouds above, the clods below the oft left window at the to the bottom & there in the at the there of this world. The word the word the willow weeps, it, the willow, weeps for me.

CASSANDRA SMITH

ONCE U&I MET A GIRL AND FELL IN LOVE

this is what u&i did best, finding a girl in a meadow.

u&i and the girl always would have the same name when we met and we would look at each other through this name until the girl in the meadow would hear her name called clearly from another horizon. the girl would return to her cottage and u&i would be left to puzzle this loudly. there had been suddenly something and now there wasn't and this was very new because our forest was hard to find. every time we would be tricked so synonymously.

U&I AND A BEAST

there is a softness of beasts when they are sleeping and they are sleeping beside the body of a nearer u&i. the beasts of the forest were not an eating beasts nor a chasing beasts but they would rumble below the canopy and u&i learned to tend through what their largest feet would unearth.

U&I FOUND WIT AND WONDER AND U&I OBJECTED TO ONE WITHIN THE OTHER BUT U&I HAD NEVER BEEN A SPECIES OF FURY

u&i would listen to how the sound of what a beast could sound would lumber out of its tongue and then how this would turn to nag. the uncertainty of whether these beast-things were a thing that maybe u&i could not endure because u&i were missing some beast pieces was wondered but u&i had never had the proper bits to begin.

U&I WITH THE BEAST WOULD FORGET WE HAD JUST MET AND WHEN WE LEARNED THE PARTS OF BECOMING A PART OF THE SAME THING WE WOULD NOTICE THE DRIFTING LIKE SNOW

there was not often weather in the meadow but u&i could tell a changing of seasons by the sound of how the boughs would fail. winter was a tremble of luster, of nearly gotten. u&i would place names on the things that had fallen and the names would sting when they would never be spoken aloud. winter would keep the names frozen and when it grew colic winter would rid the limbs.

ONCE IT WAS SAID THERE IS NO DOMESTIC BUT ONCE FROM THE BEGINNING OF US CAME WITH THE RISK

everything is so fucking gilt.

I DON'T REALLY KNOW THE NAME OF HOW MY HANDS WEEP

it became again strange, this awkward of paws, how one thing could be drawn to another. there would be a sketch of embrace and then would be the withdrawal. the things held in the most intentional of hands would be chewed and then they would no longer exist. they would become the half things of hollow, the things of no longer glory. i had wanted to hold you and keep holding. i didn't care.

DAVID WOLACH

from *Landscapes*, Vital Forms Symposium, Subterranean Arthouse, Berkeley CA, April 2013

**

1. Passing

For the *inability to pass* the first din, dins to follow—*screams* to follow, a dolled mouth comes into day the wheel-well stows in flight. Ailing insufficiency in the wait and oh well. Dreamed a film engendered with so much visage. Distractive adornment, this black swan dress f/or our pilfered body the labor of any misgiving. Again the hiding took to us, again the work and hours in glamour's *silhouetted* fucking *repose*. Over mountains. Over sand. Dreamed a fear of medicine. Strikes not yet quite surgical layoff but glances, boxed and away. Over glass. What will have become of "an empty tube inflated by a mind"—in the flame of unknowing. In the bars and between. Over a ledge. A riff. A theater's atrium. A gullet. "With no place but their own heavy centers." These souls, all, for the terrific ecstasy of disclosure. Like lying through your teeth.

2. Occupying

In overcast *tones* recollect, *impassive* slowdown. A who done it dragged on, boots were the first—not proverbial not the last—to come. So gathered into tents into them hunts, moles burrowing so it went. Then run back. Find them. Knocked on doors and they visit me in return. Every *gesture* has its finance. To be visited by a city, the ragged throat

of the visited upon in such a way. We who display in moments of stall and brief. What is the gap in the rap. Who has written it. Return and find them. There is a door. There is a motion. Another door. That is all. Hauling palettes under moonlight. That is all. With these arms. *Impasse*. An absolute wrench. That is all. Rats under moonlight. Visage of bloodlet. Rights called persona. Fisted. That will be all. Barrel. *Deadlock*. Blackblock.

3. Maintaining

They are *holding*. We are *maintain(ing)* functionary, grind. Of lines, of repetition: a distillation of radical mimicry, incanted and then in the mountains someone is not there and is far away. To start the conversation:

If you are a deskjockey straddle me. Ergonomically.

4. Gap

Be entered by a place that enters you. Press *enter*. Be pressed and call up, out: recall that *the clock* is outmoded. To the phrase. Oft-used flippant academic jerks of conferencing in denim. Recall: there are temporary offices for *temporary workers*—these will have caught fire and the doors will have been locked, where their body's precipice will have been to fall or burn, and

wherefore both,

thereof a temporary window will have snowed ash and face parts and a perhaps torso is light almost as air and slurs almost. But hallas the dead wait of it, a life's remnants no matter how severed are too heavy for breath to carry.

And I'm too blunted to feel a death without scrolling it like it's porn or edible so use the discharge of their blast radius to affect my pardon.

Recall that at this juncture *muscle memory* is not useless but is

of no use—at a juncture. At a juncture language gets replaced. Offices are sometimes abodes. This is not working

from *home*. Recall: Dhaka's thoroughfare bloated and not rushing the people corridors in riot not rushed the feet as they go. Outsourced from where, from where. Thousands line up to work

when it rains. Then the pavement, fists swell with people are for a moment is sometimes another form of commerce. And this is recall not about jumping, not about, not proximal not approximate. Recall that *recall* sometimes marks the imperfect boundary

of silence. Sometimes silence is an uproar. It is, sometimes.

**Note on excerpt of *Landscapes* above: Italics are words participants/audience wrote down on note cards at The Vital Forms Symposium (curated by Eleni Stecopoulos and The Poetry Center, Berkeley CA 2013), this in response to my part of the reading-performance, which began with this phrase as prompt: "two words when you hear 'the latent potentials of the laboring body.'" Quotes, in order, are from Wittgenstein *Culture and Value*; Paul Celan "All Souls"; and Fred Moten "necessity/immensity: many edges/seeing things" (Floor Journal No. 1).

from *Hospitalology* (Tarpaulin Sky Press 2013)

In my opinion in my panic question re
Member I'll nurse you and this hard cot
Far from ransacked palaces occupied by

In my opinion in my codified panic flight
Risk takes as I look you over as aphrodisiac
Plea me out with better vitals pumped per /

In my opinion in your sault my rends results
Rawed turn your profound ask for this port
Able lung the heat here is fucking killing me

JEN HOFER

Buying Power

The hopelessly hopeful subject propelled through an electrified field, mobile.

Magnetized, or resistant.

Buffeted by the blowback of change.

By the blow.

Subjectivity constructed out of post-consumer waste.

Gulping for oxygen. Grasping. Objecting.

Buffered from change by consumerist blowback: the subject is the target.

A blow to the target.

There is no "post-consumer," so nothing is wasted.

The subject is weak at the knees. Grasping for a handhold or foothold.

The rhetoric of hope obliterates entrenched structural immobility.

To hear the difference, if there is one.

No glass ceiling, but an endless permeating air of no you can't.

Buffed to a hopeful sheen. Blown back.

If it is possible to hear.

What you don't see can intimidate you.

Phenomena abound. Intimations. Microscopic internments.

Bouncing around like molecules, impenetrable ricochet or porous tunnels dynamited through rock, held open with rebar.

Opportunistic portals held shut with a bar code.

What you haven't heard of pervades the airy wavelengths, familiarizing itself with the crenellations of available space.

Strategic vacancies. Striations.

Seepage, corrupted systems, a dust that hovers, interrupting the workings of a gut feeling.

Strategic variances. A loping ease. Vacated strategies left on autopilot.

The subject does not necessarily exhibit an ideology, but rather clambers awkwardly through a pilfered landscape, all too fake or all too real.

Magnetized or resistant or denominated. Targeted.

A slope or mitigating angle.

Care, what if God was one of us?

from *Barf, Sexually*

All I can see sometimes is cuteness. Frequently, when I go to type in the URL for cuteoverload.com, I mistype it as cuteordie.com. I realize this typo is alarming; the urgency a problem. There is a search filter on cuteoverload.com called, “cute or sad.” I hate the choice. Cute is always frayed by ineffable sorrow. The science of cute is heartbreaking, the cutie’s floppy limbs, its vulnerability and need, an incessant reminder of my failure to produce young of my own. The origin of the word “cute” is from the word “acute”, sharp or severe in effect. I’m unable to withdraw, to disavow cute. Creeping and waiting in the bowels of sex. I’m related to cute through a lineage of past lives and because cute is sealed into every animal. Peering into a long tunnel of mirrors at my ancient memories I see who I was before I was this human, this sophie, memories of being everyhuman. Remember or sense the time when you were everyhuman, before you were born into having to only be you? I want to get back to being everyone and away from this one, this stoppage, chatter and clatter of lies in my belly. The neuroscience of animals tells us that their emotions help them navigate their physical reality. Their sense of care is visible tenderness. Remember that our emotions are unthinking too. Emotional brain plasticity allows us to extend our sense of care to all our fellow human beings, not just to our offspring. That care is uniquely human.¹

Our inclination and affection for the cute is generous, though cute is everywhere, common as grass and bottomless as insomnia. Cute pisses me off though, steals my bones, and breaks into my flesh with its round face and chasm eyes. I want to hate it the way we hate ugly, anything that is the reflection of the ugliest parts of ourselves: neglected, diseased, rotted, contagious. Perhaps because of this, the most ugly reflections of ourselves are the homeless. But aren’t the homeless vulnerable too, so exposed to the elements and theft and rape and violence and fear? Maybe surviving neglect, surviving exposure, accepting the elements enough to sleep through exposed nights with only a thin blanket or dirty sheet stretched from his toes over his head like a dead body isn’t cute—sometimes, I wish for them that they were the dead bodies they resembled because it would be easier, probably, to just not wake up again on a cold slab of sidewalk so cold it is deep with cold— I realize this makes me like a hamster who has to eat some of its hamster babies or a psychopath who believes himself to be a mercy killer. Survival should be more valuable than the cute, like bravery, and the opposite of ugly. But bravery you choose and survival chooses you. Deep down, survival implies victimization, which is offensive and ugly despite our American need to overcome adversity, a feeling or value we mistake for equality, for justice. Rugged individualism trumps the need to be just, though they are both forms of self-righteousness. I think, thank GOD it’s them and not me. By “the homeless” I mean people.

¹ Asma, Stephen T. “Animal Spirits.” *aeon*. Web. 6 Feb. 2013.

KATY BOHINC

Let us add that contemporary philosophy addresses itself at all times to women. It might even be suspected that it is, as discourse, partly a strategy of seduction.

- Alain Badiou, "What is Love?"

Excerpts from "Dear Alain"—a project of love letters from a mathematical poet to a mathematical philosopher

Dear Alain,

There, got it, round two. multiplicity. said Badiou. you mother fucker stole my brain. except, you're wrong. still working in Euclid's plane. enlightenment is the real projective. where parallel lines meet at the horizon and a line is a circle. it's true that the abrahamic religions have a problem with historicity and crusades. somebody's always got to be right before and in order to get to God. buddha knows the line is really a circle at the horizon anyway, where we all should strive to dwell. the point, it's a line. the line, it's a circle. the circle, it's a flower. that point derrida collapsed in the derivatives market? don't worry about it. we'll fix it when we wake up. cat life number 27, ladybug reincarnate.

Dear Alain,

I think when you talk about Multiplicity, Alain, really didn't a guy named Hardt write that ten years back? I guess he was riffing on you but it led him to Classicism. Chaos is the original sin we've all been running from all our architectural lives. Why are we spending our energy re-discovering this? Why does this constitute a form we want to represent? Is it that we never knew how bad it could be until Hitler? Maybe we didn't know how much pain dissolves brick. I see this as the real problem.

Dear Alain,

I thought all day of what I would write you. Now I can merely see my fingers typing at the keys. Everything escapes me. My mind thinks of so many intimate things to tell you: what I think of your work, how I feel, the images and the selflessness. When I think of writing for the entire of existence, of humanity, I am in church with a vow to serious straight eyes, concentration, a heavy heart and good posture. It terrifies me and makes me cry. How do you do it?

Love, Katy

Dear Alain,

I love you more than ever. You wrote that the Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings have a universal significance. They prescribe new possibilities whose value is international.

I could not agree more. When Mubarak finally stepped down, I was just headed from my office to lunch. I stepped outside to consider the importance of this revolution, this televised moment of history as important as, the paris commune or the french revolution or, or, as important as, Tahrir itself. Tahrir means To Freedom, literally, or, independence, as I'm sure you know. And as I stepped out outside on the street I began to sob. I really did. I was crying on the street and thought, perhaps you look a little silly on the street here, so I went to the bookstore where my friend Rod works. I cried more at the bookstore. All in all it took about two hours to exhaust myself of the tears and I am not sure anyone really understood- most people just think I'm overly emotional or maybe crazy- but I cried because I am not crazy and Egypt proves it. That moment when he left, when Mubarak left through peaceful means, through universal, peaceful spontaneous, beautiful power of the people, it's, it's every single person in the world who said "things can be better", it's every single person in the world who dared to say "torture is wrong", it's every single person who dared to dream, it's every single person who went to sleep with hope for a better future, it's every single ignorant fucking imbecile who only said "no" going to hell, it's everyone who called me crazy for hoping, for believing, for wanting more, it's to hell with them, and it was worth it, it was all worth it, it was true, it is possible, it was worth the sacrifice it is all worthwhile we can and the big words are worth a damn and I cried and cried and cried because all the idealism was true and all the blood and the bruises and the torture was losing, it wasn't structure anymore, it was a tall building made of electric fence for everyone to hail with bruises and scars and untouchables, that facade collapsed, and there was a sun to heal the scars, and the romance of poetry survives and this is why I cried: for all the pain of anyone who ever said "I guess that's how it has to be" because it didn't have to be that way the day that Mubarak left, it was singing and dancing in the street among all the people, it was the resounding ring of the subtle non-violent line, it was the rise out of silence of the truth, that magic of the white dove from the darkest, gentleman's top hat, the scar become the badge, the tear become the holy water, the transcendence, the moment where the best side of humanity came true, and everything we write for, everything we live for, everything we ever dared to believe was worth it all.

PS. It's parallel lines meeting at infinity. It's when Gauss looked at the horizon and said, but parallel lines do meet, they meet at the horizon. It's the dream of the platonic form lapping at the edge of the shore and the tide rushing over one last time to a blazing red dawn, the kind that makes you wake up and breathe as if for the first time and all those tones of sarcasm fade into some jellyfish dying on the sand and it's blindingly beautiful the stuff we always knew was there but just grew too cynical to care except maybe deep in the night we risked a word or two of "maybe" and "i hope" and "it still is" and "there is more" and we dreamed and we dreamed and we dreamed and it was the real projective plane and things do happen at infinity and i still believe in love and i'm getting on a plane because i believe that if the egyptians can then why not, we can have it too. i still believe. please tell me you do, too. I love you. Tell me these words mean something to you. Tell me. Bisous.

SUE LANDERS

so much individual being in them that one can never think there are many millions made like them

It is difficult to begin a story when one is far away from the beginning when there was a little house a lot of children not a lot of money and a lot of neighbors.

perhaps everything will come to be showing something

and that will be the happy ending of all this beginning

When the beginning of a story is far away it can be easy to sound romantic or bitter about the *poor queer people living in little houses*. I just want to talk about people and their houses and what held the whole of them together. What held together the whole of these individuals acting as a whole acting upon individuals together.

Enough queerness to hold together the whole of them.

Outside the rowhouse not an airlite but a shotgun or a railroad were the neighbors. And some of the neighbors were new and some of the neighbors were old but most of the neighbors by the time I came to the house were new or so they told me.

My siblings told me that before I came to the house old neighbors moved out and new neighbors moved in and all of this happened very quickly. The moving vans like magic. So quickly they called it flying.

New neighbors moved in and old neighbors flew out. Old neighbors flew out to houses next to houses with people who looked like them. But we didn't fly away the way other white people who looked like us did.

And this might have been because of money. I say might because these changes were not discussed or explained. But there were many children and not a lot of money so this reason seems reasonable to many.

Or maybe we didn't fly away the way other white people who looked like us did because of a feeling. I say maybe because these feelings were not discussed or explained. But there was an exchange a sibling told me. Much later a sibling told me our mother had asked them a question. A question not meant to be answered. A question about a feeling. The question was how would you feel if you moved into a new house and all of your new neighbors moved away.

Or maybe we didn't fly away because of the church. I say maybe because these details were not discussed or explained but much later I heard about a meeting. A meeting at the church where my mother and father were married and baptized their babies. A meeting at the church where the men of the church the priests told the neighbors not to sell their houses. Told the white neighbors not to sell their houses to black people. That to do so would be the beginning of the end. I need to go back before the beginning.

beginning a new thing without leaving the last thing

understanding the meaning in the repeating

understanding the reason of this one

always compelling to understand the reason

all the doing and the moving

moving through a country is never done quickly

Not like moving vans like magic this place of seeking and pushing and fleeing and living. Pushing and living and seeking and fleeing. Projects like this take time.

Much earlier than any of this Franklin had a project. An arduous project. He wrote *let all things have their places*. He ruled each page with red ink to keep track of his rights and his wrongs.

to be governed by good and wise rules

And as I think of him I think of surveyors and their maps. The maps drawn long after Franklin. The maps drawn before any meetings or moving vans like magic.

from time to time

The maps relating traits of individuals to whole groups of individuals and their desires. The maps ruled with red lines and shades to grade areas by color. One map contained a house on a street named for no one. This street was shaded yellow to signify *transition*. A shade meaning an area at risk of *infiltration*. Of infiltration by what the makers of the map called a *lower grade population*.

from time to time

Twenty years after this map was drawn my father bought a house on a street shaded yellow. He bought his house from a woman who looked like him on a street full of people who looked like him surrounded by streets full of people who looked like him and then there was a meeting.

from time to time

It was around this time there was a meeting at the church. The church where my mother and father were married. The church where they baptized their babies. The church where there was a meeting that my parents may or may not have gone to where the priests told the neighbors not to sell their houses.

from time to time

A little later than this people who looked like my father started buying new houses in areas far away from the lines and the shades that graded areas by color. It was around this time that there was a burning. A burning at my uncle's house after he sold his house to someone who didn't look like him. Someone who looked like my uncle burned a cross on his lawn. And his baby remembers. My uncle's baby remembers. She tells me so 40 years later. She tells me about ash on the lawn in the morning.

from time to time

It was around the time of the burning that all of my father's brothers and all of my mother's sisters drove all of their children to houses next to houses of people who looked like them.

Old neighbors moved out and new neighbors moved in and all of this happened very quickly they said but moving through a country is never done quickly what happens quickly is a story short of details. A story short on details I am telling.

I am telling you that it's likely that if my father had more money or less children or a car or a different religion or a desire to change or a desire to not change or a greater or lesser desire to keep everything exactly the same we would have flown away the way others who looked like us did but these things were not discussed or explained and we didn't and I am explaining that.

from time to time on pieces of paper such thoughts

I sit down to write them for you.

EAST BAY POETRY SUMMIT SCHEDULE:

Thursday, May 23rd

8pm @ Nick's Lounge: 3218 Adeline St, Berkeley, CA

Karaoke at Nick's Lounge

Friday, May 24th

7:00 p.m. @ 2127 Blake St, Berkeley

Uyen Hua

Douglas Rothschild

Melissa Buzzeo

Jen Hofer

David Wolach

Saturday, May 25th

4:00 p.m. @ Long Haul: 3124 Shattuck Ave, Berkeley, CA

Cassandra Smith

Sue Landers

Mathew Timmons

Katy Bohinc

Frank Sherlock

**6:00 p.m. @ Woolsey Heights: 1628 Woolsey st apt c, Berkeley
Potluck!**

8:00 p.m. @ Woolsey Heights

Bhanu Kapil

Andrew Durbin

John Coletti

Jared Stanley

Dolores Dorantes (with Jen Hofer)

Jenn McCreary

Sunday, May 26th

3:00 p.m. @ The Public School: 2141 Broadway, Oakland

Anne Boyer

Anna Vitale

Laura Henriksen

Sophie Sills

Frank Montesonti

7:00 p.m. @ Tender Oracle: 531 22nd St, Oakland

Maged Zaher

Matt Longabucco

Dawn Lundy Martin

Monday, May 27th 2pm

BBQ at David Buuck's