



Bowl of Light

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Argotist Ebooks

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True Zero

“God is the tangential point between zero and infinity.”

– Alfred Jarry

“Any life is made up of a single moment, the moment in which a man finds out, once and for all, who he is.”

– Jorge Luis Borges

bowl of light

I.

The feckless rule

the spaces between us
be;tween us
;strange punctuation like

stab in our atmosphere
letting the
like
leak in

there is a bowl of light
-ness
feathered
this time
,is
that, my right

and you could be clever
and it would mean

this time
,and this time
,it is.

II.

we walk outside, mutter
inainties
render dreamspeech

fecke less rile
feck ruels liss
what sound
what
,what

- a bluing
- a blurring
the shoulder over her sky
silk devoured and happy
empty of stars

of further life
little bubbles
boring
across the wind
not with it
;utter purpose

absence

III.

for those who wrote questions
and never asked them
your fingers remember
your whispers
even when you've forgotten
that slowstale corduroy
slug between your hat
and your necklace
is really a paperweight

IV.

feckless rule
and fey

where elision occurs

decision
.and failing that,
reptile leavings
humid against the canvas
you heated with breath

feckless bowl
full of light
scribed sullen
and paranoiac
depending on days

this space leaves me
with no alternative

feckless \\ overhead
perspective // rule.

V.

cold arms and questing
mouths of small children
adrift in sleep and tender

they wait for you
and dismiss what
you await

sometimes the only art in order
or order in art, is at your expense.

random pundits dish Poundcake

One says: "I remember her poster on my wall,"
a slick nod off camera that we just catch, a grin,
a wink and notoriety descends into sophomoric
groin humor where we are all seventeen again
listening to records while laying in bed
and wondering much to our chagrin if we might
indeed ever meet, ever be, that person or someone
very much like them

what is it to be famous?
this instrument of woman wonder transcends all else
when people like Linda Carter wear spandex and all
we can think of is the last time we tried stealing a comic
from the grocery store, enrapt with guilt and crying before
we reach the car; sometimes one glove is best
two implies guilt

can you still touch the world
is there ever not a space between your flesh and ours
promise is the nipple glimpsed through netting
and all we understand of an imagined world
an imagined word beyond the four walls that so
completely seal us off
seal us odd
for time to pass so completely
irrevocably, there must have been a transition
that we missed somewhere
when we began looking at others
not our parents but models of that
same world outside

who prepares you for life, is
it the same woman who
makes you poundcake
or the pundit speeling
on absolutely nothing
without a touch of gray

all of this has left us with a lone voice
hollow booms, a motorized studio,
just that man meant for grand events
signing off at the wrong time
the era.

the ignorance of lost causes

Colonial time is nothing like the present
wrapped in fever-warm water
and sunken: a child's dirty,
secret, treasure
burnished by salt and diminished,
hues we cannot discern
always blurred around the edges
viewed through air, that imperfect medium
for song

dreaming of pirate ships and immaculate
beards, women in fifteen layers of gauze that
dance belowdecks, emerging at night with a knife
between their teeth, blood on their delicately hemmed toes
the brine of the air, then nothing,
the hue and cry of slaves below
hemmed in by coins worth
their flesh and love
witness whose crime
what took them away
what brings them back

tossing a penny into a mall fountain
meaningless compulsion, frigid air
the chatter of teenage girls
the somber shuffling of resigned men
the brash glare of hormonal frippery in
androgynous display
reflected in this extra dimension
between me and the world I would love
a funhouse mirror
the edge of everything

Colonial time is nothing like the present:
it's underneath
water
soil
our consciences.

otherwise

I.

Anything placed here has its own
agenda, regardless of nightflower
scents - here, lilac; there, jasmine -
when you see the child
what do you say to
that dark spot, packaged
revelations like pop music
and always hungry?

I once knew something, that
agenda placed here has its own
anything, regardless of temperature
or volume; I hear my brother
scrabbling around in my desk
"not real," you say: no, not real
but cold nails and bread feed the word

II.

cascades surround, and other-wise
calliope plays, that half-hearted amplifier
almost with magic
almost with fingers
I cannot stare for long; hinged eagles
jut for eyes and earth
here, beneath the weight of this sky
when you're at my back still
cracked conjuration
this day

III.

To know the circle is
not a pathway to the ocean
but a train of flowers
cast upon waves that beat
objections elsewhere

what depth, failure

IV.

poet of my youth, fragile
hate and hope to braid
epic Immaterials' smoking gun
pointed, here,
I have a page
and pens for your hand
I would hold again
that quiet moment before
only the hint of horns
the aftertaste symphony
you wore like horns

mirrored.

gallant

1.

I had a line
a glittering arc
across the mind
some passive, blunt shark

- and

somewhere between hand
and swollen throat
it looked up, down and
becalmed, afloat

- but

watching you cross
one hand, the other
sublimely toss
belted-breast brothers

- then

I wonder what's wrong
between them, sure,
a poet, his song -
neither one pure

2.

{lost in a colloquy, that like us all, has two sides
from one note of grace to the next, the chaos of intermission,
we all want to know: what}

{last night, I dreamt of stars. not that I could see them, but feel them
naked on my skin, the way you feel a candle's flame. I awoke shaking from the cold, trailing
glory beyond the pillow, and tiny, perfect holes
burned into the bedsheets}

{not now}

{my brother falls again, green hills, a cliff face, it doesn't matter the depth of mortality or the

portrait of my unease. I can do nothing to stop it, and part of me doesn't want to, but twice in as many days is enough for the sane, especially in this country, bearing crutches and coveting fire}
butterfingers

I read your words and
I want to shake that tree again
maybe something else will fall:
that magic eightball coconut,
and come up with a different answer

the weal of time closing shop
on a few old sandwiches in plastic
and one lonely drink, poured and paid for
with American sacred

there is no charge
for the loss of a phantom digit
we'll forever feel when in public
gratis, bumbled and trodden
by blind feet in flip flops
down some lost boardwalk
in some lost summer

in here it's cooler;
outside the birds sing again
it's been an Age of loss
but soon
soon it starts all over
you have that to look forward to;
broken glass or not,
what you hold in your hand is
always running.

genius in practice

I
full of frantic Saturday
more than half mad with light
and ghostlike
twistings of a loud
clock spinning circles;
genius in practice

I
could spend the rest of life
fearing the weight of men
lurking in corners before
only dimly perceived
when heard

I
know what it means sometimes;
youth is a failure deeper,
more malignant than age
even if time suspended
its eager, arbitrary race
how much better

I
fell in/was pushed
down a long flight of stairs
paved in broken books,
broken authors,
oozing the lie that was their truth

I
sit here telling myself
no longer aware of water
or the thirst it brought;
deserts are relative
here in the shade

I
would hear the lesson
but bear repeating, no
one key to that lock
jagged and flailing
where words fly fast

intelligibility comes
and goes

I
would greet myself,
ask: "where have you been?"
and collapse at the bottom
adding my bony pages to the
scattered pile
dust mites and shadows.

or not

There's an old song on the radio
scars scraping speakers as it
pushes its way out and in your head,
dragging a crutch right into your head:
new if you've never heard it, but
if you've never heard it before
then what are you doing here,
mocking it's feeble attempts to
remind you of what you fear
and what you love

not everything can be good, and
very seldom can anything be new
so it's rare when something is new
and good, enjoy this permutation
while you can because pouting
outside in the rain are a dozen
cold/lonely/others just like I

found that cat that one time,
crying outside and wanting in so bad it
was a song - this one, in fact -
and I held him in my arms a year later;
he was a good cat

sometimes
it all depends on mood; can we talk shop here
can we talk shop here and not about cars
can we talk shop here about music
and love/death/life/prayer whether you know it
and poetry, whether you know it.

dandelion

What is it, exactly?
what is it exactly...
that you said
I can't hear
through closed lips

this room is too warm
your face is too far
and the noise
the noise is
brain cells dying
in a spatter of fat

outside clouds
scud their shadows along
the parking lot
blue, then black,
blue, then green
and all around us
the dying day
buried beneath dandelions
a forest of waste
outside

reflected in the faces
in the days to come
before the bell rings
that same hope before
the shadow
the impulse to run
the impulse to breathe
and god forgive us, breed

so,
what is it, exactly?
what is it exactly...
that you said
that space between riot
and holiness.

tryst

Sometimes there're not enough words
regardless of marching order:
those listing critters, drunk from
birth but running already,
prints further apart

rain collects in small depressions
growing fat and inconsiderate
where I
flounder on the page, blind
and wheeling
for a new labyrinth,

where my legs cover distance,
where the horizon has a beginning
one with scars where foliage should be,
soft-shed blossoms underfoot
where my horizon has no end
where you are courted by animal-faced men,
scents of lilac and
a cup of fresh tea in hand
a Japanese folktale taken
from the library and fondled

Poets like the lost,
hold chaos on burning tongues,
and walk through gardens of
impossibility
sowing life.

Ninety Degrees

“Spaceship Earth is at least ninety degrees off course... Once we have the power only our integrity can see us through the storm that is approaching.”

– Buckminster Fuller

“I think of our bodies as spacesuits.”

– Leslie Arbetman

voices

These are our streets;
no one screams like
the night
alone with a bottle of
wine and the shattered words
bloody your feet

These are our streets;
sad, your poet,
young and becalmed:
an actinic breeze
stirs feathers and hats
among the ill-fitted stones,
all that's left to us

These are our streets;
we know no others
and maps follow logic that
does not belong,
our night,
our night
is quiet save a soundtrack

These streets funnel and
coil: a megaphone at a mime's
mouth

shudder and jerk: a mishandled
ship, late at anchor

shred themselves: furied,
the drop of a single,
golden note

These are our streets
to do with,
to soil and defame
to glorify and praise
to own completely
remake in our image
dress up and cast out.

here, and them

Your deadspace colloquial synapse
firing raku-yaki in colonial spleen;
what emissions trail you, ensnare your delicacies
and drag you up, into the arms of ecstatic bliss
like watching the fecund paint pull slowly from your smiles
the ones you practice in the mirror

if death and the space between stars weren't so perfect, they wouldn't be the end
if ignorance weren't so easy, it wouldn't be perfected,
on display vulgarly,
the web-toed blare

what sheep corner in your ambulance
pulled over and pissed on, the corner of a fence you never thought to
repair,
some small keys dangling from the column,
and spiderwebs for fetlock

if you can dream of zombies and impossible shapes
your reality tetrahedral and claustrophobic –
your eyes tattooed on the back of your worker's hands –
your sins reeling and slapping the back of your mind like a Catholic ruler –
your knees and feet dirty from who-knows-what –
your tennis shoes broken and sad, reflecting fate, and, let's face it, reliquary –
yourgun
yourgun
your gun –

then I can kiss you tangled awake in bedsheets that smell of deliverance; the spirit of freedom,
not Ned Beatty in the woods, holding for dear life to palm fronds and:
my spherical paranoia, chachacha –
my broken dreams swimming alongside last night's pot roast –
my too-olds and none-too-valuables –
my promises of future selves for us both, at the lowlowlow discount price –
mylaughter
mylaughter
my laughter –

your deadspace colloquial synapse
firing raku-yaki in colonial spleen;
that emotions tether you, elicit your debaucheries
and curl you tight, out of small lint carvings and this,
unlike sleeping, all sotto composure thrown quickly despite the miles

the ones you see in the mirror.

a death among the crowd

There is death among the crowd.
this time there is something hard
some metal, fluid,
writhing and spinning where your heart
should bear everything else:
no name but the sensation
our tongues
our throats
refuse

it
rises on blue
heat-settled feathers
shifts under the skin:
can you feel it, brother?
hotter than the roof in August
can you feel it when your back is turned:
a greater sensation,
the Queen has passed,
ebbing now,
but that thing in you that
cannot
will not
scream

there is death among the crowd.
nails scrabble in your slate throat,
rebellions you'd almost forgotten
"...it is so dark in there," you think
and you are not

your shoulders lift
the very verge,
bitter precipice/faultline
of the soul:
to one side, life
molten and burgeoning

she cannot be, but what she is
would tear you apart
should you -
for one minute -
let slip the reigns

but oh, delicious child.

gloryman

Take my name down/gloryman/brittle
for rooms outlined in wisdom teeth/staked
too hard for small mouths/sharply incised
and wishing for collard green sadness
mint as sedans can only be/ hard turns
tool through your living spaces/exhaust
option

take my name down/gloryman/shook up
naked and ripped outlines/porcelain fragments
clenched/weblike/between opposable thought
where walks the soft man/caning
through new darkness
tuning fumbled lips/Asperger's symphonium
cradle the life that lifts
bury the life

take my name down/gloryman/calloused
and hard horny hands/break bread
beneath other stars/sheeted winds
deliver our fast/gaping blink
and here we sit/poet mouth
moulders, dripppppppppppppp

take my name down/gloryman
take my name down/gloryman
and I will keep spreading yours

fires burn nightless here
sparks fall don't rise
and the heat stays low
but still about your business
peddle truths no one affords.

bullpen

Glory in words, that's right:
a tickertape parade past your genteel
windows, and you can't turn your/
won't turn your/
head to watch anymore
really, what is the point
when the world comes to you?
All you knew of brotherhood and artistry
came from a cold spot unmarked
although now the weather has changed,
the wind is all that visits

forecasts rule the day
creeping issues
with Spartan plumage;
the last decade wallows in a trough
passed by trust-funders fleetly scouring
the brine for saleable moments
while ignorance drowns in Chinese plastics,
useless feats of engineering, and famous chefs

the epidemic of the moment
has no spare change,
nor a pulpit.

punching clouds

Fucking process
curled up like Obama fury -
we've not seen Cheney for some
time - where does the badger set
when wounded eccentricity mails our
bills

folded deep and warm in some
sweet hamper of moss,
if only you had toes to stop the gap

and nestled there between brows
disingenuous and made for dykes in
Holland you'd climb, had you arms
and will to do it

this fucked process curls like smoke
and down androgynous slopes
naked mysticism from which
Rebels and Republicans
shirk duty for dollars

hid in plain sight
the glow of your skin
a dead giveaway
giving way
wane even with CFCs
released as a guiltless child
1984 was a good year
made for punching clouds.

captain

Whoever it was/
in static/in fear
, can't quite seem/
relative/any
more/
not with/out a car horn
things break down/where
it used to just be ankles

I'll be sure to turn/hang it/
back when I get there/one leg asleep
the others are adrift/don't sit that way
when there is honey/perfectly passed
an open basket/wounded with/and wine

it's otherwise/hard/difficult
,just above, that curve/you know the one
tied to a pine at slow inches
dressed and narrow/where/hands
what I really want:
delicious/staved/like a ship

can't you just answer one question?
where have they all gone?
that, too.

on arrogance

Of course you're beautiful
of course you are,
and bright because of it

what matters now is that
dextrous weaving of
transgression that brings us closer;
all the color in light
and tuned to breath,
a map if you will thinking -
not only of tomorrow
but what would happen
if you were on a plane and
blinded before you land

how, then, will you greet them?
spear pushers and phalanx binders
alike gathered to offer something
brittle and soft around edges
ill-defined as the map you wear in your
head

some stream crosses before your
unseen and therefore
unknowing toes
that stream is a sea, really
on the other side of which

of course you're beautiful
of course you are
and bright because?

for flesh

Can't move you fast enough,
a fast enough
wind and rain and crazy light, broken lenses
what little thing,
that little thing means
this to you, scarred and staring
an open battlefield, preserved
so lovely but for the blood and I don't really,
don't really feel anything anymore
just an open wound
long enough and you know it's there but nothing more
I wait for it the moment to crash into this perfect beauty
one silver bullet would do it but there are parking lots all around
and even if the signs were clear I doubt there is a bullet anywhere but
in the ground here which is what it is really this doubt and hope
the sense of something closed that should be open
my heart my glorious heart filled with sand and leaking time

wishes all
wishes and memory where the cars roll the birds roost in summer
backwards in this place where so much has deserted us
field glasses useless shiny things ravens would run off they take over
when we aren't looking take off and build a home you know
a home

I used to know
knew something that I forgot and it's hard to lament the passage
when all you hear is its reverberation aberration some tired sigh among the trees and grass
could be the wind you think could be but for my face and the guilt so heavy
I never asked to carry anything no beast of burden I only have the price of passage, again that
word and the means to see it happen though the last of me runs out that way out through my
fingers and down where it is a meaningful portion perhaps but a portion all the same
portable and resplendent in homogeneity a soulful mixing of like to like everything below the
Mason Dixon has seen blood anyway so what so what woman so what some summer day where I
forgot my name and who I was for a time here everything knows its place that every night and
every day that everything is and cannot be forgotten not really only subsumed it just is it just is it
has is has it and you can't hold

What happens then this birth in reverse not death but a transcendent regression of sorts just like
that story of Merlin aging backward and shriveling don't look too hard just don't
the churchyard would have been just here just here where the stars mark bullets intended.

interstitial

We've made disastrous recovery possible
emerge from wreckage a new man
with a new something, whatever you want it can be yours
we've made revolt,
disaster/submission/cunnilingus possible
and where the railroad ties used to be there grows a flower
bent forward an innocent child waiting to be helped into a new
shirt, folded lamely over an arm that used to hold
something smaller and gentler

the room swims deeply shakes like gongs
a fork on the side of a glass where your
fighting fish swims knows the sound the vision the
horror of that noise
the microbes you just inhaled know it as the sound of life and
possible oppression;

interstitial, the journey;

throw out your lightswitches and will things to happen
will they happen in the dark
or only in the daylight where you imagined a child's happy
body to be, that same small knowledge you had in the floorboard
of your parents' car, curled up like a comma;
like a cat, like any number of penumbral items that you could
list but won't because the only taste you can taste now is
failure and it's not sweet at all;

like the air from the vent at the bottom of that footwell
Honda, thank you for understanding the needs of little people
little and sleeping, dreaming of angels that fend off bloody noses
and ignorance with flaming swords and mighty words that
we all once understood

crashes make sense if you admit this place
exists.

One Hundred Eighty Degrees

“Les Nessman: [excited] Obtuse! According to Websters, exceeding ninety degrees but less than one-hundred eighty degrees; lacking sharpness or quickness of sensibility; rounded at the free end; dull.

[looking offended]

Les Nessman: That's an insult!

Bailey Quarters: Les, take it easy.

Les Nessman: Take it easy!

Herbert 'Herb' Tarlek: Yeah. Just calm down, okay?

Les Nessman: Don't tell me to calm down. I just paid five dollars to find out I'm rounded at the free end!”

– from WKRP in Cincinnati, *Young Master Carlson*, 1979

"Biblically speaking, to repent doesn't mean to feel sorry about, to regret. It means to turn, to turn around 180 degrees."

– Frederick Buechner, *Secrets in the Dark: A Life in Sermons*

miraculousviolentwintermoment

Here

the low hum of the car crouched on ice
thumping schisms of ice shattering under
steaming wheels/stigmata of saltpeter,
acid gusts of filter-melt cigarette smoke
on the dry wind sharp
and bright as moonlight
where naked child-chased
faery bunnies lick
flurries and hide their
chocolate fingertips
in slippers shod for floating;

here

she wore a collection of
scars on her
cheeks intricate as
the texture of silk,
or the difference between one wave and another....
twisting memory like strands of rope
synthetic but no less real
dreams in a jar
the grocery store lobby
\$.25 for an everlasting
hobnobber

but you have to catch it in your hand.

skinShip

Tingles across my cheeks
raw fire from a
lightbulb/ no sou...
just a presence/
nothing connected
no -
thing connected

and the scent here
of her; stale cookies
you ran thumbs acro...
retrieved the memory
and glitter fell/ if you could
see your footprints/
or hear/ them
echoing and dow...
you'd know this
[emptiness]
for what it is
forget what it is
forget
wha...

it's the hammer of nightfall
body from a roof
ravens call one a...
time, polite
the murder body
politic
belting arias;
at the same time I felt
my ribs crush, under, under, under
soft fingers - there were 3 -
spores and spring rivers.

shade where my eyes ran
shade
where my
eyes ran

Thudding in my ears, that passing something
too swift to grasp
I am/ drunk/ with it;

with you,

I can smell where you
have been,
know your ghosts,
born, golden
children
despite the olive of their
[skin].

dark ediyorum

Senden nefret ediyorum
;over the shoulder
was right there
the page
in the dark so
;sharp softness

pierced hills
swallowed vales
:dark ediyorum
she hates

send in th e
you
that hates dark
well
whole and solid

cold slice meat
colored
by anger
;Turkish
and sunlight

Senden nefret ediyorum
that dark you
sky above the rim
where the rain comes
;small creatures in
estuarine actuals

then
;small creatures
abrade the wall

sure they are hidden
and waiting to dine
;whole and solid

that darkness
where the rain comes
bearing time

you
and weight.

there is always time to start a ghost

For joy as a song, built
thunderous histories
and swollen ankles hidden between
the pews above the cracks to hell

small children always
have something, like cats watching corners;
psychic parrots lamenting her passage
from a world of inchbugs and barrettes
to broken sock string
across your sleeping wrist

when we are
born we
begin to
sleep

the prayers on our lips no longer
concern the flesh
or plate
but sunrise

starting the ghost
smells like strawberry
linen.

the pornographia of substandard mind

Old beliefs die hard
dressed-up in boundaries
like rational rats
in man-time,
the first half
bald and unassuming crystal,
champions of never

- that pendulate boss
first half
the work resounding
the world's reality

- deathbead truth: clown gear
strewwwwwn down the stairs]
hard-stopping
experts supernatural

first.

the bell rang

"the gravity of the situation," he said
"requires certain concessions... your lifestyle,
for one, is, well..."

not to be morose
you dark mouse
but today I said

today to a child
broken and high
dressing more

more regretfully
attending the funeral
[of]balance
; wingtips

it's amazing how you can
say these things
that little space
in your head
must ache
abominably

"cut it out."

in a forest

drizzle-whispers cross the
creaking floor where
- only moments earlier -
the not-there had been; what
perfection in slumber
the innocent
,rolling in crescents
,begging more
than I knew
we had but skimming
reality for thrown
fishpond sunlight
:dappled skin
like groves

future springs
,arched veins
triumphant nearly
every dream.

flotsam, ebb

1.

Anarchic juvenile
hieratics
build careers,
steam sidelong into
tumbledown Auschwitzes'
open fencing,
crate ebullience

as fast-forward commodities
translate hypertext
clumsy paws
dirty screen

poleaxe-sacking
nonpreventible
oscillations
in spacetime.

unutilitarian spasms
bereft of muscle and mucus
dance like gravy
in a universe
of biscuit

2.

Underpass,
post-
everything intellectual
reeking of the possible
academic
a-feared

3.

juice.

transient.

music

everywhere below the belt

Nickels fall Sunday
with top-down ragged meaning
cats in heat
, frozen floor grates blow
, one billiard ball
at the end of a long rip
stares,

promise
that actress
exists everywhere
below the belt

across the street
an elderly car refuses

into ringing trays
sheathed in prayer
starch, watered
with wine
: shoe polish
an unfamiliar
face shake
means
she comes somewhere
Sunday
we waited
for you

on the screen.

if all I can do is hope

If all I can do is hope,

what difference does it
make when they bring guns in

and meaning to kill, they
wear bulletproof jackets,
sleepy animosity,
and unkempt dreams,
all tangled up in teenage
sexual politics
and cartoon morning diatribe?

and meaning to stop whatever
it is that threatens,
throw a desk at your attacker
or at the window so we can
get out

what difference does it
make that I am prepared to help,
to sweat my way through walls of
differing perspectives:

what do I know about children dying
in front of you in Sudan, or how,
when you
go to sleep at night
you don't know if you'll wake up
or if it'll be another day
without a shower,
without electricity,
and ten minutes spent in front of
a mirror trying to hide the bites on your
flesh from bugs or needles or
fools?

What difference does it
make that I dream a bigger dream
than you have eyes or imagination for,
that I know what you can do,
that I feel the blood flowing through
your veins as delicate as possible futures;

there is nothing I can do to steal
your breath?

I cannot dance,
I cannot sing,
all I can do is hope.

Two Hundred Seventy Degrees

“The Martians considered Saturn an attractive world with its many moons and beautiful rings of cosmic dust. But its temperature is close to 270 degrees below zero. And ice lies 15,000 miles deep on its surface.”

– from the 1953 film *War of the Worlds*

“Just show us how this particular plane pulled off these maneuvers. 270-degree turn at 500 miles an hour descending 7,000 feet in two and a half minutes, skimming across treetops the last 500 meters.”

– Actor Charlie Sheen questioning the official report of events on September 11th.

Hubble repairs notwithstanding

When all you eat is fried fast food and all you drink is beer
what chance your children? Across the street, over the nation every
where there is a Memorial Day there are drunken rednecks setting
their faces on fire by accident but really to what point when the fires
they raise celebrate nothing but an accident of choice, here in the land
/// if only my brother had lived a bit longer he might have known true
surprise like a live television broadcast for a non-existent award, which of
course he was the recipient, you can't have known and not know - never start a line with "of," I
think that's the second rule of poetry, only second to the first which is never tell anyone what
your writing means, because then that's all it is
/// I may have said that before, but I'm a bit bitter and unsure of the usual
sureties tonight; there are more rules but I may have forgotten them, I can't remember right now
or ever
/// maybe you'd rather read lines describing a long dead poet and his/her gorgeous
burial/offering/appeasement/easement into the afterlife, but really that is all that I am offering
anyway, what do you think this is a pyramid scheme? No, Jacques Lalande was the painter, not
the artichoke juicer and no, really I was born when peanuts ruled the day and the last time I saw
a space
mission was when I wanted to be aboard
to late for that now, you think, well I wouldn't be so sure.

There's space, and then there's Space
mine, I own. Hubble repairs notwithstanding.

piton

we could have been giants among
bloated American corpses
upright and terrible
in pain but sitting nicely, leather
chairs and clover honey from Spain for your
coffee when instead my brother
my brother

hide your face
from the wasp in the ditch;
that broken and sung-songed swath of green
out: over all the fields and rain
feet propped in the silt,
all that remains of beautiful cities
where women cried on balconies
your name on their lips

we could have been giants among
trees the size and shape of stolen dreams
snatched from the air by your lashes
and held pulsing with dew
and desire between the leaves
of your crown

hide your face with your hands
from that bone-thick crone and wheel;
what pain is left us comes wholesale
and reified saints decry holy writ
for your sake, they say:

we could have been
could have been
have been
giants among men.

inertia

I await miracles
same as anyone;
maybe a little more obvious,
maybe I lean forward, even
when there's no headwind

these things
seen, over
time

I await miracles on the street, one
down from your old house,
where you lost that tooth
where the heavy pile of the carpeting
hid monsters
and faeries, both
flew out at night

to tease your tender nostrils
and shadows scraped the windows
like a dream of hungry ghosts

who was that angry child
with a broken collar bone
and magic power, with
a silent voice made
from glass, shells and neon
butterfly dust
destined to sing
to cats
suspended in flight

I await miracles
same as anyone
without a handhold or eyes.

mimicked, nonchalant

Resonant strides across
a page;
through the hall;
and over the moon painted
corpse-hung blue on the wall
underneath which
children cavort
like ants carrying
trees in their mouths

Just inside you
never know,
never now
in the late apple light
carving Paris streets from
your grin

Here we are
sharing the shelter of
thin wings over
too-bright blast furnaces
while below our dance's
mimicked
nonchalant.

when

When women get together
they talk about bags of lobster and shrimp that
smell like body parts
what parts I won't say
I think you know

When women laugh
sometimes they cover their mouths
and sometimes they don't
but somehow it's decent
even when what made them
laugh isn't

When women descend into madness
they make men look sane
staring as we do
continually into rearview mirrors
and shaving mirrors
anything that can show the fleeting past
anything that streams and
overflows with time.

interruption

Glandular exigencies jar/r/r/r/red
the frame;
"do you like being an American"
she asks. a golden blur across
the frame; always framed
some starlet spit in the face of/shat in the shoes of/slept with the boyfriend
you get the picture;
rainbows occasionally and beneath them
unspoiled countrysides
of myth and other brands of coffee/haemorrhoid creme/condoms/fast food/fast food
enjoy the symptom and
now for a word from our sponsors
"do you lie, being an American" no;
unequivocally
I could be lying but
short sleeves and a nice haircut dictates otherwise
kids run in front of the car and I barely stop
that's one version - I am always retreated inside myself
second version - the bird I hit on the way to work
can't fly, ever fly again.
a wheel of startled eyes and blue feathers with
just a brief light of green/the color of desire
black across the windshield
across the street/an old man, too old
(where are his children?) mows his lawn
I wonder in the mirror/the past/what if he has a stroke,
as long as I can
see what happens
around, in front of me it's real but what happens
when the lights are off? Scoot. I can't see.

the frame;
twisted light like broken bones
or or or something, something red
maybe just the fluid in my eye, what's it called
it's a function of glaucoma/again the symptom
"do your life an American"
ghostly grocery store shelves and I just read Cormac McCarthy
what does it mean/what does it mean
treasure your canned corn/even fresh fresh rutabaga
the holy holiness Hostess anything and batteries

again, the frame;

blasted all over the road with billboards that are tvs that are billboards
and I am not a doctor but I play one/towels by the pound and happy ending truck stops
what is this country coming to/well, let's see what has this country been
the last great thing/the last great hinge was when we won/drove across country
for no reason to watch landscapes that do not change change and then change again
don't pet the rock it might be poisonous give me my steel toys please painted with lead-based
pain.

"do yours look American"
well certainly not.

until then, whenever then may be

I don't know if you remember, but
the last time I saw you
you were upright, using both
legs prepared to run while my daydreams had
me in a convertible crossing a bridge into
Brooklyn with The Pixies playing
on the stereo my mind has a louder volume than yours and
I really didn't hear what you said
I'll pretend to listen now, because it's
the polite thing to do, only you have
nothing to say or if you do it's lost
in the folds of your mouth, the corners that trap
sound like hungry spiders and pin your hopes
in a place that saliva no longer reaches

I hoped to have some kind of closure, some thing I could
place soundly between us, point to, and say "here" - but that
didn't happen, the tea was too sweet and your
children are amazing, kind, and everything I garbled
turned out to be ironed flat in my past
- what is a vacation, anyway?

I wanted to tell you how sorry I am, but
not for me those words, for my
father and all the opening and closing, iris-ing and oyster-ing
questions that never get answered in a family
we just accept or don't but
questions come out and stay put in interesting streamers
maybe we can decorate them with song next time

I put my hand on yours and tried to tell you
without telling you so cold, so small, so much less than we
were, I feel like a tick: the sound, the insect, it
doesn't matter much because it's both
and in the bathroom I heard the grandchildren
happy with my wife and that
was enough for me.

dance hall explodes, killing one foreign vision

Level your finger the way
you lever your smile, parting crowds
pedantic hacks in smart
suits hurl similes
long dead at the back
waiting for a faux pas or the
foie gras-gasm, whatever
hits their palates first -
a burst of steam would set
this trip off nicely or
perhaps gunsmoke;
relative to the bang
the barrel is much
shorter, the band keeps playing,
paid for their smiles and speaking only
pidgin French when required

a nice night with the windows
open mist
on the parquet floors and
in one
old man's eyes
heat-seeking
outdated hardware and coarse
language beneath
what might once have
been a lab coat, stained
tonight with vintage
bottle drips swaying lurid from the candle angels
all that are left;
stalagmatic pools of wax
and a single footprint, to be specific
"size eight, but no heels" you joke
I'm still watching, wondering
what everyone else
sees in this empty room
- the clocks stand still
shadows crawl the walls,
top down, eyes
averted you can
feel it on your skin
this break from reality,
flirting posture

- what do you really mean -
transcends luminescent,
overpriced watches
and those who hold them
once designed
the perfect explosion.

how punk

All these men nab carrots
their heads to the side
in love with something off screen while
wives telepathically quiz them
their personality traits and no one hears we can only do one
thing at a time, popular discrepancies aside this arm of the galaxy
devoid of/feeling numb from/the Novocain gum hurt
spinal block ear-splitting
screches of childbirth and terraforming before
it all goes dark
and the woman with matches
is the other side of the room reapplying lip
stick your guns are all in safety
deposit boxes and with the power off
you're power poor,
smiling vapid and discourteously
staring at the small stars her lower back pre-ass
denim warm from the dryer hot
under fingers that otherwise hold grooves straight off
a 78 and guitar solos played
by gods that once walked through
the waiting room

walls covered too many times paint
hanging in adenoid flaps so wind sings the room
through the open curtains near
which she has moved the smoke from the leaky fireplace too,
carried it in vanilla lily arms a small box a small dog curly with hair,
reminiscent of casualties on television in some
small place the priveleged ignore until the
wax/water/blood among their own personal arrangements
the Mercedes stalled on the any highways hubcap
deep in ephemera attrition and septic hurricane water

spill what you know and pull back before you get it cut off.

failing writers post cards from space

I need this to be right, this
collection of wrongsayings:
rightdoings turn over and over
and, over, and over
pay attention now
it's the greatest
trick of them
all, when the words
disappear faster than your cat
facing imminent bathtime
your hands itching to cause
disaster and nothing
on the stove,
old grease
feeling electric and breathing
in the middle of summer rainstorms
dropping hail and worse all over
a screen that can't look back,
fortunate that mistakes pay
better than ever

was what

dreamy substance stuck between
fingers clenched tight on imagined lashes
beating this thing into shape
frothing in the traces and blown
hard for the treeline

submitted
for your viewing pleasure
strung out like a smack ape
in the darkest cave
ceilings all done up with ticker tape
flotsam Halloween
for the Christmas set
your rocket is ready

your fingers ache
you can't shut it down
or out, it undulates in
the space you used to fill alone
and calls you names

your family and all you hold
in your front pocket aside
from the lint that glues the universe

or this one, hard as a forgotten ticket
pasted to your forehead
no one to see yet

- 1) where's the dope
- 2) where's the money
- 3) who are you calling Rooney,
cadet?

this venture has about a point
one ten chance of fuck-up-itude and that
is why you would have made an eager career
from cartwheels and earwax
could you have held them close
the way your dresser holds fifty-year
gusts and two small nails that belong

it's not my coffin.

The Dome (Notes from Below)

“The old cathedrals are good, but the great blue dome that hangs over everything is better.”

– Thomas Carlyle

“The sky was like a bowl of light overturned on the flat black land.”

– Laura Ingalls Wilder, from *Little House on the Prairie*

“Each child born has at birth, a Bowl of perfect Light. If he tends his Light it will grow in strength and he can do all things – swim with the shark, fly with the birds, know and understand all things. If, however, he becomes envious or jealous, he drops a stone into his Bowl of Light and some of the Light goes out. Light and the stone cannot hold the same space.”

– Koko Willis and Pali Jae Lee, from *Tales from the Night Rainbow*

faery Mound

glittering electric something
small rebellions spark cap guns
burn in the sun that is there
women dance slow gyres
powerline strength denatured alcohol
syncopated in a corner where two trees meet

/static buzzes ornamental grass
/towers fall and plastic army men
/over the hills the moon rises caterwauling
/just there amongst the saws
/not sure what that is
/and rainbows end

from the bottom the top looks different
maudlin feet itch in too-tight shoes
lightning and feral faeries bare tiny torsos
and encumbered without mothers
this mushroom circle without paying
aggressively inked with night and something more
bows it's the intention of blood

/gray and heavy with stone
/no socks in summers with summer
/dancing where we are rooted
/no one gets through this gate
/tiny pointed teeth bared and breasts
/arrows drawn without
/to beget and shed rain or no rain

again the night shudders
existing only as a tale burned at their table
course we don't understand
electric things that hate and twist
air the same scared to kiss even
amongst the living whose
and you didn't operate as more than metaphor

/giving birth to a moon blasted from smog
/bizarre thanksgiving of
/night can really do things
/enzymatically through wires and
/the beautiful dangle fishhooks
/corpse you'd devour at once were it so
/clear as ice in a suddenly

bright place

with hats off clowns are slightly
who hit whom, does it matter
snow the last we saw it
never fading no matter what
still you hear laughter
queen you are and stole
home is a memory

/less deranged than that last accident
/fight and love spread similar patterns in
/never clean no matter how you love
/you wash at an empty place but
/braying children of misfortune whose
/never to be returned
/times that abstract furies of sound

glow deeper

synthesize pain

/golem of spit and wire

prize your life from their gold fingers
and hum your electric song.

shake that, again

Cold zombie sheets
;the sleepy unhistory,
starved yellow by
a glassless Floridian moon
and floating downstream

wet hands made of pretime
:mold and raw, nearly divine
static from one half a bald pair
your father's Magnavox
await the pounce
/pounce

danger shrouds in
twin harpsichord
scatterings, there
:one quick-bitten
nail and megaphone
- puddled blood,
a long-vanished
chain receipt,
decrepit theories
enumerated
across the backs of
thousands of tiny pages
- a beetles' feast

shake that. again.

splice the mainbrace

Splice the mainbrace
: death
beyond hippodrome's
glass-bottomed ghettos
there ;re lists
golden cricket wonderlands
wrapped up and sold
Jonestown slomo,
homey-style

we can roll
and we roll deep

like it or not
this season leaks
and goes down slow
; fat and heat-haze sugary
like rakehell geese
we're all floating in grog
slapping our palms
with an eye on trim

we can roll
and we roll deep.

toe

Incuse
clackety-click minting
new nature new fingers
where? hold

Spiritism
alone and saline
ebbing a fenceless
rubefaction

clickety-clack tick
breathe in curves
the written and fall
where normally
it's held
;await

a fingernail lost
- solid Tangle
the youth that was
;emerging
doldrum
in a stain
,a storm
made
who we
aren't

hanging men
drape the wold
foetid

mist
:bones scrape bare

: bones scrape
charity
,call brides
and birds

alike
/click
/clack.

sound

1.

"Organized religion has done more for art than it has for people,"
clinking silverware, the roughness of overstarched cloth napkins on a bearded face, muffled
footsteps, random video game explosions and tinny can-opener-crinking...

2.

"War? What war, and where? There's always a war - what makes this one so much more
objectionable?"
television static, a small dog's bark, the wind battering glass windows - the seals flexing in the
frame

3.

"The color of light is really black, you know, so when you see something red, that's your brain
telling yet another lie. You can't believe what anyone tells you, anyway."

front door store chimes, tinkling metallic - slapping against the glass, the heavy thud of a bible or
military manual hitting the floor, its spine rasping against the wood floor and the signatures, a
pen scratching on paper, deep-basement hum of a huge A/C unit kicking in again

4.

"I can't believe I grew up here."
a car starting, small, brisk, children barefoot slapping, sidewalk chalk rustling, far-off highspeed
traffic, palm fronds rustling, the high-pitched creak of a rocking chair on top of the lower-pitched
creak of a front porch board, an off-kilter ceiling fan squeal

5.

"Well, you may not own the house, but you're one hell of a gardener. That's great work."
deep voice, throaty chuckle, bugs smashing into glass bulbs at full speed, techno playing on
small car speakers, the click and flare of a cigarette lighter, a car door slamming

what happens next

The race is on you think the race
is on and I wonder whether it can be said that we fight something
hungry for the future when what we race
should measure our speed in flight
two rows back some little person is awed at
the clouds at the ants/clods/buyers and sellers/the metamorphosed children
just like him but ground bound not free
not free at all
cloudling speaks again and we move one step closer
to something some time some definite unit of bliss or sadness unknown
until then we can only close our eyes and refuse the outside in an interest
bearing machines that tell only doom
forecast only trends and expansionist tactics far too unwitting
to be applied in a democracy

The race is on and we cannot even talk of it here
where the walls have ears, and eyes too
who knows where god listens, or even what god it is
even the smoke detector in the bathroom conspires against
random elements of our society that are neither

Why take off your shoes
when it's the hand what holds
knives and always has been
down the wing
runnels of water move slowly among the airbrakes
waiting for their moment(s)
and achieving as we cannot
what violence we impart to everyday things
as our wings tear open the sky
revealing the brighter heart of truth
from a boy's lungs to our open ears

we always wanted to fly
but in our heads
wings are flesh and bone.

glorious on a cellular level

Her face was
violet I swear right
before I smacked
it didn't hurt her I swear
it was just a sweater
it was just some animal hair;
alone in the confines of your gasping fish heart
small and shallow way too fast to contain anything
meaningful she looked at you while you laughed at her
and the moment was born
the same thing that one day some poor farmer might tell
his grandchildren if ever there were any to tell
machines do all the work and farmers
push buttons not children
don't you know/didn't you read
Heinlein and Bradbury you
poor sod that's what they used to plant in the ground whenever the weeds got
too tough isn't that nice corporal
punishment, corporeal blandishment
and an altogether warm and fuzzy something a little too large to fit in your pockets
but just small enough that she might be amused by it and let you do your tricks
it's an antique this love and lust and urge
to accumulate for the sake of propinquity
I mean propriety became such an ugly swan but we were hungry and ate it for the sake
of something that we could chew with our peppers
the garden having been left behind and our dreams forgotten upon awakening.

hembuk too at the show

Slow it was slow
and safe pulled
from your flesh like
the last stitch
weighted at the end
garnished with stinging balms you
can't pronounce but can smell,
feel warm coursings under the skin
writhing deep sea eels of frustrated
nerves and truncated happenings
no glory but the end of day from a
hospital bed; the bottom floor
a rotten pensione where maybe
famous painters gathered to discuss

\\the flapping sound is intermission///

we're lucky, there's a public station
documentary all about it
everything but the grain,
rutting texture and single malt spilled slowly
down the throat of your greatest legend;
high on a stool reading race charts,
picking glass from one red heel,
thumbing the carcass on a plate,
in the last fiery implosion through
the south windows

roseate scores on breasts of doves
burned and reeling,
exploding up from the square
outside and for one moment,
you are really there
without boundaries of safety
commodity:
just a man,
on a couch,
in your head.

cloisonné

What on earth does that
have to do with anything art can say
when art says anything at all it
tends to echo from tinny speakers
smelling like the rotting foam they shed,
motion is entropic too, muscles
flexing in the friendly confines
of this second-run buck-a-day
theater of the mind and if you
could see them fall you would remember
where you and yours, sitting cloistered
volunteer peonies,
the edge of the orchard,
used to sit and sway,
the game
the game, was
to match the movement of the delicate heads
bent low under the sun
dropping ants for you to burn

that was long ago of course
but yesterday too, and now
when the winds blow, was
it real or not, you still have the sunburn
doesn't that mean the cost of childhood
is written in the scars on knees
the scent memory locomoting through
this house your head and the oil spill
behind the Red Lobster leaves peculiar messages
only translated in the moment
and saved for a later that never comes
a hidden treat in the bottom of that winter coat.

glass and bone (-Ed)

Crushed by gravity and looking up from the bottom
this man inside is not me though we chat
mostly one-sided, it's true
if he could be anything it would be me in a wheelchair
but be sure my toenails are painted black
I dread fungus

/ attack this living thing
/ beautiful in the jar -
/ some retributions hang from
/ the lips of the infirm;
/ swollen gutters shedding last year's

And in the kitchen you would find all the usual things
relatives just as real and breathing as they were when you were all fifteen years younger
and the glare in your eyes was just a reflection of the coming moment
and not the screeching cacaphony of a shell falling like
an oak leaf, the wrong time of year
it's the wrong time of year

Children gather round
we're all children.

/ leaves in a rainstorm

C. Brannon Watts is a poet and educator living in Rockford, IL. He believes that poetry should remain open to interpretation, and routinely burns greeting cards wherever he finds them in the wild. His recent publication credits include work in *Ygdrasil*, *Clutching at Straws*, *Greatest Lakes Review*, and *Metazen*.