



# Taming the Sky

E. C. Bonham



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## INVOCATION

O Sacred Names, O sacred text,  
reclining on the pages of a book,  
you look like the night sky,  
as cold as the Absolute.  
Bring me your emptiness  
so that I may be free.



I



## FOUNDLINGS

There is a cold  
in the heights.  
A frozen tarn  
lays impassive  
on the peak.  
Brutal wind sweeps  
across the meadow,  
crackling in  
broken snow.

Flames shiver  
in a ring of stone  
and a foundling trembles  
in a quaking dance,  
hearkening to  
the freezing chant  
of the night's  
syllables of snow,  
suggestive of clouds  
smeared across  
the blue tableau  
some hours ago,  
before he reached out  
and stole those sparks  
from the night,  
before the stars  
grew unwilling,  
when he could still see  
those pale inkblots  
in the sky.

# THE HOBBYHORSE

Bones of ponderosa  
rattle in the wind.  
Empty pans clatter  
in the petrified pines.  
The river shatters  
as it hits the mines.  
The gold is scattered.

The salt of the sea  
has risen and fallen,  
burning out in the sun,  
the sand sweeping past  
where a river did run,  
where cowboys are riding fast,  
firing their wooden guns.

# THE CROSSING

Cold white bars  
of light slide  
through the dark  
as the wind rattles  
a closing note.

The sun shatters  
in the sea's engulfing throat,  
the result  
of unstoppable decline.

The sea's lumbering strides  
propel it to the mark  
and it lifts a stealthy hand  
to scribble in a cursive pen  
on the disappearing land.

The distance  
between coasts  
grows thin.

Foaming ghosts  
breach the ocean.

# CAGE'S LOST SYMPHONY

## I. Largo

The room is a white hand  
holding a bird of smoke.  
It's lethargic wings flap  
like the lips of a soprano.  
Staccato sips of Latour  
move the undulating reeds  
in their melodic contours.  
Then light chords of quiche,  
forks on fine china drums.

## II. Presto

The sky holds a smoking gun  
by its burning metal throat,  
its lolling tongue now quiet.  
Fingers twist pizzicato  
around a chainlink fence.  
With polyrhythmic drumming  
shells tattoo the ground.  
Somewhere a dying machine  
screeches its final sound.

## III. Nullo

The void's frozen fingers  
thresh the vibrating stars.  
These are frequencies unheard  
because the audience departs  
before this movement begins,  
and these are no longer sounds.  
This is not for human senses,



this fading of nebular clouds  
in one eternally sustaining

D i m i n u e n d o . . .

# PRESTIDIGITATION

abandoned venue  
curling posters

a chained door  
an escape artist

clothing whispers  
quiet affirmations

a padlock opens  
his heart clicks

an empty stage  
a shaking light

his footsteps  
muffled applause

dusty footprints  
eyes following

address the darkness  
witness the illusion

a crowd of blood  
heart's drumroll

tapping his heart  
his wand of dust

the grand gesture  
the misdirection

the gray smoke  
vanishing memory

the sudden applause  
the missing audience

the security guard  
his small spotlight

the graceful bow  
the curtain drops

# TENDERS OF THE GARDEN

Roses explode:  
a red flowering  
beating in the  
bloodless garden.

Lightning strobes:  
a blue flowing  
throbbing in the  
pulsing rain.

Secret flesh:  
the faint mark  
of the hidden  
is now exposed.

The rosebush:  
rough brushwork  
of the forbidden  
has materialized.

Roses whisper:  
white petals falling  
like cold syllables  
in the moonlight.

Sightings occur:  
black puddles forming  
like dark whirlpools  
in unblinking eyes.

Taking flight:  
the setting moon  
over iron spikes,

elaborate metalwork.

Ending night:  
the desperate run  
through the oaks  
of the mockingbird.

## SPINDRIFT

The moon is a lure  
sinking in the night.  
The waves are a cipher  
scrawled upon the tide.  
The clouds are a blur  
foaming across the sky.  
The wind is a sailor  
screaming in the brine.

A line is sent  
into the dark.  
A man will dredge  
amongst the stars.

Down below the silent guest,  
hooks begin their search.  
Down past the water's flesh,  
something stills its birth.  
Down beside the haunted wreck,  
lines begin their lurch.  
Down in the black depths,  
something awaits its capture.

The sea whitens  
in the moon's grip.  
The man is thrown  
down its silent throat.

# THE BEGINNING OF NIGHT

Words are throbbing in the light.  
Grinding gears are shaking,  
rattling in the wind.  
They're humming the lines  
the keys are playing  
as they chatter  
in the cold.

Fog is billowing  
as the light changes  
and the fool dances  
before his mic.

The light shatters  
in its strobing,  
the bits  
falling in the crowd.  
In the front row  
a zealot rages,  
grasping after the damaged  
and twisted lights,  
while, from the stage,  
a laughter sounds  
at this ending of days.

## THREE

Trees rattle  
bars of sunlight.  
Leaves wriggle  
locks of Pinyon Pine.

Leaves twist on the branch  
like the turning of keys.

\* \* \*

Autumn bursts like a match  
before the glowing of trees,

exhales the  
dim smoke of night,  
inhales the  
last bit of sky.

\* \* \*

Hear the engine's roar  
on White or Paper Birch,

penning a tale of roads  
in long and lazy curves.



## TWO

The shattered road blinked  
with its broken streelights.

The mouth of traffic opened  
as if prepared to scream.

Tears of burning gas.  
The traffic went blind.

The road's teeth were broken  
trying to chew the black.

\* \* \*

Sunlight vows played  
with burning syllables.

Then came the orders  
from the screaming blaze.

The sparkling sibilants.  
The glowing vowels.

All the fiery words  
soon to be extinguished.

## TURNING OFF

Candles wink  
at the sight  
of the dervishes.

Dust whirls  
through the temple  
of the night.

Silence sings  
down the stairs  
of the crucifix.

Winds curl  
through the temple  
of dead air.

Burnt wicks  
from the candles  
of the word.

Barren soil  
through the ruins  
of the sandcastle.

Sharp pitches  
up the spine  
of the martyr.

White noise  
through the ruins  
of the sky.

## EX NIHILO

Next to the church  
green stalks of light  
pierce the darkness of earth.

In the spacious cloth  
floats a pale star,  
the tiniest of white dots.

His eye is pierced  
in its bleeding sight  
by a thrusting green spear.

Clawing at cold soil  
empty as the sky,  
he dives into the void.

Winds play the thornbush  
like a distant harp  
as the vacant angels should.

A rootless blossom opens,  
winks its red eye.  
A long winter has ended.

# THE PATIENT SKY

Summer's towers turn to sand  
with a surge of the patient sky.

Autumnal cities are melting  
in the slow assault of rain.

The nights are growing festive  
and the winter's flurries deep.

\* \* \*

There is a vacant craft  
rotting in the brine.

A storm's white eye blinks  
in the depths of a blue grave.

The ghosts are growing restless  
as they bob in the distilling seas.

\* \* \*

The green tongue's lash  
whips the last of the ice.

The loud voice of spring  
resonates in the frozen glade.

The winds are taken to screaming  
and to the sowing of seeds.

## PASSING THROUGH

The night  
swings its bat  
at an orange sun  
and it shatters  
into twilight.  
Seeds of light  
are scattered  
across the sky  
as the darkness runs.

Behind its mask  
a ghost pursues  
the night  
as the winds  
pass through  
the dark.

Torn from their husk  
the stars fly free,  
hurtling through space.

The ghost caresses its new face  
and, though by night winds unmoved,  
the garb  
it wears is unwinding  
like the fading of the mist  
in the risen sun.

## A QUIET SONG

The sky waves  
its banner,  
it whips in the wind,  
and light rain  
sounds a march  
across the damp earth.

With a spark  
the storm's rapid fuse  
is ablaze.  
The daylight explodes  
with a crash,  
metal contorting  
through the sky.

In the haze  
twisted wreckage looms  
and settles  
in a slow collapse.

The storm seems  
to give up,  
loosen its tight grasp  
on the rain  
and the light.  
The sound of its drums  
has run thin.

A white flag  
ripples in the sky  
and is gone  
leaving just the wind  
blowing through

the clear blue  
with its quiet song.

## THE HEREAFTER

The stars are lowering  
the day's blue coffin  
into the charred horizon.

Falling stars sting  
the mourners' black eyes,  
blurring their bruised sight.

The priest, in flames,  
clutches his burning tome  
as the blackened pages moan.

The priest's searing praise  
ignites the gathered crowd,  
who disperse into the clouds.

In the dark a mime  
going through the motions  
stops to listen to the crickets

sing in the tittering night,  
the stars shake with laughter.  
Lights are winking in the hereafter.



# THE MAPMAKER

The shifting terrain  
surrendered to the sky  
when the sandstorm came.

A vision smoothed  
by sandblasted eyes  
rises from the dunes.

A page sanded clean,  
completely whited-out,  
redacted, and bleached.

The storm touches the page,  
its hand covering the mouth  
of a disintegrating age.

A smudged cipher  
in the falling sand.  
A muffled dirge  
for the promised land.

# TAMING THE SKY

The first blushing  
of the jaundiced sky.  
The twilight gushing  
from the horizon's eye.

A tamed lion's roaring  
settles down in the mist  
of not morning.

A bright gong's crashing  
in a slow diminuendo.  
A silence everlasting  
in reverberating shadow.

Fingers of rain entering  
the mouth of an eclipsed sun  
play with the wiring.

There is a restructuring  
in the neurons of the dark.  
Something is emerging  
in the flickering sparks.

A pale hand is rising  
inside the house of night.  
Stars are aligning.

# CORPUS

The footsteps of the night  
leave stars in their wake.

The blue sky  
evaporates.

The horizon's blade takes  
the pulse of twilight.

Its mouth agape,  
throat dry.

Emptying the parched skies  
of the illusion of rain.

The starlight  
unchained.

Here lies the body of the sky,  
the empty outline of clouds.  
Here where the dead pantomime.  
Here where the wind is unwound.

## THE GUEST

The antique house  
bows to the wind,  
murmurs something  
as the guest arrives.

The withered yard  
dries in the wind,  
motions to something  
that the guest examines.

The paint falls away,  
drifts in the wind,  
offers something  
the guest reaches for.

The door swings open,  
surrenders to the wind,  
releases something  
as the guest walks in.

# SHATTERED

The bitterns shriek  
in a marble frieze  
of lowering mist.

The fog crumples,  
collapses, and roils  
like curling newsprint.

The moorhens writhe  
behind the blurry white  
curtain of the illegible.

There are peat marks  
all across the blank marsh,  
vague and untranslatable.

The sewers mouth  
the cursive streets.

The exhausted steam.

The vandals white-out  
the writhing tongue.

The velvet glove.

The hostage recites  
his lines of graffiti.

The kidnapper signs  
the ransom in calligraphy.

The clouds are rent

like shredded documents.

The paper rain  
litters the parade.

The broken letters  
of shattered words.

II





## THE BEATING OF WINGS

A green vine shatters,  
spraying drunken blood  
across the witchgrass.

I grab a jagged leaf,  
liberate my heart  
from its dark crevasse.

The red baptistry  
drips with the high art  
of this sacrifice.

My heart, finally unstuck,  
flutters with freedom  
and begins to rise.

All across the stone  
it drops its feathers  
like a fleeing dove.

Wineglasses are tolling  
in a distant bellfry.  
The ritual has begun.

## VACANT GROUND

All language is parched,  
and slowly burning hands are  
writing with matches.

As the plot blackens,  
slowly a thread unravels  
in the blind vandal's

blood. Crimson trolleys  
clatter, sweeping the lost streets  
until they're empty.

Vacant ground: dead seeds  
shift, stir, awaken, and burst  
in arid splendor.

And now a mad thirst  
is trembling in the throat,  
singing its one note.

Its voice is cracking.  
Broken sound is broadcasting  
from shattered playas.

## ANGLE

Grey fog inside my skull.  
Shadowy forms writhing there.  
Ash falls like a thick scar  
sliding from a glowing wound.

His chair moans as he leans.  
I hear something collapse  
on the other side of a wall.  
It has the voice of an oracle.

Cubes clink in his glass  
like a ring of steel keys.  
Ice drops into the alcohol:  
a celestial body disappearing  
beyond the horizon of a sea,  
dissolving and decomposing  
between walls of melted sand.

All of this before  
he even opens his mouth.

And all across my flesh:  
refrains of bleak truth.

## THE DARK FIBER

A splash of white wings  
ripples the blacktop river  
as a scribble of dark water  
crosses the stunted pages.

Fingers of black sewage  
turn whispering pages  
as the storm rocks  
in its splashing chair.

The treadstone hisses  
its rolling headlines  
then suddenly swerves  
to pick up the news  
with splashing hands.

The paper rips apart  
like an exploding star,  
shattering under  
the undercarriage,  
as headlights flicker,

lighting up

the dark fiber

of the night sky.

# THE UNFORGOTTEN

The tomb's mouth  
foamed with ancient dust.  
The stone's teeth  
clenched the unforgotten.

The scribe's pen  
pried open the silence.  
The quill's feather  
brushed the unforgotten.

The ancient dust  
rose from the parchment.  
The unclean words  
whispered the unforgotten.

The deciphered text  
touched the reader's ear.  
The wordless scribe  
received the unforgotten.

The words unwritten,  
they rose from the page.  
The dead described,  
they spoke the unforgotten.

The letters aflame,  
they branded the listeners.  
The workers tattooed,  
they became the unforgotten.

## VALET PARKING

thin black lines  
calligrapher's art  
fills the metropolis

syllables jostle  
flashing vowels  
on pages of night

white suits foam  
a sea of valets  
on asphalt shores

the tide roaring  
seashells washed  
into eager hands

the doors opening  
an imperial venus  
catching the light

the muse is seated  
wafting toward her  
the scent of poetry

a valet takes the keys  
language roars to life  
it's time for a joyride

# HUNGER

Cars are slouching  
to the city's jaundiced beat,  
to flashing Morse drums.

The sweet rose's sound  
accents the wafting tongues  
of billboard preachers.

Here at the crossroads,  
sour apples tempt the shrunken,  
who no longer reach.

The lotus blossom  
flickers open on the screen  
and it sings of lust.

The sleepwalkers step  
into the mouths of their gowns,  
mumbling bedtime tales.

Here, where the world ends,  
unwounded dragons awake  
the devourer.

## BALLROOM

Her gray beauty strides  
across the blue barrens  
above the rain.

He serenades the sky.  
He wraps his voice  
around the rain.

Her black dress rustles  
across the dry tiles  
above the rain.

He serenades the sky.  
He pushes his tongue  
inside the rain.

Her blue shoes light  
up the gray floor  
with rain.

He punctuates the weather.  
He stills his breath  
before the rain.

Her black steps blow  
up the dry sands  
with rain.

He punctuates the weather.  
He closes his mouth  
after the rain.



## DRIFTING AWAY

Spring's convulsing light  
writhes around me,  
its lips issuing  
a rustling cry.

Summer's drooling tongue  
writhes around me,  
its violet mouth  
full of sap.

Autumn's disappearing sky  
spirals around me,  
its leaves seduced  
by the wind.

Winter's descending stair  
spirals around me.  
One last visitor  
has come home.







## IN THE ORCHARD

The burning of stars flecks  
the sky like spilled sugar,  
the cold white light  
as soft as a blanket.

There is white earth on the grave.

There are white sheets on the bed.

There is white snow in the cornfield.

A dark and tattered tree  
sits by a crystalline brook  
that laughs over the stones.

Autumn cries with its trees  
and shakes in sobbing gusts.

The leaves rustle in the wind  
like a sleeper shifting in bed.

Dressed in mourning black  
I walk through the orchard  
among the heavy gusts of leaves  
in November's orange light,  
which is like a warm apple cider,  
waiting for the apples to bloom,  
to blossom out of nothing  
like a scream.

## ABLAZE

The autumn winds dance  
in their dress of maize.

Green icebergs drift  
on a sea of spring.

Dressed in black  
I slide through  
the storm of leaves  
until its soft  
rain subsides  
and I find a  
little waterfall  
rolling across  
silver-gray rock  
like a moon  
directing the  
warm waters.

The moon shines  
over a black stretch  
of forests covered  
with lunar snow.

The bark is black  
as with a burning  
and caked with snow  
like white gauze.

Burning in the  
autumnal light,  
the fields blaze  
with Indian corn.

## DARKNESS WAITS

A black street curves  
through an empty night.  
Peaches smolder  
their cold light  
across the asphalt.

A yellow candle burns  
behind the dark pane  
of a window.

I put my palm  
to the cool glass  
then rest my head  
as if to sleep  
and now I cry  
at the brown table  
upon which the candle sits.

A candle burns  
in a red glass  
bloodying a bedroom  
with a doleful light.

Night spreads its deep blue  
upon the brown horizon.

A black chandelier  
quiets its shaking embers.

Darkness waits  
in an open door.  
The door closes.

An old wooden gate  
swings back and forth  
in the dying yard.

A pale blue flash of lightning  
reveals a child  
standing in the middle of the night  
clutching a doll.

She has pale skin  
and she stares at me  
with her black irises.

At that moment  
everything ends.



# INSENSATE

A black-streaked gate  
raked by the night.  
There is a dark cube  
like a judge's robe.

Mountain ash trees.  
Huddles, whispers.

Slow water trickles  
along the dripstone.  
Subterranean pools  
begin to deepen.

Eyes at the exit.  
Slits of light.

A sconce of steel  
clings to the wall.  
Lime and sulphur  
with a crayon fire.

A sudden intersection.  
Moments of indecision.

Now the empty crate  
of an abandoned room.  
A square of light  
lifts from the frame.

A wind I can't perceive.  
Gossamer curtains move.

## CESSATION

Blinds like dangling icicles  
lighten and enshadow the room.

The window is pancake ice  
floating on sky of midnight blue.

A white wash of cold light  
sloshes through a black space.

A comet is plummeting,  
moving in a dark glissade.

A faint light is shivering  
far in the shadowy distance.

A Polaroid sits like glaze ice  
in the darkness of my glance.

White pebbles like fallen hail  
rest in a square of black cherry.

I shiver with a reminiscence,  
with the darkness of memory.

Now tongue and pen are frozen.  
Now the screen blackens.

## AWAY, INTO, AWAY

In the chill blue air  
a purple flower  
peels itself open,  
stretching until  
its petals fall away.

One of them spirals  
through a vast,  
roaring emptiness  
until it's frozen  
in a block of ice.

A naked woman in a blue room,  
filled with silence and water,  
strides down flooded stairs  
into the cold embrace  
of a freezing pool,  
a small smile floating  
to the surface of her face.

In the burning yellow air,  
a woman closes her book  
and rises to her feet.  
She tosses her book  
into the pool  
as she walks away.  
It goes quietly  
into the water,  
its pages still dry.

## AGAINST THE SILENCE

A gold crown rests  
on a cushion of night.  
A soft whispering  
in the dark.

The wind is gentle  
in the green leaves  
of a murmuring forest.

Coins are falling  
in a quiet rain,  
soaking velvet.

A man moves through  
a faint blue storm,  
hard footsteps  
on cold asphalt.

A car keeps driving  
on through the dark,  
lit by dirty yellow light.  
The tires' low growl  
yelps to a stop.

An empty house,  
its cold panels flat  
against the silence.  
Welcome home.

## IT'S TIME

The air is cool and still:  
white streaks in blue marble.  
Crickets are singing offstage.

A bush waves in greeting  
with its dusty green hand  
while it whispers something  
in your ear.

A coarse path lies before you,  
graying into the cold distance.  
Your steps are hungry  
and they crunch the miles,  
with the mouth of the garden open.

A burgundy flower is there,  
the thorns daring you  
to pick up the glass,  
to know the taste  
you'll never have.

Sapphire burns in the sky;  
sounds like a shattering,  
tastes like glass: sweet.

Don't you think it's time  
you closed your eyes?

## EROSION

The clouds are sighing  
and the wind is soaked  
in the storm's flat grey.

The rain stumbles,  
tripping on salted earth,  
collapsing into silt seas.

The waves scribble  
on the blank tides  
with their blue pen  
until the ink runs low.

The ground is erased  
in whispering strokes  
of grey debris.

The world's  
demoralized breath  
shuffles by,  
carting the land away.

IV





# GHOSTS

The dark space  
The silent space  
The empty space

A fusion  
A combustion  
A star

From nothingness  
From the dark

The searing light of myself

\* \* \*

The white pavement  
The white bones  
The white snow

An unpaved road  
An empty track  
An untrodden wild

No past here  
No ghosts haunt

In the searing light of myself

## PARENTHETICAL

—I have never retreated,  
I have only advanced.—

(A victorious enemy  
marches on my tongue.)

[My own private Vietnam  
in every syllable I sing.]

(I taste mud with every tread  
and every tastebud they gain.)

[Every breath is occupied  
and lies in glowing ruin.]

(Their measured footfalls  
grinding teeth in perfect time.)

[I'm burning syllables  
in order to save them.]

(I can feel the jagged pang  
of enamel beneath their boots.)

[Sibilants are writhing  
in a hiss of bullets.]

(They reach my lips' wet halls,  
soldiers slipping in the pink.)

[A guttural growls  
under a purring tank.]

(I no longer hear the din  
of the mouth they maim.)

[Vowels are held down  
and made to scream.]

—I have walked so far  
only to surrender.—

## RED ROCK

A ghost flower drips open  
like a melting candle.  
Harvester ants circle the flame.

A leeward wind tumbles by  
like rolling windwitch.  
Blue skies circle the brush.

The desert paints its body  
with iron oxides and hematite,  
moves to the sad melody  
of the föhn player.

The atmosphere paints its body  
with blue arcs of lightning,  
strikes to the loud gong  
of the thunderstorm.

Tongues of red sand  
burn the writhing earth.

Mouths of pyrocumulus  
devour the arcing skies.

A stream of white petals  
to  
A shock of blue skies  
to  
A stroke of red wind  
to  
A shower of black ash  
to  
the end of everything

## A GREAT REWARD

Leaves of bay laurel  
cool my fevered blood.

—a diadem of hawthorn—

Glasses of Chateau Lafite  
ring their icy tribute.

—a violent gem of blood—

Words of sparkling praise  
drip from wine-dark mouths.

—a shower of broken glass—

Sobs of sanguine weeping  
beat their joyful drums.

—a cacophony of fists—

Tears of condensation  
weep their beautiful refrain.

—a verse of incoherence—

Autographs of the nameless  
scrawl their fevered runes.

—a final broken stanza—

## THE DIFFERENCE

Around the exterior  
of its coiled body  
a hot wind hisses.  
The mouth opens onto...

The house of deformity  
squats in darkness,  
flat, blank, windowless.  
The doors open onto...

My quickening blood  
a crimson slither  
envenomating my heart.  
My eyes open onto...

Heavy doors unfold  
and sound drips out  
of the square wound.  
The doors open onto...

A voice intones words  
both ancient and foreign,  
a voice I'm here to murder.  
My fingers open onto...

Into my blank wrists  
I carve strange figures  
of perfect uniformity.  
The doors open onto...

Before me is a face.  
Horror is written there  
across its reflection.

My mouth opens onto...

## SILENCE

My skull is glass  
glowing with the heat  
of something below.

You can smell fumes  
wafting from the mouth  
of this charred beaker.

Lead is boiling inside,  
a hot poison waiting  
to pour forth.

Syllables splatter across  
a smooth, grey workbench  
like invisible ink.

A critical temperature  
has finally been reached.

Drink the burning contents.  
My screams have become gold.



## A GENTLE BREEZE BLOWS

The words of the wind.  
Arranged in meadows.  
Blinking weatherglass.

The sign of the wind.  
Hammered in the fields.  
Bluebells are tolling.

The movement of wind.  
Howling in the pasture.  
Tongues of lupine.

The swirling of wind.  
Circling the prairie.  
Funnels of larkspur.

The mouth of the wind.  
Devouring the earth.  
The jaws of bluestar.

The tongue of the wind.  
Hypnotizing the land.  
The eyes of the iris.

## SHADE

Dawn pours kerosene  
all over the horizon.

The clock lights  
a red match.

Nimbostratus smoke  
drifts above the sun.

The air alight  
with blue flame.

Sparkling embers drip  
from the skin of fire.

The clock tolls  
a red alarm.

Contrails roll out,  
releasing water vapor.

The air boils  
with blue dusk.

The dying flames sigh  
in roaring night winds.

The clock covers  
its red skin.

The night's smoke rises  
and the fire goes blind.

The air obscures  
its blue eye.

## THE MARK

Scribble on the flesh  
the words of sacrifice.  
It opens like a mouth.  
It says nothing.

Stamp upon the page  
the mark of ownership.  
It curls its tongue.  
It eats everything.

Carve into the stone  
the sound of chanting.  
It opens like a door.  
It contains nothing.

Scratch into the wax  
the shape of the air.  
It closes the window.  
It shatters everything.

V



## THE ROOM

A grey bird flies  
down an echoing tunnel,  
enters a cold room.

A white cloud flaps  
its burning wings,  
flies to the North.

The geese lay claim  
to a frozen shore,  
sing the arctic wind.

The water's face bends  
in whispering waves,  
blanches in the cold.

A black ice settles  
over silent angelfish.

A humming light burns  
in the vacant room.

## THE TOWER

Glass like blowing snow:  
the wind is at the gate.

Constellations of cold light  
like fingers of melting ice.

Gaping holes of jagged sky:  
the wind is at the gate.

The weather's broken view  
through fingers of melting ice.

A speaker shivers there:  
the wind is at the gate.

He grips the cracking throne  
with fingers of melting ice.

The rain tramples the floor:  
the grey steps of the sky.

The wind touches the gate  
with a hand of melting ice.



# DROUGHT

The wind is blowing  
through the empty spaces.

The weather is sounding  
in the dry hollows.

Only the wind  
circling the tower.

Grains of sand rattle  
like bleached bones.

Phalanges of wind tremble  
like shaking vocal cords.

Only the dead  
are out at this hour.

He adjusted the dial  
to catch the barren signal.

He cranked the volume  
to hear the desert's hymn.

Only the dead  
singing with his voice.

The broadcaster was waiting  
for water to flood his senses.

The radio tower was groaning  
beneath the absent clouds.

Only the wind,  
only the white noise.

# FLOOD

The icy world collapses  
as it slowly dissolves  
and the rain palpitates  
with a quickening beat.

Strings of rain are thrumming  
in damp chords of crimson mud.

Playing their sad, stormy pieces,  
the raindrops scare themselves.

When the key of weather mutates  
and the rain tattoos the butte,  
the floodlights start dimming  
to the darkness of a Locrian mode.

Atop the tower, the static hisses  
as the last of the chords resolves.

The dying weather slowly rotates  
around the shivering roustabout.  
Below, the barrens are brimming  
as the hard red land is remade  
into the most violent of seas.

The last bit of earth dissolves  
as he looks down and hesitates.

He kneels as if in tribute  
to a storm of his dreaming,  
one that left him a nomad,  
one with no more chances.

## OPEN BOOK

A broken promise of rain  
darkens the cracked terrain  
with its dry half-light.

A world of withering  
crunches underfoot like jaws  
grinding in a sleeper's mouth.

The wind will carve with its dirk  
as it draws the summoner's rune  
where once the storm crooked  
the land with its weathering,  
when the land's broken pages  
were the playground of myth,  
when the ink was still black  
where the arcane letters ran,  
when the book never creaked  
as dried pages shattered.

## A PROPHECY

In this twisted landscape  
dying trees are growing  
and brown grass chokes  
the fertile soil.

The boiling sky is black  
and it threatens rain  
while a candle of wind  
flickers to and fro.

Beyond its blackboard's scope  
the sky is erratically drawing  
meandering lines with its chalks  
across the walls of the castle,  
walls that will only fray  
once they've been overrun,  
bleeding block by block  
from a grey wound.

Swinging in the bellfry,  
a silent bell is crowing.

## LAST STORM OF THE SEASON

Cold winds are screaming  
but the world is still,  
untouched, not even trembling.  
The waters are tinted windows,  
a candle is a yellow crayon.  
Everything is solid and hard.

Serrated knives of crystal  
lie frozen and unheard  
in the hands of a tragedian,  
its blue hands scrambling  
as the lights are dimming.

At the call of the clarion  
the weather slowly dies.  
The storm is disassembling  
as the world turns hard.

Slowly comes the end of days,  
slowly as the winds grow still.

And no clocks are chiming.

## THE ARSONIST

The flames are nodding  
in the wind like a field  
of flowers. The clouds  
are billows of white smoke.

A parade of red uniforms  
march to the music of fire,  
the popping of embers  
crackles like a snare drum.  
The flames a brass section  
roaring expressionist sounds.

He slowly dons his smock  
and opens the red vial,  
grabs the canvas of fire.  
He licks the tongue of flame  
and from nowhere, a trail—  
a scribble—of heat blossoms  
with the logic of a dream.

As the words turned florid  
and the soul turned to smoke,  
he looked at the blank clouds  
as words set fire to everything.

# SAVANNAH

The savannah is holding  
the meadowlark's tongue.  
The scattered petals  
of silent syllables.

The dawn of blazing stars.

Iron oaks are clutching  
their Maltese crosses.  
White oaks are raising  
their heavy branches.

The meridian of blazing stars.

The prairie is crashing  
in waves of switchgrass.  
A shower of birdsong  
explodes in the sandjacks.

The twilight of blazing stars.

The longleafs are shaking  
branches in some harangue.  
The voice is drowning.  
The conch is sounding.

The night of blazing stars.



# GNOMON

black shadows across the dial  
white noise across the page  
a liar is on the stage

the alleyways of their mouths  
black tongues are curling  
the black script swirling

black smoke across the sky  
white phosphor across the flesh  
a spider is in the mesh

the alleyways of their blood  
black veins are curling  
the black flag unfurling

there are ivory gulls  
breaking waves of sound  
there is the coming night  
tolling bells have struck

## RIDING THE ASPHALT

Black tar is melting  
in  
Shining cul-de-sacs

High octane is burning  
under  
Resonant superchargers

White shoes are tapping  
on  
Pulsating gas pedals

Sanguine light

Air and fuel are flowing  
into  
Throbbing steel cylinders

Glycol ether is rushing  
through  
Nickel/copper brake lines

Carbon black is shooting  
into  
The gusting air currents

Emerald light

Drops of yellow paint  
in  
Pints of dark road

Drifts of carbon fiber

across  
Meters of sharp turns

Shudders of composites  
through  
Kilos of shaking chassis

Sanguine light

Clots of carbon fiber  
across  
Veins of black asphalt

Pupils of xenon light  
in  
Sunken steel sockets

Breaths of siren sound  
through  
Lungs of city streets

Emerald light

# THE DIVE

He stands there cold and naked,  
shivering before the gelid water.  
Its dark blue surface staring  
at him, looking so uninviting.

What will it be like, the shock  
of the ice as it cocoons him?  
And what dark things lie below  
its surface, slumbering there?

He remembers when the wind cooed  
with a cold that wasn't bitter,  
with a voice that was reassuring  
and whose songs were riveting.

He readies himself with a shake  
as hard as his body will allow.  
He can feel his blood slither  
as his heart works its mayhem.

Maybe the pool will grow whiter,  
the decision will be made for him  
by the icy whims of the weather.  
If he can't dive into the hollow,  
bubbly arches of this ice arcade  
then he's free from discovering  
what's down there quietly waiting  
on the other side of the water.

He's probably still standing there...

# TRANSMISSION

Stormclouds tumble across the sky.  
The future is blowing black smoke  
into the night's starless canopy.  
Its quiet footsteps can be heard  
in the distance as it approaches.  
The chill you feel is its spies  
as they slide invisibly past you.

Inexorably, its steps grow louder  
until their roar becomes seismic.  
Soon the sound will fully occupy  
the atmosphere in quick blanches  
of terror at the oncoming horde.

All you can sense is the audio,  
the harsh signal you suppose  
must be the air gone all askew,  
as the thing reaches the border.

Then the wind gone suddenly hard.

And the clouds an empty smock  
drifting slow and phantasmic.

Then the rain as it drenches.

And the touch on your shoulder,  
the white noise from the stereo.

# HEALING

Blue: the sum of being.  
Blue: this amniotic sea.  
Blue: the bird's death song.  
Blue: the ocean's kiss.

Wind: the weather's monologue.  
Wind: this cold tongue.  
Wind: the howling fugue.  
Wind: the blue wing.

Tableau: a swimmer explodes.  
Tableau: a crowd of waves.  
Tableau: a storm cascades.  
Tableau: wind-tossed knives.

Wound: a quick inhalation.  
Wound: a warm infusion.  
Wound: a silent epilogue.  
Wound: the torn white flag.

# ONE WITH EVERYTHING

It's been raining for days.  
Grey drops are descending  
in those huge blurry waves  
that indistinguish objects.

Everything is drab wetness,  
everything slowly dissolves  
into the fall's white noise  
and into its senseless cold.

The land swirling in eddies  
as the ground is conceding  
to a flood that reweaves  
all into a new wholeness.

With fear, the steeplejacks  
finally resign themselves  
to their drowning destinies,  
being relentlessly encircled  
by the slow, jostling bodies  
of their friends serenading  
them in rainy crescendos  
that fill the damp airwaves  
with their malformed objects.

Perched atop their antennas,  
they slowly steel themselves  
before singing their threnodies,  
songs bright and monotonous.

# THE LONGEST MOMENT

Snow white walls everywhere.  
The sea breeze of the A/C  
crackling like breaking ice.

A moment of calm settles.  
The pills melt on my tongue.

\* \* \*

Somewhere in a frozen forest.  
The deep powder of the snow  
blowing through the wild.

Exhaustion is hunting me.  
Its footfalls in the snow.

\* \* \*

Behind glass, rows of nowhere.  
The low security of the store  
all too easily circumvented.

A moment of exhilaration.  
The knife is in my hand.

\* \* \*

Fallen logs are everywhere.  
A low gate of western hemlock  
that needs to be traversed.

Strength is stumbling now.  
It scrambles to its feet.



\* \* \*

From nowhere comes the druggist.  
The switchblade at his throat  
relieving him of his key ring.

A moment of calm settles.  
The locks melt in my hand.

\* \* \*

Somewhere there's a babbling.  
The wet steel of a cold river  
cutting through the forest.

Hesitation pounces on me.  
Resolve falls in the snow.

\* \* \*

The sound of alarms everywhere.  
The trembling druggist's hand  
fumbling under the counter.

A moment of hesitation.  
The need is in my veins.

\* \* \*

From nowhere the barking of dogs.  
The low shout of the marshalls  
echoing through the woodland.

Desperation fights back.  
It regains its footing.

\* \* \*

Somewhere to the left: movement.  
The mad rush of the druggist  
sprinting toward the cowboy.

A moment of panic rises.  
Thought melts in my mind.

\* \* \*

Bone-chilling cold everywhere.  
The strong pull of the river  
rushing through the depths.

Resolve is bleeding out.  
It gushes from its wounds.

\* \* \*

From out of nowhere: struggling.  
The wrestling of the druggist  
reaching for the cowboy's knife.

A moment of liberation.  
The knife is in my hand.

\* \* \*

From somewhere the other bank.  
The slow pull of the cowboy  
clawing at the deep snow.

Strength is staggering now.  
It can barely hold its weight.

\* \* \*

Blood is absolutely everywhere.  
The quick work of the knife  
opening up the druggist's body.

A moment of calm settles.  
Adrenaline melts in my veins.

\* \* \*

From nowhere sounds a gunshot.  
The dying body of the cowboy  
falling in the soft powder.

Exhaustion has caught me.  
Its jaws around my throat.

\* \* \*

From somewhere: distant sirens.  
The desperate rush of the cowboy  
raiding the abandoned pharmacy.

A moment of apprehension.  
The pills are in my hand.

\* \* \*

Blanching faces everywhere.  
The last breath of the body  
babbling like a cold river.

A moment of calm settles.

Eternity melts on my tongue.

## A MORAL ALLEGORY

Painting with fire  
on filthy canvases.  
(Scent of dead leaves,  
scent of imminent fall.)  
Performance art  
of the immaculate.

Painting with rust,  
oxidizing structures.  
(Color of dead leaves,  
color of imminent fall.)  
Perversion of form  
offends the senses.

The crackling verses  
engulf the heresy.  
(Sound of dead leaves,  
sound of imminent fall.)  
The crown is burning,  
enthroned above art.

Ash in the town square.  
Ash in a red fist.

# INCONSEQUENTIAL

Blue fingers of wind  
caressing the throat.  
Inconsequential breeze  
strangling the text.

The wind's spiralling hand  
bubbling across the page.  
Letters boiling like water  
in a gentle, cupping palm.

The paper is tumbled  
through the quiet sky.

Blue eyes of weather  
pouring over the line.  
Slow-moving storm system  
highlighting the phrase.

The rain's dripping pen  
scratching out the text.  
The torrent of stanzas  
diluting to blank cirrus.

The tiniest cumulonimbi  
scatter everything windward.

# VITTORIA

Beyond the stagelights  
the heckler is catcalling.

The white keys wag  
their smoking tongues:  
a fusillade of notes.

Beyond the stagelights  
the heckler is muttering.

Empty mouths open  
their gaping abysses:  
the wound of an aria.

Beyond the stagelights  
the heckler is silent.

The brass fulminates  
in explosive crescendos:  
the breaking of instruments.

Beyond the stagelights  
the heckler is cheering.

# UNIVERSAL SOLVENT

Into the glass of sky  
I pour my tumbling body.  
My soul empties with the  
sound of ringing glass.

The sloshing atmosphere  
bubbles with my screams  
as I boil in the heat  
of a neon twilight.

My body spirals down  
like a clock's hands,  
spinning like a drain  
when magma pours forth  
from my burning mouth.

I transfer my energy  
to the fluorescent lights  
in a flickering alchemy  
as everything goes  
suddenly dark.



# ODE

Hands of dark matter  
Flesh of the void  
Stars fill its pores

An empty figure grasps  
for the silver scales

Everything scatters

Words roll like marbles  
across the alabaster

Blind eyes of the invisible

Strokes of dark geometry  
Blade of old starlight  
Crimson lines in the dark

A headless figure falls  
from a short pedestal

Everything shatters

Words break like billiards  
across the black velvet

Closed eyes of the invisible







# Hobbyhorses

The Dadaists chose the name for their movement randomly from a dictionary. "Dada" is French for "hobbyhorse." A majority of the poems in this collection were inspired, often very loosely, by randomly chosen dictionary entries. Here are my hobbyhorses:

"ice cream"  
"Reform Judaism"  
"nursing home"  
"character"  
"whence"  
"valet parking"  
"capric acid"  
"courtship"  
"economic rent"  
"assignor"  
"on one's own hook"  
"withering"  
"jiggle"  
"hemorrhagic fever"  
"recalculate"  
"mastership"  
"diet [2]"  
"wage"  
"hemacytometer"  
"sexual"  
"equivocal"  
"talkathon"  
"colcothar"  
"pack on"  
"photoresistor"  
"camisole"  
"quarterback sneak"  
"fief"  
"pneumobacillus"  
"backsplash"

"penicillin"

"emblem"

"emphasize"

"chassepot"

"schnapps"

"madrassa"

"point defect"

"antacid"

"ewe"

"reveal [2]"

"assignor"

Which dictionary entry inspired which poem is left as an exercise for the reader.









