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FREE

LVNG 9
an independent journal of poetry, fiction, & art
FREE

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Coasting

All eyes on mirrors cornered in folklore rumours
on what's going down plucking up a harp smoke
haze rigours single double chin bowing without
interest in what rejection is all about escaping
from desolate cul-de-sacs pigeonholes meant to
redeem previous crumbling social engineering
projects tall order from the I Know How You Feel
charm school lying through their teeth everyone's
a winner what's your line in patter? Clicking
out a rapid fire speech tempo hard to tell the
would from the maybes press on difficult sparkle
to decipher a dab hand around the house demoted
by some spook quite bleak for awhile until you
find your niche where the domino theory working
in reverse brings base relief. Tearing lumps out
of what a paradigm should be on earthly terms.
Walking through the ghetto with the grotto in
honour of the Sacred Heart towards temporal
sensation tonic asking why does a note sounded
on the bottom of a freshly filled cup of coffee
move to a higher pitch? The bubbles dissolving
in the new cup change the note. You get the same
sort of differing velocity when there's gas in a
liquid. It's often how gas fields are located.

Submariners

Sandra Tundra part-time waitress took
to addressing the new kitchen porter
as John previous incumbent's name she
worked under an alias of Joan Glasnevin
Saint Pappin's trained in Galway liked
it there ergonomics pay rates low staff
morale ocean floor head chef loved rain
lager dictating thermonuclear war very
real possibility one crisis after another
punk era then glamrock followed flavour
teleological plateau amnesia discotheques

Attached to watering holes sea cliffs fog
banks beyond Mary Lou's hello murder coup
arson pots pans piling up J cloths my mop
bucket sink office recurring dreams hated
that helmet pretty hedge empire domestic
message understood needed onions predator
host stagger aisle Chapel of Bells poodle
barking 'Here Comes The Bride' cassette
probably arose in bacteria four or five
million years ago to help with at the bar
you've got to be on top one cell squirted

Its genes into another fusions uneven
Ruby lost general direction Drumcondra
pavement motto CURSUM PERTITIO birth
misadventure verdict only home SHE ever
owned herself often return to an office
metal keys liquid lunch breath testing
stout slips tint shit piss SHE wrote
cushy job indoors more germs in your
mouth than arse living on an island of
saints and scholars wonderful launch
pad for next world anchorite hedonist

Unite under influence John Donne's few
scoops mundane metaphysical spins hit
spot apparition lie back think Alaskan
beach volleyball Michelle Phillips bias-
cut kissing curves synthetic bearskin
we've got so much to talk about soap
powder 1907 perborate silcate= Persil
celluloid first used making detachable
shirt-collars extremely flammable as
many smokers discovered Mamas & Papas
what do you think of space? fuck space!

Utopias riddled with prohibitions slipping
glimpse towards Antipodes lift radio signals
Dolores Bridget's mate weights numbers seeing
maternity wards as trenches Duchamp's enema
Grove 22 muzzled greyhounds backyard kennel
detect movements within talking relocation
Kerry Pike favoured transfer application
tea's served level terrace contrasting
wallpaper clutch at straws together wide
berth eyes back of neck spare tyre allusion
driven by compulsions this that way in direct

Sunlight too intense to appraise a diamond's
pawn shop value more potential than actual
space earth did not move sky stood still
perpetual shade falling on The Marsh our
tribe extinct their folklore lost a rebellion
is not a revolution spirits tighten blood
vessels tilt balance dictate blood pressure
affect body's ability & so to sleep neutered
observers ensure soft landing conditioned
reflexes fine-tuned specimen fields of May
wild corpses stalk Little Hanover Street

The North

The ice eyed animal what kind of entrance
was she Never an actual idea was broken

Not the cloud landscapes of way or stone pain of road
but inhalation No mist or smoke no air

A door into topographies of sky Lascivious
tunnel of voice Decomposing gate to abyss

There is no moment through Wakes there pregnant nourishing
what root:

Wash out water with water

Perhaps these are lies Perhaps inhalation of perhaps:
channel through which the human wreckage can wash entailed

out of history into white sea
frigid asleep

Inhalation of lilted-string gait Gate of shining Door of poisons
Way of traps

Shimmering gown over eyes;
Sick so happy:

It is daytime

Pain apparelled as acquaintance Odors unruly in waft
Eyes have healed from ice to cobalt; yet water remains transparent

The grass door leads the body to the world or the cloud-heart is snow
Hole in the brain where light enters Hole in the heart where rivers pool

The stone is conglomerate: passage pilgrimage pursuit
The grass door in wind shudders

One finds pink shell a small rodent seeds of panicgrass

or a constellation: the fingerwhorls always bloody; world
not dead but measured What we are

hunting Ease of passage to mountain's lee side The death
of all that confuses Bit of ground

in which to mother
seed No we are named hunting; Seed or syllable: fracture's exclamation

Marry your burdenbasket Hoist and ascend into meadow or starfield
or dismemberment

It is the same
method of dreaming: the enemy I beloved I stone I tree

Skull permeable; the movement of atmosphere liquid Its collective
body a solitary animal in rapacious ascension

The communal body reeks of common Obese cloud
of breath Heads of teeth Fluttering birdhands Frangible love

The landscape is gestured with devolving
edifices of line: disjointed stone melting earth occasional worn tooth

Gardens browsed to cedar Ditches unnamed to paths Air blown blue

Boundary glyphs pecked in lava still speak keep out
Keep being to possess; out being face-away

To possess facing away: the humid wall
of noise pressed up against the back No horizon all edge fallen

Or become another animal The dancing line oscillates between snow
and rain In cottonwoods the whirring of dragonflies

is blue clay used to divert volition: no choices: tomorrow

we will either be asleep or awake or air

Our vocation could be the deceit of death Erosion
or fracture Our avocation could be the commerce of names

We are manufacturing ourselves in what image encumbered
by what vocabulary Sky heaves

Perhaps keeper of graves Perhaps being of stone Sky land
or sky god Every eye a scandal This landscape is drunken

The structure designed on suspension We can have no profession

We are the defaced

in the exhaust of the land: dust below
wind above We sing to mask the music

What is the yield In grain
in flesh? The earthen walls of which world yield? What sight?

Our bodies
are becoming red and yellow flowers; we are a category

of disappearance In defence we embrace
sacrality: of broken music hail's path

of the sentience of insects or the strategies of disease We accede

to beauty's combustion subscribe to the body's rainbow
trajectory Our lives erode

as sandstone or cirrus mottling our personal names
as rife with mutation dependant

on angle of light Call me Stone

or Cloud; we will answer always Always we will answer: small owls
burrowed in cupped cliffs: melodies which accumulate

as bright gravel in the palm The earth

is paved with pottery poverty Red cliffs grind The premise
is of evergreens We will go away anywhere: breaths in breeze

though always a wall in the sky Drystone
the seams perfect; seams of the brain

lighttight We will not go away anywhere:
we move into cloth or clay

into heron or seed; vibration dissipated or lingering
as method of light defines

[Monster made you were]

Monster made you were
To sing and blaze because
issue quickened how my glory is
your little feet chrysanthemums
that made me hate sister blood
I hate you for you wouldn't hush
burgeoned from peaceable jingles
Lucky Dog yours is a mouth

[Cats underwater a zoo]

Cats underwater as part of a zoo
tableau orange tabby cats
sad wet fur they blink
so rarely moldy necks
My sister doesn't feel anything
I was wearing the old black hat
on the subway when I saw the old lover
I think he has a "lard ass"

[Crows and grackles grackles]

Crows and grackles grackles
in the sycamore food cruising
I'm broke and the sauce burns
I sprinkle ashes in the flowerbed
I kiss your cat

It doesn't matter that fate can't rain
and write flower again
Want me a handsome bird
 black toenails that curve

West of Sunny's Wigs
the goddess Gaia shakes her dirty hair

The End of Everything

N.B. As a compositional device, this poem allows for seven sections of ten seven-lined verse parts, each using a syllabic count of ten syllables per line

I

I could show that darkness fell about us—
 all of our spirited crystals snuffed like
 wicked lamps, while the weather followed, piling
 its clouds so high, and then attacking their
 crested, or tight chiaroscuros. As
 much as this may depend on what we come
 to, wronger or no better than what we

avoid. My own light still withers in my
 books—so much of it composed, and resting
 in its marginalia. Where should this
 evening be, then, with these assessed roads, or
 its storming, shut-out night? Listen and hark!—
 for I talk of it here, with my stress put
 to a world of vocabulary. There

are patterns to our right days, the few hours
 pushing, or grouping us all against the
 walls. The hammers descend here, while some of
 us have come to be planted (even as
 deep as roses are) within this season's
 crematoria. I—or who else?—should
 have shouted, although what would a warning

have done, except to administer a
 last preparation? The god we have shall
 burn, the same as we did, puffing himself

before the windows, still watching, as if
the right assumption for panic was to
think of us gone blind. Of course, the manner
of contentiousness exists. It does! It

describes those who are not changed by hope, or
all the first expressions of it, such as
motives for explaining who, which or what
had disappeared. The future studies us,
while the past is arranged from what future
was. The present oscillates...between those
places where our god does either not yet

die, or is unborn. We, though, could choose to
to talk again, while passing through this hour's
new cemeteries and hells... My people
go nowhere! I see them stood against the
wires, ones dead and leaning, others who claw
at the barbs and hang, too alive to let
their bodies fall. Or should my people not

go when they do, by making a brasher
exodus throughout the fields—breathing the
scents, while carrying back their bags of old
poppy flowers? They seek, and are sought by
a god and a golem. Some, I think, will
walk forever on the air, while others
should prefer their attics, able now to

stop and write of falling through the sky and
dust. Of course there are shadows, but I have

found most, and broken them, each against the
hook of my knee. The years, though, are never
part of what I am. They stir the fashions
of decades by drowning, or crowding through
our flocked millennia—then, like crows, they

lapse, to carry out the whims of hostile
life. I should want to have doused the many
branches of the candelabra. Instead,
there are tricks. Then our fabrications, all
glistening with the blood of what seems ripe,
and raw enough for carving down. Never
could we have enough names for ourselves, but

I have some in my mouth like angel, dog-
rose, fire. I have some that fill my mouth, such
as stars, children in rags, the burnt bodies
of soldiers, golems, gods who need us, gods
we also wish would die... In my mouth is
a tooth that speaks too fluently. It knows
of my books. It chews on, and crunches wars.

II

Once, but once only, I believed that my
body had arms, so I used them to love
with, and implant messages of beauty
inside my loved one's soul. Loving seemed as
constant as my eyes, but they too have been
taken from me. I may walk assisted
by a shattered stick, while my mouth is firm

about its words; yet I listen—not to
replied talk, but the scufflings of mice in
their corners, and the high, stinging winds that
reach too far behind all horizontal
screens of derelict wires. Hope has an end,
but life never truly has to start. The
mice are sometimes caught for food. I have

also drank from my water, not being so
afraid that way; but the salts pecked themselves
inside me, still forcing, or turning back
my tongue to the same absent bowl. Always,
thus, I return to the huts. There have been
pits. Sometimes I have stumbled, and felt the
bodies open up beneath my own, but—

there being no more gods, I have not cried.
There are no more people... excepting that
I hear their noises, or am pushed about
between them, fending off their insults as
they come. We live, crouched as tens of thousands
in five hundred huts. The walls protect us
from the stars, whilst the cold beats through them, and

rain freezes in its trickling through their laths.
A year ago, I would not have maintained
these dreams of hell—yet now I request them,
lest there be far worse. I ought to be wrong,
for at the center of any pain there
is a paradise. What should not begin
with proofs?—always it is that death consumes

itself to intend life. This comes of the order, yet is outside of our part in its normal comprehension. I believe that hate, in its multiples, is better than evil. I should not complain. For me, a god was never anything more than a different quality of devil—

but I could also assume that this makes too much of an indulgence to common generality. The world's greatest shames grow from little pieces of inhuman hurt. Even so, the amount of pure, or prime recognition would require nothing; although I am merely carping to what

I know. The most familiar ground to me was well-loved and easy to follow—which is why my referral to it here is neither good nor proper. Now, and for a year since my light went, there has been no manufacture of sense within me; for this war is not a war, but a long

and incorrect smashing of attitudes. It is not a question of gods, lands, or even politics. More credible quests for distortion exist, but all of them require terms that may become polite and discrete. They stay as tags, because we do not, cannot and could not know what our right

words mean. We would not intend that they are mysteries, but the natures of extreme negatives are—though not sublime—made too difficult through what they seem. The scream is enough. So is the sigh, or the silence—some of it being broken here, but by one who has always wished he should not die.

III

As a symbol of poverty, I would think that a potato meant most. Here a token of wealth, it is sometimes hidden—kept and nibbled at before being traded; but its image fails for being transient—the full value is held for only a moment, then the lustre of

it falls. If I think of it now, it is a fit price for the world, and descriptive—not in terms of shape, but of a mundane commonality in which all like things may vegetate and none are proud. Thus, I communicate—or thus turn and return, in and out of my prior life's ties. As

a teller of memories, I could not want to recollect all; although I tend to invent a feel for anecdotes, or hum and grumble when a story deforms.

Life, when acknowledged, resorts to apply
a crookedness upon small rules—to now
assert that war breeds benefits, or at

least richness for some, with less (much less than
some must have thought) for the disfigured others.
Nations are never glamorous, yet (as
people) we have always possessed a world's
distortion. For the need of our terms, the
nations procure us. They will not read their
history through ours, but combine to set us

slanders—unqualified, as each one is,
to assess guilt. It is not right. Those that
murder us need never die... yet hell is
a status that is not constrained. Having
coaxed the worst suffering, what else must be
done, but the same enactment of such hurt
made over and over again? Even

coffins have become too good. Believe that
thousands of friends have been burned, or that the
same great numbers were pushed into pits, not
buried but decomposing into the
spared fragility of our mutual
air. Assume, as a truth, that the methods
of dying are worse. Yet there are also

some of us who are not dead, for options
of death have become too grand. Then, a life
consents to no better dealing—for in

its quicker exit a body belongs
to, or regards itself as possessor
of more potent attractions. Suppose them
spatial and temporal, but expressed as

a single duplicity within one
major, universal flow of spirit
in a coil-form. Thus, those dying—but who
now could wish to consent to a rape of
his soul, to engage with a consequence
of separation, whilst knowing that hells
and heavens should not merge? My blinded sight

should still see further, although my private
darkness burns with the shreds of numberless
suns, so clarifies a better, or more
brief infinity. I have stared too long
into my nights, now scanning the air for
infidelities, and patching my words
with remembrances—not, strictly, of things

I have seen, but of the drawn-out dramas
that I once incurred. I suffer for them,
blindfold; for I sense the occasions have
no full- or half-light. Most shadows that I
miss are the results of fables. Those who
die may yet record them, as if required
to know such prophecies that pass for rules.

IV

All of our newer history began
in the bowel, for it stirs there, bearing
us too far back upon its circumstance—
by fouling, or showing the fall toward
retention; of this or that plot of a
novelty, where the verses and chapters
vie, or are the onset of all our blank

and piteous memorabilia.
Now pretend that this, my narrative, does
not ever risk a rightful turn. It speaks
its best pleasing, but aborts when all its
whining sing-song should cohere. I scratch—
or my stick would scratch out all these many
mediums I name for mundanity;

though they be items of birth that are far
slower in maturing than those named for
religious disguise. My soul is termed
as a prop for the benefaction of
the sky. Thus, my preference for a lack
of cloud, or what cloud was before my day
gave way. If, or when, the mornings came, they

fooled our actions into nothing better
than a raucous shout. The command to die
was not so incidental as the one
to live—and yet it seemed the preferred, or
was carried to us on a pungent breeze, our

numbers found, with our names corroded and
burnt, with more than bones and furniture smashed

within the emptiness of fields and streets.
Such matters of death are never great, for
all are occasions of dependence—wed
and privileged; so look as growth that has
offered too much shade, or perhaps like pots
in which the only substance is profound
decay. Death being dark, it comes as grist

to a blind man's eyes—but death becomes long
shadows, shaped like guns; it serves us our flesh,
which means new competence, yet lays it down
again to be bruised upon our many
plates of blood and oil. Death is a finger
cut from a hand. Death is a fist and a
foot, a set of disconnected toes, one

jaw and a skull through which many bullets
chose to scream. Death should have been a horse, not
a rider of one—not a skeletal
king, with a scowling visage to portray
a melancholia. There was a night,
though, when I heard him clatter on the moon...
but of death and Death, I think the last one

is asleep, so would not recognise that
Time is apt to disappear, or if men
and women gathered singly (or in pairs)
about a deep, and stinking sewer hole.

It is a history, or a whole of
History prepared from parts. It is due
a future. It is given our present.

We invent it. We would wish to change it,
for it does not go, or vary from those
scenes and intervals that none agreed to,
or had sanctioned last. The end is always
so like a dream of being pulled into
the sewer. We are people who descend
there. There are others who do not, but they

are disguised by their skins, so have a choice
of politics to still escape from. Then
some are gods being beaten by gods, or
are horses stretched to where the windows push
out. There, too, there are thieves. I could begin
to accept a conclusion of murders,
or of nothing stolen, nothing put right.

v

Remember this, that once beyond the moon
there was a ghetto. I was told of a
painter, none else, although he could have been
a poet, alive and singing in the
streets. In the night sky, he strolled with a pig
at his heels. Beyond this, there was also
a piccolo. The stars hung from a rope,

while we watched the descent of two hornless
goats. He should have redrawn them, for there was
a space inside each that echoed with a
bull's blue, raucous words. It was not the best
to have forgot, for although the rest of
some of us looked trampled on, there was more
to come, experienced or not with the

laying out of seasons in this way. Then
now, with nothing better. Pains, or such short
obstacles to beauty, go about when
my own shunned lamp seems quiet. Yet poets
are men, and men may pulverise their dogs;
there being no meekness or humour— whilst,
or if, any form of conspired thought is

headed. The heart in this picture is one
the bull should bellow to, for the red is
angular, and cut about by lines to
mean both head and jaw. So was it not too
human a plan to err and be wrong? The
man should always stand on the man, even
now with a lemon clasped to his suit of

holy robes. Although not yet the victim,
I must state him proved. The glass clinks. A cow
guards the gates, for if the ghetto allows
no risk, there is less speciality;
the sky is exploited by the buildings,
but it would be dark there, with only a
voice humming to a whistled tune. I say

that a man should always be another,
last or first, but coaxed once toward himself,
by loving or dying. This is not the thread
of this picture, nor yet the fabric of
a book's story. We simply, once, would have
entered a shrine. Later, there was no air,
but before there would have been a type of

fragmentation, conceived by most as a
medium for clarity; or was, for
others, too disgusting to be near. It
is not for me to have described it, for
the world provides no history, except
for exceptions—or the breaking up of
compound rules. In common with this, we (or

they) seek aberrations; though always for
us the laws are limited, and the set
scenes become (even if while better) these
snubbed, but standard tendencies to repeat
a consequence of what should show. We should
be seen, then, but are not. They are not, but
are; while there are some, others, who always

hear a dual clamour. Such as this is,
the cockerel in us duly screams. The
truth should be that the pig outside us eats
its eyes. No one told me this was so, for
even though belief came first, the colour
that I reached for puffed us up. It became
smoke, so was watched for. It dropped, cried, so was

still a child. It dug itself into the
ground, with its own bones shoveling the ash
away. It could hurt, so the world listened.
When it was no longer visible, or
had strayed, or been blown away to become
lost, the day returned it. To us it was
a wrinkled element. It shone like gold.

VI

In my dreams, the world was always circled
by blue; yet the globe itself was shaped like
a hive—an appearance that grew and bulged,
to become pear-shaped, now able to float
within a dark, rippling fluid. Now
a sea, then a sky; now a blood falling
from, say Heaven—say from my wrists, my eyes,

my lacerated knees. If I do not
dream, there is still the world, even though it means
far less, while we and they would both avoid
it, taking but brief interests, or seeking
out the same occasions to ignore. Yet
my dreaming copies an equivalent
of time. Life, itself, capitulates, or

shrinks against an immortal span of pushed
millennia. So to my years, while they
came budded from the stones, and a crisper
skin that seemed to have folded, but was tied

so untightly that the main thongs chafed. I
may have thought, or dreamed of the right offers;
and I may have cried or shouted, for there

are still too many syllables made small,
or (at their best) endured as tokens to be
learned of. Believe me, now, when I think of
flesh. I do not control it with my tongue—
although I have searched, and felt amongst those
last few places of the ground, for a tip
of something that was silver, or had grown

together as a bulbous root. This, then,
would have had to be all, except that the
sounds were those in which I recognised, not
pain, but a manner of it—a to-and-
from componency, now a whistling and
whispering, and not (as I think it should
be) a strident, strident howling, caused here

by the kicking of a foot. The dust moves
from the bones, finding its new places in
teeth and hair. Then it is we, always, who
aspire to calamity. Some of us
will never die, but most will bleed and burn
in those small, private rooms erected for
ghosts. Outside of these, there is no other

obscurity. The bones rot. Dust always
occupies their sockets, unless what I
talk of is not so, for there are corpses

here (even these), who always fall away
from what is marked. Thus, the shredding up of
books is mere routine. Hunger, or the long
breaking of skulls, is a more efficient

extra. I was told, once, that when the lungs
collapse, there is first a silence, then an
increase of accompaniment—as by
a solo instrument, made beneath the
main contralto elements of profane
songs; but it was not truth. Nor is it true
that the soul gurgles out of the heart, or

procures for us a confused lyric that
directs it back to nationality.
What the dying mutter to their wall is
of consequence to little else but past
execution. The language that most of them
learned has been debased. It corrodes, still, on
their lips. Before it is spoken, it is

sucked up from the stomach. Its words come, pumped
from the diaphragm. At times they flirt in
the air with gnats, flies, moths—. Now, when I hear
them, the buzzings of syllables attain
a better constancy. I hear myself
repeat them, but do not—cannot listen
to the rasp of blood clots made by my throat.

VII

I cannot go back. Nor can I live, for
when I arrived my body was simply
signed in black earth, so had come from the best,
or only grave I knew. Yet I seem to
find others, if only to fall, splitting
here and there into two or more of death's
added parts. Should I know that I had blood

enough to run away? In this station,
think that all my limbs have crossed. Now explain
that my face is broken. It is not here,
but scattered throughout different rooms. There
is a sky, but all is wooden there. The
rain falls between the light, echoing and
tapping, while creating deposits of

itself and letting them run across the
cheeks of someone not yet better off than
dead. These, though, would be symptoms to observe.
There are more, but I find them abstract and
unsayable. I will not speak as much
as this for them, because none should ever
have to say so, or approach toward what

is (for me) not seen. There should always be
a bed, a desk, and a formation of
a better memory that seems not part
of any book. When they took me out in
the morning, on that day when I still saw

our world being puffed about, as would a
grain of rye be—and watched, then, its many

fields crack; on that morning, when the day was
judged absent, I saw it all no more. There
should be a moon here, or a man standing
beneath one—his, or its few shadows not
connected to him, but pulling away,
or becoming as inconsistent as
dust is, its ashen heaps soon looked for on

this wretched floor. On that morning and this,
there were ghosts. I found two dozen stretched here,
their bodies still dying, some mumbling of
what they believed, while others cried for those
they lived for. An hour later they were gone.
The wind still stirred them, as did the clanks of
doors, and the closing, or shutting down of

such machineries that burned their spirits'
fragrances. Now, or later, these would not
be listened to. Quite simply, there are rules
to allow that nothing leaves or lives. If
not dead, we prepare to be so. The moon
rests within our throats, so if some of us
need to retrieve it, we look for ways to

cut through the air. Breath should always replace
light. Birds, in their small states, are as easy
to permit here as petals. We should have
to admit that the moon could always want

to dissolve into our lungs. At times it
gashes us. Some conclude that it means a
furnace, but do not know if it holds our

bones. If they are not there, or if we do
not feel that the pistols wake us—or the
boot-heels that are thought part of the wood, and
the brash knuckling of our privacies, our
worlds and our heavens, our heads, our stomachs
and our ruined eyes; if we do not feel
that these things arrived, or had force—even

if we had not known of this, or of who
and what of us had become lost, sought out
by them and murdered, then say that the best,
the very best would not have survived. Always,
when the night is occupied by screams, do
we cut our angels down. Otherwise, the
end would hold less purpose. It needs no life.

June-August 1999

from *The Tango*

What's place — 'moon' 'rose'

Before, saw dog's end back crushed from hurtling car.
its head curled to see walks anyway from greenery—here
the men's delicate backs' cages move the present only
as if there were sleeping, but the backs move
'emerge' is on one level the men's backs curling or
straightening.

the men's delicate backs' cages move the light that's
'at' present—before, the broken dog's crushed end the back
that's curled to see still walking
their
on curling straightening backs move *that* light

one's emotion itself volatile event is not 'initiating'
one's dying and living?—nor is one's seeing?
their own hands move them on the same level in the
light, they're lying in the light

the men's curled backs lying beside their hands move
them. no one having memory ever (only constructing concept
—concept as motion—of that) and dog's crushed back then
seeing as the head skitters to road's edge
there
is seeing outside itself

'friends' 'is' convention only (or 'custom' isn't
initiating one's 'dying and living?')—and their backs lying
move the present only
the backs move the light in that they're lying on the
same level

people's emotions are not 'there being outside events'
—nor is there 'no relation' to events outside their
apprehension even

there aren't going to be 'friends'—one's prior concept

the men's backs move only the light

—which is—there not in hurtling road

they're lying and their hands move on that same
level—the men are 'only' their backs—if so 'there are not
backs'

one's hands lie in air too—(and have no 'back' there)

to have that view
it is not necessary. backs

military wolves rose

—who have one be only convention—
only if one notices?—
others aren't convention? while these men's backs
move the light

the relation between emotion and event, neither
causing the other. nor do they have no relation. people
submitted—as customary functions—to a friend—in their
view—and they're—
only *social*—motions for the other

not erase excruciating pain in some
social gesture of repression
in one
it is not *out of body*

white orchids are 'by' persimmons—causal,
disrupting.—so 'seeing' itself is opposing streaming—.
white orchids dependent there on persimmons is social *only*.
—*are* social only (both)

is in any case created

crushed back the head skittering walks—from
hurtling road, greenery
friends as 'that,' i.e. not existing, are *social. is social.*

—their back cage's move it, is the light-and-
language? both.
but the men moving there didn't speak.

if there
no 'friends' (as *everyone isn't* that)—nothing social—
only being child until dying

delicate back dies sometime.—but these men's backs
move light here only

only being child until dying—everyone—is their
delicate back dies sometime
theirs one

—is 'basis'—standing or curling? only

moving is floating ears—elephants—a trunk and
face floating on one's ears
either charging or floating on grass, at once
man's chest: as trunk floating on ears of elephant's—
he's that, coming. ears on 'trunk recoiled or forward.'

some are

standing or curling, rose—is not—rose (they rose).
both.

subjectivity/language is—the delicate food system
disturbed famine reappears—?

were killed practicing in the monasteries—shipped
to labor, dying, trains shipping them, ringed in by barbed
wire haul on dam sites tunnels exhaustion famine in lines.
the same figure repeated everywhere changes it there as if
changed but not either from within or without that

if the back's constructed—and moves the light—is
subjectivity/language *only*—they're not 'speaking'
that is 'speaking'—social—both

subjectivity/language constructed *also* and those men
move the light—so—
social isn't *anything*?—there—walking—either

moon rose—that is—appears to
moon rose
on or resting on mountain's top—edge
horizon—
men's delicate backs standing move—is separate—
from them
there at all—both

Coordinate Mesh

chromatic dissonance lead
 through screens heights trail
 boundary probes
compact branches diffuse light
 sound follows sound fragments
unlike a question you'd halt to remember
 crease the dark slates
 muted shutter a lapse
half life of self writes to stop, load static
 mirrors a breaking point
suddenly vanish nothing settles the lip scratch it
 empty weights
 fold over fold bloated historical cape
 grammar's decoy, decay
lost counts on the erasures over time, voidpoints
you stutter hinge on a word
 falls outside the medium,
trace of a whole in bit syllable, desire
 the palpable field various marks on white
train of thought
 the still unfinished stills

wavering mirage
approaches zero
leans outside the mirror
blurred sequence empties
shaded heart unravels the coin, scratched light

circuits you handle
minimal fleets
the untamed cipher, blanks
in knowledge corridor
visible splinters
the unforeseen collapse
tension of drapes
writes the forest's edge
mapping field variance
dense static voice strata
not automatic
raw crystal harmonic
mesh

Unit Shifter

improvise the tone circuit
 current flows a frantic measure
ignite the field you sign
 film partials scatter chromatic
 eclipse in waves
hingesyllable adrift
 polyvalent
 the blanks a mere
transitory flights patches
 a negative lead mirrors
 your hand erased the words
 parallax error
skinned glass darkens intent to please
 says nothing
palimpsest edges
 forest depths
found stations transit
 blurred scenic echo
 emulsion series
grillworks

 locked corners a drape
 transmission bits, cell rift
 self of yourselves

map of where amazes changes

indeterminates
routes that lead a music,

jazzlattice

swelled pockets in part

shards
the contours mesh harmonic

a stear in words to shunt, clasp
ignites the charge
blow open to close the whole
particle as wave
starts kindle breath a sear
mind helix

crescents
juncture signs

word lots you jostle to match desire
creases the field gaps
partial to sever darks, unload

as you handle weathers

spar chromatic

leads ignite

Sharp Tends

threshold heights drape
 assembled cuts, fold
transit sound
 rift
 station to station
 tracks the measure
 muses on nothing
as it plays the dark latches
 gain a lapse toward
 lassitude tongues
anticipates a closed length in bits
 blurs whole circuits white noise
 fades in stripped banners
 dark snow

partials fuse a portable series
 the bloated sums a miss
hollow as accumulated knots, reserves time
 signature scratch on glass
self that hinges on nothing to say
 writes desire as map loads the current
 saddles the break
 defeated by memory tends

to sear the draft words
tunnels the darks
various tonal meshes lap the crystal voids
breathports ignite
muscle ray
slantwise kinetic
red shifts
sound leads plunge, thread
accelerate

Lucky Pierre Style

Can you question the phone
as a way to define ourselves
against another casting for roles
no one understands until they're
sitting above a scene so real
it flickers in the lines strung
from here to Buffalo and beyond
the future rehearsals of laughter
and boredom calling forth
a vague recollection of interests
formed from the chaos of options
and the multiple choices made
all the time though not by you
or anyone you talk to or know
about as baseball or history
seems real until you see it
as a series of choices based
on a series of choices based
on all the decisions made
with or without deliberation in
the flux of chemicals and weather
the smell of gas or wet fields
in a book you haven't read (yet)
breeds belief in the afterlife
or birth of antioxidants taken
every night to fight a disease
whose symptoms will change
how many times again I'm sorry
no one by that name lives here

Poem for Another Person

Another spot on the actor's lungs
or an episode of planes drowning

another night in the company
of traffic lights and sleeping cats

another book whose pages are acid-
free, pot-free, booze-free, and love-free

another effigy of holograms
dangling from the rearview mirror

another videotape rewound
to avoid any additional fees

another prostitute who is
really a policewoman on TV

another way to say why don't you
go fuck yourself and really mean it

another appointment with the doctor
who advises another appointment

another garbage truck stopping
in the night to beep for x seconds

another glass of water from the pitcher
whose filter you never change

another pronoun to indicate possession
without implying humanity

another pause in the action
initiates the doubt and denial

another roach slowly suffocating
in the moist folds of Wonder Bread

another joke about skin color or hair
color or someone who killed 25 children

another way to eat a pizza without using
your hands is to eat it off the floor

another animated jet worth \$10
billion just landed in the back lot

another poet who hadn't read John Wieners
and took himself seriously was me

another time in another place and we
would've stared at each other again

another episode where they smash
the french horn and watch him sob

another page of hieroglyphs
and portraits of D.H. Lawrence

another way to stall for time
is to kill yourself

another fish that used to be found
in these parts was caught 10 years ago

another library book with several
boogers and more typos (no bugs)

another hypodermic needle full of
helium was found at the observatory

another speech by the homeless man
preempted by a car alarm or a stroke

another way to show your parents you're
not gay without confusing yourself

another coffee can full of thumb-
tacks quarters and rubber bands

another chance to finish the words
before the words finish themselves

another movie filmed entirely
in the astronaut's lower intestine

another day with a name that's
nothing like Eleana, Mstislav, Paul

The Maids of Honor 1656

(*Las Meninas*)
Diego Velazquez

(2)

I flatter myself
and in so doing
let language know
it is a model
to be copied
possessed
and when necessary
decorated
for the ladies
and gentlemen
I work for

Psalms
Psalms

The dwarf is a grown-up
and she smells bad
I am told
that I will grow tall
that my legs will be straight
but I do not believe them
because I am still small

When I am an adult
paint-me
larger than this dwarf
she pretends to read and write
and eats our food
as if good food
will improve her breath
and stop her tongue
explaining narrative
needs theology

Psalms
Psalms

I'm going to measure
all the figures
and scientifically describe
the steps that are taken
to supply this box with depth

Psalms
Psalms

The Queen's large hips
are contrary to her small bones
and when she is in her bed she wonders
if my heart pumps blood
and my days are numbered
why am I covered in brocade

and why is my face roughed
and my hair
I forgot my hair

I forgot the reason
the mirror reverses
my husband's face

I forgot the painter
reworks the dog
and fulfills his expectations

Psalms

Psalms

I forgot
the stairs
I forgot

His majesty doesn't chew his food
he has gas and belches
before every decision

Psalms

Psalms

he prays
dear God

my wife sleeps
with her eyes open

she is afraid of the dwarves
and gives them little things
nicknacks from lands
with different climates

she bites her fingers
and has no patience
for the daily routine
that encourages
good diet

she is sullen
and wants more candles
by her bed

she wants her mother
but her mother sent her

to — me

saying
trace on your palm
the names of those
you want killed

and when they are dead
remind the painter
that he will be undone

if he forgets
to remind us

Psalms
Psalms

and I pulled down the sheets
and saw my wife's legs
and forgot what her mother had
told me

Color Field

Articulated plot of dabs
her flesh color yielding
to his idea of it

his mind denuded by a fiction
the unnameable scope of the rain
refuses a narrative; persists

as he colors what he touches
at this instant blue himself
resisting the demands of red

blood dries on the palette unfavored
history this poor arrangement of events
uncertain number of casualties rounded to the nearest
 hundred thousand
a clump of pulp moistened to life in triptych

smear and expanse
we have entered the unwitting anatomy of force
 torn apart by compassion
 orange and yellow the disruption

repository of corruption this bodily vessel
 in the graphic matter of memory
an eye swol shut, she hides
before the viewer
 revenge the point

with manic strokes he
 in dissolution
 recalls the delicately rendered

seven gates of his descent

luminous rejected wicker a nausea of ideal
 attesting once to the comfort or elegance
he copies from a photo the parents as he names them
pathos
in shoddy blues and gray indiscernable as figures

shattered at once as he aligns them

Snowfall

“Word language is one of many possible kinds of language”

—L. Wittgenstein

Call it prone, alert, derision
 rephrase the wind, find it
forming a mouth

this bright and poised exhalation
streaks air
eyes are a keepsake against detritus

snow—air heavy
the permeability of space filling
the way we use space
 a looseness
snow tacking around streetlight, now
 at dusk...

reminding that we move, glide, are untethered
that we swallow, breathe
that this exhalation and beat
take place somewhere
that we drench ourselves in air

The Fall

Trembled awake, globe of wine
 championed, clerestory
 of noon sky... two spruces:
 one note held, then another sung

grapevine turning
red; true color
 of a wound in bright sun
 bright and cold

legs pull away from her...
 tribulation; eden
a whisper of sin

flesh folded back
 back to the delta
 her palm curved in,
 saying come, saying stay;
 leaves litter the skin
 spores blow into the mouth

 drunk two mouths as one
 forked voiced of a branch
 growing everyday more naked

sprung from their vertebræ
trees collapse the dome of red

one note held, then another sung

The Ruby

Sun livens; the lanterns in the fronds rattle
slightly: their colors, blue, pink and red
bright. All is quiet. Overhead a dazzle

of gulls. Brown pelicans in their sky line.
Egrets stir the surf.
Yellow-green coloration of sea. One pelican

skims low. My body wetting these pages.
Drawn in ink, a pairing of paper and skin.
Sun hidden; a solitary figure reaches out.

The wind is not calling. A flange of quietude
envelops and water holds itself like clouds
for rain.

In the pillow of quiet a jewel resides. It brilliants,
wet as a berry. Two people, blind in the joining
hide there, too.

How We Celebrate the Arrival of Spring

1. We wait for the Golden Slab on the flag pole in the courtyard of the courthouse to harden before frying the potatoes, and when the Slab has been sufficiently tested I, as my father did in his age and as his father did before him, descend, with the purpose of retrieving the olive oil, into the innermost chambers of the courthouse basement, a giant overly lit maze with flexible mirrors, the walls of which double as you pass through each mirrored corridor, each square dividing and subdividing into smaller squares, until it becomes increasingly obvious that the room is not one room but several rooms, that the world is not one world but several worlds, and that geometry and physics, though helpful, in the long run, can do little more than confuse us. We peel the potatoes, first pulling the oil out of the innermost chambers, but not before inviting the bishops and the hollerers to emerge from their hibernation before the frying. Because we need their blessing. We need them to ascend up from their sacrifice and to emerge frail and underfed. We need this, because we cannot fry the potatoes without this, which is what we have been taught by our ancestors, who have been taught this by their ancestors before them.

2. But before we can fry the potatoes and summon the bishops and the hollerers from their cabins in the red clay mountains that border our village, we have to first decide who will climb the flag pole to check the stiffness of the Golden Slab. This is the first thing we have to do, when we think that perhaps the weather has been warm enough for long enough to declare it the official beginning of Spring. We live in a part of America where an inordinate amount of larvae develops in the sores and wounds or in the nostrils of humans and other

forms of mammals. It is the children's (age 10-11) job to collect the larvae and monitor them as they transform into pupa or chrysalis. The child who, in the eyes of the town's elders, collects the widest range of larvae, is awarded the satin whip, and gets to ride on a float in the post-declaration ceremony with the child who was awarded the satin whip the year before. The child with the satin whip in turn has the privilege of counting the flies on the fly paper. The fly paper is made by the eldest sons of the males who have been imprisoned for non-violent crimes, usually involving the confusion of substance with surface, such as entangling the bird-lime with alkaline, or circumscribing originality to those whose objective is to in fact be wholly unoriginal. The sons of the imprisoned are gathered in the courtyard of the court house, where they must each stew up a vat of the sticky poison, which is applied to the transparent fly paper. Each boy cuts his paper into 16 squares, then sews his name into the bottom of each one. He is then required to hang them in basements and closets throughout the village. 4 hours after the official bell has rung to announce the moment when the fly paper can be hung, each boy, accompanied by an adult chaperone, collects his strips and brings them back to the courtyard, where the newly crowned keeper of the satin whip counts the flies. Whoever has captured the most flies is, without apology, granted the responsibility of having to climb the flag pole to test the hardness of the Golden Slab.

3. What is important here is first lubricating the pole. Because if it is later discovered that the boy has climbed an unlubricated pole, as was the case in '68, '73, and '82, then the declaration of spring will be ruled invalid, and each of the

ceremonies will have to be performed again. In addition, punishments will be levied upon the 4 village council members, whose job it is to lubricate the pole the night before the climb, and the boy who knowingly took part in this farce. When it comes to climbing an unlubricated pole, there is no standard punishment; instead, the wrongdoers, or, as they might be called in some circles, the criminals, are subject to whatever penalty the elders decide on, the only set-in-stone rule being that the punishment must last for a period of 2 whole days. The 16 town elders decide on the punishment by first counting off from 1-16, and then arranging themselves in a square, with 4 elders on each side. The eldest son of the eldest elder then writes the numbers 1-16 on small squares of paper and folds them into a hat. At the end of a random drawing the remaining 4 sit around a square table, and each writes a punishment on a piece of paper. The eldest elder, regardless of whether or not he is one of the remaining 4, then reads the proposed punishments aloud, and is given 2 hours in which to somehow combine the 4 into 1 fair and just punishment. For example, in the aftermath of the mayhem surrounding the unlubricated pole of '82, 1 elder proposed that the 4 council members and the boy be confined for 2 whole days without food; another proposed that they be kept in a room with fluorescent lighting blaring heavy metal music to prevent them from sleeping; the third proposed that they be forced to blow up balloons without pause; and the last proposed that they spend the 2 days incessantly chanting out-of-date revolutionary slogans while keeping rhythm on hand drums. In the end, the eldest elder sentenced the council members to a confinement of 2 whole days without sleep or food in a room with fluorescent lighting, while incessantly

blowing up balloons; the boy was forced to stay in the room with them, playing a drum and shouting revolutionary slogans at the top of his lungs. But it is an exception when this law is violated and, in the past, on the rare occasion when the pole has gone unlubricated, it was only because it was feared, wrongly, that the chosen boy was not strong enough to complete the climb. The system is set up so that the climbers are generally always strong enough, and if it appears that they might not be, we are taught to have faith that divine intervention will carry them up the pole, as was the case with the narcilept in '68, the diabetic in '47, and the punchinello in '81.

4. Before we can check the hardness of the existing Golden Slab, a new Slab must first be prepared by the monks in the red clay hills, and then retrieved in a ceremony we call The Stealing of the Golden Slab (see section 5). The monks concoct the Golden Slab by cooking a synthesis of egg yolks, milk, flour, paste, wheat germ, cow fat, varnish, and foam. After it has stewed for 2 whole days, the 2 eldest monks spread the mixture with a dough roller onto a piece of cardboard, which is left in the field behind the convent. 2 days later, the Slab is folded 2 times and blessed, and left to sit for 2 more days, at which point, the sugar and soda and honey are applied in thick layers, and the bees are let loose from their hive; the queen excluder is sealed over the apiary, and the trombones are played to beckon the people up from the village.

5. When we hear the trombones, we convene in the courtyard of the courthouse and march to the red clay hills, the children

in the front, wearing bee masks over their heads. Each child has ardently worked on his or her particular mask for the past 2 months, and by the time they are completed, we expect each one to be a masterpiece. And each one is a masterpiece. I say this not simply because I am proud of our traditions, but because I too was a child in this village, and I know the pressures, both internal and external, that go into creating the perfect mask. But this has been documented elsewhere, by a number of anthropologists, psychologists, and art historians, who, with the exception of a few renowned scholars, have almost all overlooked the importance of the actual event for which the masks are made: The Stealing of the Golden Slab, a tradition so important to our culture that we have, among other things, named our high school football team in its honor, The Golden Slab Stealers, or, for short, the Stealers, who, at the annual stealing, are responsible for arming each of the women and children in attendance with an adequate supply of stones, which are thrown at those men who are selected to go in for the steal. When we arrive at the field behind the convent we form a square, not too close to the Golden Slab, and wait for the Emcee, the Golden Slab Thief (GST) from the previous year, to sound the first note on the accordion. Order is called, and the GST announces the names of the 16 men who have been selected at random out of a pool consisting of all the men in the village between the ages of 24-32. The 16 men are each taken inside the convent and given an oral mathematics exam. Each man is asked to complete 16 questions involving the multiplication of a 2-digit number by another 2-digit number. 16 seconds are allotted for each man to answer each question, and paper is not allowed. This is done to reduce the pool of men to 8. When the 8 high scorers

emerge from the convent, the GST then sounds the second note on the accordion, and we march to the other side of the field, forming a new square around the Golden Slab. The GST calls us to silence by sounding the third note on the accordion. The 8 men, each of whom is required to take off his shirt, step to the middle of the square and, when the GST sounds the fourth note, a virtual free for all ensues, with each man trying to grab the bee-covered Golden Slab, which must be run back down to the village. If a man is stung by a bee he is not disqualified, but must instead sit out for 2 minutes. If a man is stung by a bee a second time, he must sit out for 4 minutes, with the penalty doubling with each sting. Essentially, the 8 men dance around the Slab, darting in and out until 1 of them becomes brave enough to try to grab the Slab. Once the Slab has been lifted off the ground, the women and children hurl their stones at the stealer. If he is stung while running, he must sit out the required minutes and leave the Slab at the location he has been stung. And when the Golden Slab finally makes it to the village, the new GST is awarded the crown by the previous GST. A party, with music provided by the Golden Slab Stealers marching band, ensues in the village, and the new GST is carried on the shoulders of the 7 men he competed with to his home, where he rests for 2 days. When the 2 days have passed, he goes to the courtyard of the courthouse, sounds the accordion, and calls the Painting of the Slab to order.

6. Before the existing Slab can be tested, the new Slab, in preparation for its hanging, must first be painted golden, a process which sounds much simpler than it really is. For the elders insist that both the color of the pole (an ivy green) and

the color of the Slab adhere exactly to their childhood memories. Which is to say that the pole and the Slab must, in their eyes, look exactly the way they did 60 and 70 years ago. Yet the elders are practical, and know that a consensus could never be reached amongst them, thus they have devised a system to limit the number of overseers to 2. Again, 12 of the 16 names are drawn randomly by the eldest son of the eldest elder, and the 4 elders who remain sit around a square table, where 1 by 1 they each state a proverb. They go around the table stating proverbs, and are only eliminated when they can no longer think of 1. After the first 2 elders are eliminated, the remaining 2 are awarded the privilege of overseeing the painting. As tradition states, the pole is to be painted by the father of the last baby born in the village before The Stealing of the Golden Slab, while the Slab is to be painted by the mother. If the mother does not have enough strength to paint the Slab, the privilege is given to her sister. If she has more than one sister, it is the eldest sister who gets to paint the Slab, and if she has no sisters, then the privilege goes to her eldest female cousin. If, for whatever reasons, she has neither sisters nor female cousins, she is permitted to nominate a friend for the role, as long as the friend meets the approval of the 2 overseers, who, in all reality, are more concerned not with the actual painting of the Slab and of the pole, but with the way in which the colors are mixed, which, after a series of tests and paintings of mock Slabs and poles, must meet the approval of the two elders, who are under a tremendous amount of pressure to make what they think will be the right decision, approving the colors and tones that they think will adhere exactly to the childhood memories of those in the eldership they represent. For even though the two elders have been

selected as representatives of all the elders, this does not mean that the other 14 elders will not let it be known if they disagree with the choices that have been made. In fact, historically, The Painting of the Slab, especially during periods of economic recession, has been viewed as more of a political issue than an aesthetic one. And as is generally the case with political disagreements in our village, the outcome has often been violent. One need only go back to '94, when the Myna bird, the prized possession of one of the overseeing elders (who after the incident opted to leave his life-long home in the village), was slain by a rival elder who made no shame in publicly stating that he had chosen to take out his revenge by slaying the man's Myna because, "the color of the Slab was not the subtle, earthy golden tone we are accustomed to, but more like the ridiculous yellow feet and bill of that hideous and worthless bird."

7. After sunrise on the morning of the Testing of the Golden Slab, we gather in the courtyard of the courthouse, and link arms as The Golden Slab Thief steps into the square and sounds a note on the accordion. We observe a moment of silence, which is broken by the second note of the accordion. The mother of the last child born in the village before The Stealing of the Golden Slab steps into the square with her baby. She hands the baby to the GST, who pushes the babies' right hand against the accordion to sound the third note. The GST then kisses the baby on the forehead 16 times. He then takes the baby to be kissed by the other elders. Once each of them has done his kissing, the baby is returned to the mother's arms, and the GST sounds the fourth note on the accordion, beckoning the boy whose fly-paper captured the

most flies to step into the center of the square. The boy is met in the center of the square by the eldest elder, who carries a small, leather pouch filled with 16 silver darts, which the boy straps around his waist. The GST then sounds the sixth note, and the boy walks over to the flag pole and touches it. When the GST sounds the seventh note, we observe 16 seconds of silence, which is broken by the sounding of the eighth note on the accordion, which is the boy's call to begin his climb. We watch in silence as he climbs to the top of the pole, at which point, he pulls the first dart out of his pouch, and attempts to jam it into the Slab. If the Slab is hard enough, as it always is, the dart will be unable to penetrate it, and the boy will let the dart drop to the ground. He then tries to jam each of the 15 remaining darts into the slab, letting each 1 fall to the ground after each attempt. Afterwards, he slides back down the pole, and shakes hands with each of the elders. The eldest elder then steps out of the square of elders, and announces that the preparations for the declaration of Spring are set to begin. A volunteer is chosen to retrieve the bishops and the hollers from the red clay hills, and most of the villagers return to their homes, with the exception of me, and the other 15 workers who are in charge of preparing the food for the declaration feast.

8. One by one we (the workers) descend into the basement of the courthouse, the rule here being that the second person cannot enter until the first person has made his way into the supply closet through the mirrored maze, then back out again. The third person cannot enter until the second person has left, etc. This is done to ensure that each of us can individually experience the seduction of this superficial abyss.

Because as we traverse the maze of flexible mirrors we are useless. Our instincts get us nowhere, and the only way we can reach our destination is by failing and failing over and over again until finally we come upon the right spot. It is in this failure that we who descend experience ecstasy, and when we emerge, depleted and exhausted, carrying whatever it is we have been sent down to get, our foreheads are kissed by the bishops, our ears are screamed into by the hollerers, and as we make the preparations for the feast, the happiness we feel in knowing that we are serving our citizenry, just as our ancestors served their citizenry before them, seeps into the potatoes and leeks, the beets and carrots, the venison and lamb, and the mountain of desserts that we bake with the utmost care. We spend the afternoon cooking, and at sundown, the entire village reconvenes once more, forming a square in the courtyard of the courthouse around the elders. The eldest elder steps forward, and individually thanks each of the 16 bishops and hollerers for their sacrifices they have made for us, letting it be known that the hunger they have felt in the past year has sustained us, giving us both the strength and hope necessary to survive in our changing world. The eldest elder then summons forward the boy who earlier climbed the flag pole to test the Slab. The boy must climb the pole once more to hang the new Slab, which is presented to him by the mother of the last baby born in the village before the Stealing. When he descends, he shakes the hands of each of the elders, bishops, and hollerers. The eldest elder then sounds the accordion 16 times, and declares, by shouting at the top of his lungs, that we have just witnessed the arrival of spring. The cannon is fired by the captain of the football team, and after 16 minutes of singing and dancing to the music of the Golden

Slab Stealers marching band, we proceed into the banquet hall on the first floor of the courthouse. Upon entering, we take a little white card from the *plan de table*, and wait for one of the butlers to show us to our seats. Because I helped prepare the meal, I have the privilege, as my father had the privilege before me, of donning a tuxedo and helping with the serving of the meal, which consists of four courses, each of which is served with a corresponding bottle of wine. And when the meal is finished, we head back out to the road for the post-declaration parade. The new Keeper of the Satin Whip, along with the Keeper of the Satin Whip from the year before, are lifted onto a float, and we march behind it, singing and dancing our way into the red clay hills, where we say good-bye to the bishops and hollerers, who we will not see for another year.

Eve Doe (32nd Movement)

Listen to the weather with solid gold eyes

Listening and Her Sister seated in

Black by the Round Table

things said or wished to be had said or differently, diffidently

close to the grave as bearing the dead thing she

(an apple & a rose.)

fathoming

sky pasted as an allegory of plastic, heave have and
[complain of it

(situation at the turning of it)

Eve (33): stripped of biography

is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is it is
it is it is it is it is

Eve: *that is my little one*

listen to houses, field

lisp

grope
mercury sideling

shape of the corners of your gaping incarnate
look for the name of it, anything

Eve Speaks to the Duchess (34)

longitudinal matters of formally hello

former children of a melancholy merriment

don't proceed further without looking

into the face of it: at the face

the toy orchestra prodded

she held her hands flat in a bow and we saw *that*

(stepchild of the True Architect)

Eve Doe (37)

nursemind to the allegory
whittled to the tree
the provisions of our landlady
sadly state: carpentry to landlubber, the story of cartographs

cartographer one — mini-chapter of beastly beast
cartographer two — no, it is a lesson
cartographer three — i second that emotion

cartographer one — yes, it is a lesson
cartographer two — finally agree
cartographer three — a less happy cartographer would not have
insisted on the fountains in blue

cartographer one — i've renamed myself, here, and here, see?
cartographer two — see what, so what
cartographer three — you two! towing the line

then Adam turned his head upon the stone whereby it had been
resting

should she have spoken then?

Eve (38)

unbearable rotation
in hidden entry, fortify

“What is nearest is destroyed.” (1)

Inflate the protocol of the process or princess

“The myth and the image of Eve penetrated far into that part of woman where her deepest feelings and ideas are stored, the presence of the story of the first woman in the Hebrew creation myth repeatedly rankling in the hearts, minds, and spirits of women who resented being lorded over by men, despite the divine word of the omnipotent male deity.” (2)

“I tried my best to think there might be another way — but
there was no other way.
So I lived out my destiny.” (3)

(1) *Dura*, Myung Mi Kim

(2) *When God Was a Woman*, Merlin Stone

(3) *Conscious Femininity*, Marion Woodman

Eve Doe /39

the written thing, writing—

remembering :
. a minute of film .
. a luncheon of 3 .
petit
. le V cheval .
. chevalier .
. narrative interloper .

edges of infamy

my green skirt or the vertical pastel striped

he says
it suits you or: i've gotten used to it

to him I write:
[I speak}

to Anne I write:
perfect redo

to her:
my nurse & alternate parlourmaid, with {insert]

reminders when sent across :
. entryland .
. interview .
. carousel .

her first job: a bus round those lanes made by motion made by
force made by prediction, lawsuit. it sways, it crests barely or: does
not at all. wait on another, with best friend abdicated 18 months
hence. *several years ago*. ring the top bell. the hill ends or begins
downward. tackle it on foot, through vestige of pineneedle, still of
deer, raccoon, not many foxes, no none actually.

a native lady was killed in this
region. tilting. camping. hiding out. she had been a political lady.
she had been on the island when the buildings burnt a bit. *.tilting*.
.camping. *.hiding* . *.out*. she held three names in her handbag,
heart.

. the 70s .

{when he saw me i was

not how i am now]

Shadyside School

This is where the children came from
the first to arrive
their reward and their honor to come to the house for water
Chloe Failor's house then
long-handled pump in front of the house then

one-room school glass broken out of its eight windows
bird's nest in a corner

reward and honor and a matter of care
pail
pail on a stick
notched in the middle not to let the pail slip
how slow how careful they must have been all the way back

bird's nest
bird's nest and empty nest.

Marianne Moore

A cover-girl and a local girl
as opposed to a china girl locked in a china closet
brittle
a local girl with other local girls

on the cover of the anthology
celebrating the anniversary of the county
of the local
celebration of the local

reading
a girl with other girls in the act of reading
as opposed to a concert girl
concert champêtre

caught in the act
as only a girl would dare to be caught
daring to be
a girl with other girls celebrating the local.

William Bronk

Years ago what I wrote
angel
dark angel
of the power of the mind what I wrote
what you were

power of the mind
power
over the possibilities of things

now I write something more
angel
name of the angel revelation of the name
Ahab what you are
revelation

something more
dark king and dark captain of the fiery hunt
which I have abandoned.

A Bite at the Problem

the sheer forthright neutrality of it all
congregate up
the haul not even them
selves in impoverished facticity
the end of which spirals into
mouth

s

often softening sight a way labyrinthical
killing in cradle the consideredest whereto
such as the past availability or tight

concept stinges inaccurate crapulence's thunder
in a delimit ingrained cacoepsis plead a
wherry dance flagrates gregations sumers
grummery hey hen he mours ticulate nding
so that day whands fortless or itful as frank
as pruss cannot before under mordantly tankerous
the search

while sex fetters wrist
and anothers indexes liquidity of lip
quench pipped in the rake of
bristle thought skirt diminished
it might almost have been ready for

an rage won't hither those animate topiarists

clonking intervalencies regust

haste of a tripped madeleine caked
up all rifices in a talitarian lamp-down
and imitation of without strenouosing our
inevitably eradicable musculature
to give the body its hue

while crumherds
wound their
horns by
the bite
on the
craven boon

burped to infinity aka some waver of the big crank
splendidly

Look, the Generous Driver

almost two yards sole to
made eyebrow curl but only also

to portray and invest

declining overbody

abreaction

feted fettered

then half
fancy dress

our differences fully healed

astride press preserved showing off

and tell tale cedes to
eye-level gently painful on
-erous and heady restraint

what's

must about

dark gleaming

in the light

in view of moves

away returning
 /in a counterpoise

with deferred admission

changes express

to willed less grasp

well and
perficient

its cunning of reproaches
 minds
inevitability out of any question to be considered

funeral chose
for parting afront
 of smoke a colour column inches
 to spire fume among
 suits glancing to prompt
 this walk's murder

alembic seethes in train
follows writ against a toot

mined by demur in decreasing intervals

clock watch for the next

interminably brief rehearsal
where curtains rule the books

or the

chuck
to be obliged by

Nectar Crater

by oxymoronic serpitude plunge up silence
its boom to do everything useful
 & boring & confident
 of willing

 inculcate a roundel for crags
bottom in a rower
 and an arrangel cornered to plode
 gelidly round colour
 certain
 at all
 event
out of true

 tares and wishbones edge
 as rabbit the cox but
 crass with coarse in fuel
 a stark sidehander
 at emaciating the
 wrong lode
written from crotons
over riparian college

for chambertots
 wend on
reign lumbs frenshaw tick everwhich and the crowing boulder
feign engrossed

Elections

A wound comes into consciousness and is born is borne again

A slice in the flesh is birth to the consciousness of the wound

pulsing pain

*she kneels crumples with a slash in the rib cage that is alert. weeping is merely in her
not it.*

how do you go about?

cutting out

crows call *out* before the lost _

tribe called like Klickitat

American Crow_d

*Thanks be Butterfly sitting in the tree
opening opening Love breath be*

born in the white light not
innocent rememory
each blink out breath dies

strange to be here
quoth stolen
raven's call stolen backs

the thief mind cannot not be me
murder of crows ships ersatz sity after sity

what's longed for
illumines box cut
architecture of the farmed plains

seen from the sky
plane and rage
on the rise

o warring tribe
O, merciful God in wrath utter—
I love my people

I see the snow or pine
on mountains with or out
the exorbitant windowpane

and I miss home
which is nothing
I've ever knownd

colony in birdland
blind from so long longing
like am me and me

am all day full
of wants colonized
my people are love S eye

because of *Be*longing,

by inkd breath I wrote the others
called away by my life is
mourning and loss

and all bitter flower
shall root by me for free
is air and everywhere love

no chain no saw Moonlit
can't cut me my bride yes
for who was paged by

the crows are coming
I cannot not hear you
I see you in the fields

Catch That Pigeon

I am
seeing things

No
& every
ghost is holy

that is if
 there were
 such a
 thing as

ghosts

The wild dog
pursues life on the edge
 & sees
the ground
way
down there

the desperation
impossible the
perplexion complete
the

globes
give light in
the
center of

the room

real or
projected
videos
of
flitting
human
eyes

Am I
seeing things

a taste
of
the baroque
fruit
then

The pigeon
was sent for a soul so
long ago &
never
came back

straight chaseless rhythm

spouse was maiden
dead were dying

the spit
is
beau coup
blue

counting
dots
on
a bracelet

Yes I am

crossed
out
scribbling

made of
dice

scribbling
for
a lucky number

new equations

untitled

I wish there was another place,
But we're descended—no trial
Could end it, nor any grace.

But it is also membered, wild
Found traces in his little leopard
Made of brass given while

They were passing through so hard
To tell. Was it a tiger or my invention?
I wish there were another garden,

A place to go to answer questions.
I say it is a tiger—but those who gave
It me are mad or dead my injunctions.

Never work—that God's great grace could save
Me like a sadness pouring out John's wilderness,
Tossed into space, another wilderness to rave

About. I want to leave here with a bliss,
This strange density to never follow me (faces),
That sad carnival cannon—Will I be missed?

untitled

you is covered
you is convened and ratified
flatted out past horse meat
and frank lloyd wright houses
horizontals fitted in fits and starts
“i made a cabin out of it”
—spitted upon, shoveled.
(you “moved in” so it’s not plastic)
but insides is carnival
which means us eating and the tooth man.
his revivals are all rafters.
there is no light after his point in time
when he talk it be dribble
but cast destiny you manifest unravel.

history's been good to you

smasht and dessicate
you build stories and tamper
so it relevates through
and because of you

can and fuse-wire
made the rust up into something
higher "that were his eyes"
but done so obliquely as to never
eclipse—that's what (we mean by) rise up

with windows for the liquid
put an end to the shelf
you books melt
cake fossil or lipstick case
hackle y shadow w/garage stori 1979.

untitled

respirator Slim hawkin up red greens

untitled

it happened
in the woods
so I believe
but “it never happened”
sends down his dictation.
“I” happened in the southern woods
I don’t think it happened.
it did, happen to me,
but didn’t, am no more.
I’m in the woods
that hornet’s nest,
you’d hardly guess
it was me.
can’t tell.

untitled

his speech is from crevices
running diagonal through the
underneath what was A&P
or that pissy beer mattress by the smokehole
he collect his water from Decker's
can a voice be frozen?
draw everything up with a stick
in dirt cones and needles.
gather together stills of the shattered
when it was condemned
you must go inside

flames flames flames

“Will there be square-dancing in heaven?”

(SCENE The flash towers and sonic booms of Dearborn Street. Windfanned. A man with five gallons of gasoline. He is a troubled man. Thinks of his wife in bed with Jeremiah, that old firebug. Sometimes, a threesome with Baruch, his lackey. Scrolls left in the sheetfolds. If he was a painter. He assumes these things. An imaginary line. The orange salamanders are real. One false move, and it's back to the cotton candy farm. Enter the President's helicopter, the First Lady.)

Down at the firehouse, no one believed that the prosthesis factory was on fire, but I knew better. Arms. Legs. Scummed metal. A two-alarm blaze. Box of smoked glass eyeballs. Synthetic ash sacrifice. Fake skin melted, vapored, sent up. Clouds over Tifton.

the saddest bone the spine
although she disagrees “Best
to have saints' bones handy.
Can you carry a fire in your
bones? Do you believe in the
Holy Ghost?

“Like I believe in
plastic surgeons.”

if she was a wall
if she was a door
if she was a flock of goats
if she was a garden

I was a wall,
and my breasts were like towers.

she plants red blooms in sky
sky waiting to cohere

—Where are you?
—What?
—Where are you? Right now. What are you
watching? Whose voices are those?
—Just a minute.
—Don't turn the volume down. Those are German
voices. They're singing. A war film!
—You're nuts.
—I am? You're in that Grand Island motel room
again, aren't you? Watching war films. I'll bet
you're smoking in bed!
—You're nuts.
—I am, am I?

My God, they've set the Lexus on fire.

The house was on fire and we carried out as many things as we could. I kept the household gods under my skirt. We kept going back for the novels. Paul, for his Ellery Queen mysteries. We stashed them at Ed and Marjorie's. The whole neighborhood watched us, passed a bottle of Bacardi. They nodded appreciatively. Ed sang a couple of the old standards, "Moonlight Becomes You" and "Body and Soul." He gives great voice.

"We'll have to leave some things," I said. "We'll never save all the self-portraits."

"How can you be so calm?" Paul asked. "How could you have forgotten the baby pictures?"

untitled

Al sd, “Don’t ever fucken play strip poker with your muse,” but there we are, sitting on the stumpy gravestones rolld down from Minnesota, drinking sourmash from Mason jars, seeds in our mouths. She hadn’t even wingd it there, countd on me to go and haul her ass back across the Indiana border, smuggld in between a Queens grandma and a screw salesman from Noblesville.

There was the usual exchange of gifts. She wears my shirt, peels cards from the deck. The ash moths and juncos keep landing on her shoulders. They fly in and out of a yew, its roots upturned. Thunder from Rafetown.

She coughs, “What’s crooked can’t be made straight, and what’s lacking—”

“Take your wisdom and go to hell,” I say.

“But isn’t life that way?” She flicks two jacks loose, hands them over.

Maximus grins, says her name, breathd sunset. Hums to himself songs of daughters.

Domestic Scene #2

The vampire swallowtails of Cartagena
arrive each summer, swimming in downdrafts.
Hopalong arrives with them,
gin-drunk on the morning train from Chicago.
I keep his carbine oiled,
feed him cartridge by cartridge.
He knocks them down,
all that blood in the air.

Bob and Joanne watch from the WPA bleachers. She's
seen this before, some baseball fireworks, Rio de Glado, the
local nine with their iron mitts and bell hands. He knows it
from some other film, the spent cartridges tinkling at
Hopalong's feet. Bob watches recognition shape her face,
polite not to mention their ersatz daughter, the ballet shoes
that don't fit, the Bueno Virus in his lungs.

binding a fern pot

Autumn at a kitchen window: cut a ball of green string into forearm-length lengths; my potted fern—maidenhair—on the round table, one hundred books, little *fern-pots* in a box beside me. Now and then overhearing birds, think this too is a kind of birdwork, nestmaking of sorts, though the nests fly off.

It comes to me slowly enough after 47 years: this way of doing things slowly in an unchanging order, as if the steps to binding a book were a natural process in the cell (prophase, metaphase, telophase) or a sequence of seasons on the wood board I work at—

Push needle-threader through needle-eye, then green string through threader, then pull threader-and-thread back out, and set the works aside for a moment.

Lay a book wide-open on the board, and tap a four-penny nail three times, all the way through along the midline, with a hammer my immigrant father brought from Italy seventy years ago. The hammer much too heavy for this: enormous and hefty with its claw above the words, and therefore perfect. The first hole—beside the center of the poem. The next beside the first line, and the third at the poem's end—*the length of the binding's the length of the poem*. The set aside the hammer to my right and the nail at the top-center of the board, so I'll find them again.

Next take the needle, and push it through the center, inside-out, then outside-in at the top hole, come down and go inside-out at the bottom again, outside-in through the middle a second time, slip the needle from the thread and knot.

At last: pull the excess thread to the left-hand margin of the right-hand page and cut—the perfect length, so anyone can see how the binding touches the poem. *Close the book*, and set it aside.

Again and again, how many times in a life? And would it be life, if it weren't done again and again—worked upon and multiplied so many times, abandoned so many times? So like a nest, like a house, like a string of blue-green algae. So many invisible times, for what happens to all books but forgotten-shelf mildew-oblivion, if lucky? Reaching exactly and only then making real the silence they came from and simulated, offering back each word that was taken up with unknown eyes and breath.