

Approximately Near



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Dedicated to Robert Kelly and Charlotte Mandell

We will be outside one another
looking in

where we are inside too
anything is possible in poetry

inside a beautiful
perfectly transparent

globe made of pure distance
in this famous world of ours

— Robert Kelly

Burlap

A book
of woven hair
that a bird would eat from
or worms wind
through.

The lattice
of brown raw strings compressed
into some kind of journal
I see from a telescoped distance. Burlap.
empty and shorn,
the skin of something ecclesiastical.
My goat skin coat changed into a baggy diary.

Egyptian Liquor

She woke me up in a dark twin bed
in a hotel. I feel strange flowers
on my head. Her yellow hair
is wrapped
in a white bandage.

She shows me a bottle of Egyptian liquor
that is antique blue, a flame on the label.

I go out of that room
to where a group of 12 pale men
play cards around a table.

And the men tell me in some sort of way
that this is Las Vegas night.

The linked compounds like row houses contain a universe
obstructed and shaped by wooden ceiling ropes
of a schooner's narrow hull.

20 women sew in a circle
and regard me nonverbally without comment.

They seem to communicate psychically as
poets are partying ensconced in cliques
yet spin off of one another.

A slender man whose skin is the shade of a pharaoh
is in a bunk fully dressed like a sailor

Wears a set of masks.

Each visage a layer that he demonstrates
to me by peeling it off, one after another.

I eat burnt toast and lingonberries
and look out an oblong opaque old window

to a nothing
and when I turn back
there is a sense of ice blue colored lace
stretched over the rim of my eye
like whitened fissures on Lake Ontario
or
handwriting across gray glass.

Insomnia

A pistachio colored flash, hand in the vortex
seems to want another hand to join
it in this triangular corner.
Is the ring on a finger
a metallic lock on a stem.
A blizzard of smoke
in a garden of colliding, transparent gestures.
I wake up and wonder:
Who would want to skin a cat
anyhow.

Skates

I tell myself to sleep. But, I can't sleep.
The bowl has a jelly in it in the form of glass
and a rickety pine cone frosted with goldy glitter.
Something a girl made a long time ago at Christmas
that is extraneous and manufactured.
Now, it is Monday and manger's put away
and darkness holds
except for the fluorescence of school.
If I listen to the branches for wind
the world sounds thick
and feels thick
with cold, compartmentalized degrees
shuffling across a lake
without skates or birds or words.

Frieda Kahlo, Today.

Saw Frieda Kahlo today, suddenly
wearing her stare
as an object.

A horizontal projection from her forehead
so as to relieve her, somehow,
of receiving us.

I stared at the arrows
she bears in a self-portrait as wounded deer
as St. Sebastian does. In Self-Portrait with Monkey,
she represents herself as an appendage to the animal
Or twin. It's uncertain.

I notice for the first time,
that her necklace of a curved thick white bone
lies on her clavicle

Like a harp floating on a sea.

Locks

As a cat who receives all of the room
in one oval eye flickers its shadowed broom
at the persistent truths that must
be read in a twitch of a dahlia-colored curtain seething in dust.
This stain I see from a desk
like a burnt hole in a dress.
A voice says: Allow the soul its gyrations.
Inside the rectilinear self's imaginations.
In dark blue January a barking dog
yet and yet and yet and yet ricochet off a wet log.
Somewhere in Eastern Pennsylvania
I sat in a room and smelled coal with my friend Elena
and held a tin pail
to scoop black water from mud behind a frail jail
where withered leaves intricately freeze.
This is how a person learns of time's webbed galaxies
in a blue plastic Christmas record's repetitive rounds of sounds
and puts itself in a brown
leather old suitcase and devises a code of knocks
that unfasten the gold goldilocks locks.

Vetiver

Vetiver drops for grounding
collected in a small brown bottle
as all winter my grounding medicine
was inside a drawer next to a forest
of diffuser reeds.

All the homeopathy
undone.

I imagine a kind of magnetism
winds around my pants
as I walk to the store
to “get milk.”

The particles of all existence are
microdots that burn and freeze that
make one lose a favorite woolen glove
the color of a January sunset
somewhere between the gray door of a house
and the entrance to the milk store.

The wavering currents
of a stream of charcoal
that lure clear facile thoughts
into the unutterable cavern of Tuesday morning.
The littered cavern that becomes a midden pile.
A zigzagging underpass
where all the lost grounding goes.

Blue Tongue

The silence of not talking has a monastic surface as though
strangulation not meditation withholds the tongue bound to a board
of its own invisible device shaped as the inverse of a shoe kind of
vagina-like
though the tongue persists to fluck against the wall of a chamber
very much like a pilot light is seen in the etheric deep of the white stove
flickering bluely inside the convenience which is what they name
refrigerators and stoves and dishwashers, conveniences, and so
to withhold that most basic tool, as though the arm swings back and
freezes a hand
so that it may not cook or wash or light in a nether space where if only the
tongue were lit and all the columns of blue fire ignited, words would boil.

Misericordia

Today, a thickened marshmallow
like snow makes every branch on Atlantic Avenue
a massive cathedral.

Tree's black arms with hands of ice
within which small rivers and birds actively
flash by. Our Lady of Mercy in her encompassing
blue cloak is an image between worlds
with her half-lidded visage
in a meditative condition
and her crown looks like a copper cauldron
or a device to transmit
the aura of gold and pink
that encircles her frozen, far-away hair.

Noctilucent

for N.K.

To she who used a meteorological term.
Stole it, I'm certain
from my trunk which is heavy and black
a sort of metal egg carton I wear on my back.
I must have fallen asleep here at this desk
which is my lap, I must confess
with notebook as a plank
and I saw in the small ceiling mirror that my hair lay lank
across my head, a bed of straw
a shaggy cap for winter which any minute is sure to thaw.
Picked up your flame thrower words
just before I had the dream of blackbirds
on a green yellow field.
A woman's face swims to the window which is sealed
with silver fibers like a weaved basket of consciousness.
It was the poet swimming in air her hair with strange bloneness
among invisible waves of clouds so low it
was a fog and before I knew it
she came through the lattice
and found Noctilucent which shines in irreal lavender bliss
And locks both of us in a cotton candy wrapped robe.
An empty vintage sateen ball gown in the old
Spinning snow globe.

St. Michael

A giant, white, open umbrella
colorless as rushing water
that frozen is a twisting snake
with foam in its jaws.

You are over our sphere and underneath.
Raise your golden scissors
that shine like airplanes
in a cloud.

Your horses rush from the waves
coalesce into foam
made of smoke
and handwriting
on a night sky.

Dawn is Gone

for Vyt Bakaitis

I hear a doorbell ring about an hour ago.
She wasn't here anyway.
Left her blanket though
which smells of hair and weeds.
Is a frozen ochre
which supersedes her effects
although her qualities shine on
in the background of your eyes
as though you had almost
become one with it
and before you could
it gathered, condensed and dispersed.
And now you point to a box
irretrievably outside, made of branches and air
the color of a pale orange Easter egg
withdrawn from its vinegar bath
preliminarily pale almost white.
Dripping, oval, shelled,
her phosphorescent figurine within.
The ball of the sun.

Purim

I wrote the word “today”
and try to align it with the unripe white cone of a strawberry.
Try to evoke the earliness
of March, the sour white
shell that startles.

I cross all of these words out
as though each scratchy band of black ink
is a wavering branch.

A season unwilling to flourish, to elaborate itself.
The evocation of “waiting and watching”
as an unseen British man pronounces from a rectangular
electronic screen
set up on brown wooden table nearby.

Dissipates with a determined dark blue cold weight.
Yet, there is a sense, momentarily,
of a reverb with amethyst.

The feeling
more expansive than the actuality
of slanted portals, awakening.
Lime and vinegar, chamomile buds,
And eating the bad man’s dark, pruney hat.

Universal Forms and Chaos

for Tamas Panitz

I'll admit, I look for a trace desperately,
an imprint of its passage.

A stain
a finger nail
a remnant of.

I forget
what the name and number meant for me to do.

A thread
of a hue
imbedded in the silvery blue gray
the color of the 17th century
which surrounds the page Mr. Vaughan handwrote on:
Universal forms + Chaos.

Yet, the cord is refuted
as a discordant chain
dissimilar
tones broken from
an interstellar box.
Made of opposing purls of sheep hair
a black knit shelter
for a hand is a discarded thing
overly protective
in the rain to come for all we
haven't a shadow in a drought.

Hamman

A flooded field of thick blue
tourmaline.
A flicker, a ripped page under the eye lid.
I would like to tell you of this
having wandered into
a hallway adjacent to a door.
What constitutes you, I wonder,
what does the word hold.
A black sag of cloth.
The silky reception of a projection.
The entrance
into rooms beyond a circle of light
becomes a diorama of particles.
God's eye
rock like in the
voided head, a wooly socket
with eyelashes of ash.
A funnel
in which the radiating accumulation
whirls
As a neck may propel the flap
at the top of the head.
The spine is columnar.
To crack open its engorged, leathered
being, rupture its casing,
I try to crawl away.
Feel leaky
and suppurate bound to a branch.

Wrapped in cocoon stuff that
bathes us in green tea.
Immersed in the latticed shadows of
the hammam's
blue tiled frames and green pools
incrementally offered.

Eixample

The approach is convex, a sense of purple spheres
underneath each shadowed ring so that the eye's path
weighted by curiosity
advances up a reversed cone.
Rung by rung, the climb is perilously "there."
A location ephemeral to latitude.
The outside rail
the farther cloudy hoop
where the light originated
in the origami of sensations in
vertiginous ripples exactly centerless.

Hoyt St. Station

Slink of a hallway from which
no train comes and we are not passengers yet.
Unfathomable intrepid patience of
the hole my eye falls in to.
And nothing to stop the looking
through the long crumbling dark.
Morning being metaphoric within this constancy
indifferently lets us hover.
As though this delayed departure
was a point apart from our diffusion
and a total and only possibility.

White Spiders

What rock is 4am, a ledge
of sparkling dark? Water percolates
in silver below the rock. A cistern
where I lay my face and cure its stains
with chamomile and lint.
Rain suddenly from the window
wets red curtains. Its layers and hemisphere.
Moon wraps
the room with changeability.
I've been away and brought back.
Humongous tree shadows.
A chasm and electrical storm.
The rock written on with spit.
Petroglyphs, white spiders, numbers,
which he wrote could be divested
From the soul, I guess, with scraping.

Reversed Birthday

“Like Scented Gardens for the Blind.”

I see in the hallway, mildewed on the broken dishwasher.

Soap slivers, snow globes,

the apothecary of healing.

It's 11:30 pm, he warned:

don't overindulge

in awakeness.

Mothy ephemera of late silence.

Sitting up in the dark I remember the Olive-colored Fairy Book.

That an old man and old woman argue.

A magic cat maybe hid in a barrel and transformed to something
that escaped out of a hole in the roof.

I'll need green ink to do this.

Netted

In the middle of the night
every slivered molecule is an urgent waiting room
in a kind of bus port.
I am travelling to France on the subway
in a silver conveyance
garnished with black silk folds.
Blue mosaic of
bottle caps netted together
as the ocean is a maze
of volcanic spires.
A tidal wave of white horses flying from foam.

August 19th

Funny, sudden wave that
“rustle”

Is still the only sound for.

No better English word I can think of.

I guess this is music, then,
a mimicry and talking back,
a rattle of seeds in a mouth.

Everything in the white ceramic sink
is used and cries

Nothing is forever.

Human hands take plates and cups away to dry.

The trees are silent for a whole month it seems.

There is no wind or music. No thoughts.

Her dry, bark-like arm holds a diminishing bouquet.

Black Glimmer Cage

Ascent in a shadow.
The black glimmer cage of your pupil's blaze.
A cool coronation of rings.
A fire in the sea.
The shadow is dry.
The red gray fruit of the August moon.
Why the poet in a brief flickering
is two feet tall and shadows cross, I don't know.
This happened in rocky land and in twilight air.
I am in a troubled procession – drunk –
of musicians playing Mariachi guitars. We
blow Gabriel's horn and start for the sea.

The Bath She Took at Midnight

What was Etruscan about it was
the dark of the middle of the night when an elven eared
woman reclining spoke a water dripped word
which rolled then down the track of the rim
and disappeared into the green growth.
She took a bath at midnight
and applied water to water.
The stick of old green iron with a worn disc is all that it is.

Green Door with Tufts

This Enclave
a welter
a gridlocked mesh of
dark shiny mulberry leaves
and refracted voices
among other enmeshed entities.
When I turn my head for an instant
see a tiny yellowed hand
or pod, a netsuke like face
withered, on a stick.

Spanish Pavilion, 1937

This morning, I took scratchy black hotel pen
and the 2 of Clubs, a card
found by my foot near the Metro
into the sparkling bazaar by the highway.
The Cataluña Zapatas
and two azure glass door knobs
and old photographs of St. Monserrat, wrapped in newspaper,
were what I hovered over subtracting with attention
adding reticence
to the unknowable things.
Found a stamp torn from an envelope: the word "Madrid"
imprinted in small white letters above a brownish official head.
Paths that led, finally,
to "The Spanish Pavilion, 1937, Paris World's Fair."

I feel this is the most beautiful structure I have ever seen.
A radiant capsule of glass that seems to hold
a promise inside its skin, ruby or blood, lightly as light.

8.3.14

Voices, tendrils
orbit in a convex space.
The woven mat of utterances, of vines.
I wish I could crawl in the dark corner
which portends, repels
and alludes to
simultaneously.
The spider web's wet hair.
As it is, sit here, obtuse, divergent
with an old Bic pen and ratty sweater.
Feel twilight interlocked thrivings.

Your Small Paper Notebooks

We sit in a room large as Illinois
A torn piece of paper on the wall.
I think it spells Petrossian.
The bottles on the sill of
weird liquors finally gone.
Her pens, her cloth and toys wrapped in cellophane.
What are the many words that stream
across your small paper notebooks
hidden in a room inside a room.

Photogram

I was going to write a poem about a place.
But, I've forgotten where I have been.
Scratchy remnant of
a waxy photogram
of a ghost leaked from another poem
as though swimming over magnetized by a possibility.
The ghost injects a substance.
A kind of wet molecular box
divided by mesh galactic curtains
with a modular streaked hand.
The ghost anticipates
a procession that engulfs the space
of the poem's future chaos.

Familia Gravada

In the plaid of the morning
a bar of shushing gray
crosses a plane of yellowish green
shade that
the lilacs burst out of
in the night.

A kind of crumbling blanket.
we walk between its bisecting thin layers.
A bee hive is a compressed dome.
I look at the slanted mirror
and shoes and sugar and a baby
that inhabit the going out and coming in.

Periscope

The ink of things pools today.
Shadow
of small oceans inside the larger bath
where agitated particles roam.
Am drinking coffee in a cold sweat.
Notice my foot as an inert monster.
A kind of small sallow dog or lizard.
Look through a periscope,
an embroidered tube that prods the atmosphere
so as to detect rotations
that ground, sea and velocities merge.
Last night, I saw Cassiopeia.
Her ten thousand sparking hairs.
Now, there is a whorl on a notebook page.
A curled thread and
gunked aloe on the words.
Heavy green fingers of the hand.
My eye crawls along.
Its ocular machinery
in phosphorescent chaos.

Tea Sponges

Wrapped in wind that is
an invisible long blade that comes over the ocean
and slides up Atlantic Avenue.
My own thought, lumpy
slopes from an encampment turned permanent.
See seventeen iron buckets from Japan
suspended by rope
and piles of wooden doors that make oblong shadows.
On a spider stuck on its web, a small black cluster of thread.
Tea sponges are brown perforated squares, wet that
the September darkness falls on.

Reading

Reading a book of poems backwards,
the smooth sculpted surface is no place.
Yet in a chair or within a
gray flecked rock in Finland flung to the sky
are spectral, groundless locations.
I'm scared of the empty alley ways
in the snow at 1:00 am.
Have to traverse dark frames.
An ancestral dragon mouth yawns hugely.
White ash falls gently from the sky.

Approximately Near

Sudden rain surprises with a box of parallel lines
and the quiet it makes nearby
so that a man's cry, also sudden,
approximately near, carves a shape.

And leather trunks
are filled with a particular emptiness of
folds of sweaters and
knitted woolen white socks that
leave an impregnation
just as much as
rose silk pockets that
hold nothing also.

Are like hands — in a way.

Shush, it's too late to
cry or to say anything
in wet air

Or to recognize the cries
of birds you don't know.

Alhambra

The word was said in the night
and sounded like
Alabama or alabaster.
A Southern aunt with a biblical three-part name.
I find on the floor a peacock feather.
A tourmaline colored scrap
in the middle of a dark, November Saturday's
discarded clothing and dust.
A strip of syllables
that float.
A doorway inside of a doorway.
Waking,
I went away
outside
the reconstituted fold.
Its intricacies.

Citrine

There's a tepid interval
a fuzzy duration to this day.
Despite arrivals and appointments.
a vortex has let loose
arcs of directional arrows. Glad I found a speckled wool hat
and paper wrapped transparent sequins in a wooden cigar box
today as the light is trapped
In citrine leaves
which persist
and attach and hang on
like whispers.

Phosphors

Now, with the magic blue pen in between my dry fingers, I wait for the descent of the elixir of “ink india,” the arrival of the “corps fluide.” The lady bug slides on a streak of rain down the dormer window one foot in distance from the giant, glowing, radium stick. It is night. The frosted arms of Chronos are arrested in mid gesture. A question arises: what, in fact, is the gesture that the name of circulates? Are the arms in a stage of preparation for moving the “hands” of the monster towards the throat of its children so as to lift each one to the O of its orifice?

The rigidities of bones of the arm. Its horizontal stasis indicates the gesture has already occurred. All of the movement in a frenzy of disintegrating frames. Rotations of the beasts branched limbs the remnants of its children, the eviscerated, remains of the hours.

To reverse direction, to swim against the waves of dark blue shadowing the page, one may find in the flotsam that situates the body like a raft. The barque of expectations is a bobbing platform above the surface. The moment before was the instant of encounter with the beast in its ritualized repetition. The arrangement of its arms may be read as a code. Left arm upraised, right arm at an angle from the core pivot may be translated in an instantaneous act of reading that obscures the interval in which a calculation is in process.

All mathematical operations evoke a visceral sensation of rejections, a no, a non. I try to investigate this sensation. An experience of being questioned by the police within a gap. I think it may be the inevitable conclusion in every instance. As the end

point was already present, an exorable monster of the same species as Cronos. The summary sum, the formulaic formula as each link in the chain of the circuit and each foot hold, a knotted string, is implicitly in place, why then traverse it. Where is the permutation and experimentation? The passages an echoic light that increases in intensity as the strips of horizon lighten.

What I wanted to experience with you was the instant before the writing starts. I find there is no method by which we could jointly stand together at the premiere. We may only join once the writing begins. How would we signal to one another that we were outside the writing and just about to begin. There is a cellular divergence, a sense of ribbons of space that divide our continuum.

The awareness — which may be envisioned as a prickly ball of fur. Each hair protrudes from the sphere. Notations that are the curled horns of a snail and as tenderly functional.

Last night, I stood at the juncture of the Boulevard Edgar Quinet, Rue du Montparnasse and Rue de la Gaite. A glowing octagon of a clock stood at the crossroad. A herm. Where the three faced Goddess must have stood. Each façade an instantaneous screen that dissolved at the corners. Sodden brown leaves lie across the stones of the ground. Within the clotted void of present conditions.

ABC

The Letters ABC are stenciled in black on white
that make a box that shines
a sign near a door
a black door, large enough for a horse and a cart.
But, anyway, in midmorning the wind was actually
a panel of air that swung sounds
toward an ear
as though occurrences were curled tunnels attached to the wave
and the recipient an animal.
A pinky bird hunched in a passage
supposedly “listening for poetry”
Which the barking crows and sparrows on the rooves
laughed at —
Among themselves.