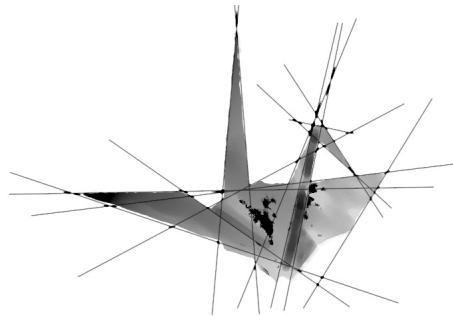


Ben Buchanan

DRIFT ILLOGICAL

Sundry Words and Phrases

2020 ~ 2021



Uncollected Thoughts and Other Odd Flotsam

DRIFT ILLOGICAL

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"Untitled Still Life" pieces by Jan, who I do not know, and perhaps never will.

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I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people who helped keep me sane: to Tabatha Reed, whose wisdom and forthright affability kept me grounded in an ever-shifting life; to Charlene Dong, who proved to me that kindness for the sake of kindness is the only true world; and to the Eells Literary Magazine team, for showing me there was worth to my words beyond their echoes.

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Undying love to my family: to my sister, whose determination to chase her dreams is her greatest strength, a strength which exceeds my own; to my mother, who is my comfort, my light, and my rock, even in the midst of my silence; and to my father, whose dreams are alive like clouds floating beyond the treeline. Those same dreams are mine, and they flow through our blood in tandem through time.

All the joy in these pages is of these people, and many more unnamed. As with all my work, this book is not my own – it is yours. Thank you.

FOR THOSE IN SPIRAL MARSHES
WITH LIMBS LIKE
CLOUDS

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FOREWORD

After the massive undertaking that was the compilation, editing, stylizing, and publishing of *Another Flow*, I wasn't sure what I would do next. I had written some pieces during the process of making that collection, many of which appear in this new volume; I had even returned to more traditional prose writing, which I would sometimes post on my website. I thought perhaps I might put out a collection of short stories, or start serializing a long-form narrative over on the site. Putting out more poetry, while it was certainly a desire of mine, wasn't something I felt needed to be explored again quite so soon. Yet here we are.

Looking back, it seems a little foolish to put out a volume as relatively monolithic as *Another Flow*, especially after *Babylon Effect*, which comes off paper thin by comparison. It can feel redundant at times, suffocating, compressed, self-serving, and excessive. The addition of three appendices doesn't curb this image of "empty density". Despite all this, I still look back on that volume with immense pride. Some of my best work sits in those pages, some of my most raw, vulnerable, conceptual, and crazed pieces. Poems that so incredibly capture the evolution I was undergoing at the time, I sometimes feel I will never be able to replicate it.

Now over the past year we have grown and evolved alongside a new shape, a new shadow in this enormous room. I released *Another Flow* in the middle of a global pandemic, in the middle of streets enflamed by police brutality, and still I had no clue the inward spiral I would soon experience. That slow, invisible changing like rivers cutting canyons and ravines.

I struggle to call this a "quarantine book", or "quarantine project" of some kind. So many people have made art out of this shared solitude, or explored different angles and views of our isolation. My perspective, while it is a personal one, is not a new one.

This is not just some interstitial place we exist in between "normal" lives. There's a part of me that will never leave this quarantine, just as there was a part that was already in quarantine since before last year. So what does that mean for this book? What does that mean for me and my work? I don't know. I keep changing, and my work changes with me. This is a constant truth in all artistry, in all mediums and walks of life. As I allude to in the opening piece of this collection, these books are a record of me. Do with that record what you will.

Another Flow showcased a creatively rich time in my life, while this book serves as my way of scrounging what solace I can from the ashes of that burning moment. If *Another Flow* was a prolonged, magmatic streak of raw, furious creative energy, then *Drift Illogical* is the quiet aftermath. That steaming, cooling, collapsing space where the frenzy dissipates. But in that relative calm, there is a tension, left in the background.

It's this tension that I try to massage in and out of focus during the course of these pieces. The tension of working two jobs while going to school online. The tension of forced isolation while also being an essential worker. The tension of self-reflection, confronting disfigured, confusing, uncomfortable ideas of love, death, and self. The tension of distance from people, yet also distance from nature. That last one, especially, is a tension I try to alleviate by finding nature in my words. In the depths of a New York winter, sometimes that is all I have.

The past year has felt like a thousand-week crucible compacted into a single day. I don't know what I've come out the other side with; my hands sometimes feel as empty as my head, and there is still a long hall to walk through to the end of this isolation. *Babylon Effect* and *Another Flow* were creative constructs of my self-exploration and passion. *Drift Illogical* exists because I exist, and have passed through this time. There was no purpose or plan to this book. The pieces in the first two collections were largely chronological, and followed a kind of thematic progression. *Drift Illogical* has no such reasoning. No such sense of time. There is no chronology to the poems in this book. Words from two separate seasons stand shoulder to shoulder. My voices from different times swirl together aimlessly.

This is my reflection in the mirror. This is what the slow melting of solitude has done. In the middle of this drifting mess, I hope you can find the same solace I did. The same sense of place these poems provided me. Though the world is dim and illogical through my window, there is joy in these pages. I am smiling in these stanzas, like a child in an innocent dream.

Take that smile and run to the same place of joy with me.

I'm waiting there for you.

– Ben Buchanan

DRIFT ILLOGICAL



— "Untitled Still Life #1", Acrylic on canvas, Jan, ca. 199X

Part I

INTO AIMLESS TIME

SWIRL OUT

No matter what happens
Treat this as more of a record of me
Than the air I breathed
Or the words I shaped
In my sleep

Take hold of the rhythms and
Every subtle collision of thought
And run with them
Like kites in the wind

That day is so clear
Over the playground buried in fossils
All the boys are playing kickball
Beside the black fences

I can slip into this dream like
Another life
Feeling its way out from under
My mind

Chrome clouds in a caravan
Following me down the road
Like the friendly Sun
In all the crayon drawings that used to
Line the hallways

White bricks straddling colored tiles
The path to the library like a mosaic
Or a magic puzzle

I can feel my hand closing and opening
Passing over the cold ceramic of that place
Painted over and over with
Nostalgia

The windows stretched like afternoons
Bus rides forgetting about anything
But the music in my ears

PART I

When I think of that boy I still
Feel the heaviness of my face
I still look at that young world,
My world, with these eyes
Still touch the invisible memory
With these hands

All the glint of that strange imaginary world
Swirling out in another life
Playing out in another dream

All my worlds are collected here
And I am here and there and in every one
And every one is a splinter of myself

A glimpse at my eye, a glance at my hand
A strand of my hair in your fondest photo

And I am a splintered man in a thousand positions
Swirling around indecision decisions
Reliving
And living
To live in
My living room

And stare out the window
Without knowing
Why

ECSTATICALLY, WE

Ripple of an ancient desire
Small ridges in old ponds and dams
Canals running through your fingers

Expressionless frog resting on a rock
Beside the lip of your dream
Waiting

Stars arranged in artillery charts
Above us there
You, me,
And the idea we used to be

Mapping silent prayers to stoic walls
Repeating nothing back at us
We threaded tapestries with our
Flaming minds
Never slowing down

Ritual movements in masses unfolding
Back and Flow
Back and Flow
And fuse the ropes
Do not let go
Do not let go of me there
That memory of a desire
I had not yet recognized
In your prism hair

From small things we are formed
Like sediment and beaches
The rocks between layers of history
We misshapen stones and slings
Dreaming flying flinging
Together hand in hand like birds
In migration

Us screaming shouting beings
Quiet only in our sleep

PART I

That dream we designed like a chapel on a hill
There the light is a blanket on trees
And your ever-smiling face

And my arms the bells ringing
Out and up into space

MIGRATION

The birds moving around poles of light streaming down
Searching rays scanning shores and radar bays bouncing signals
Back and forth in pen pal signatures
The sealed and hidden questions moving through their
secondaries

Where the dead yellow grass begins breathing
Softly again
That is the letter splayed naked with the words going down the
throat of your mind
There in a new spring light

Along the mudflats and reed-soaked marshes
Making little prints slowly subsumed by the caressing form of the
wet earth
Small beady eyes watching migration routes
From cascading northern peaks to western ridges rolling in fields
of dust and deserts
Cotton moving in patterns across the sky
While weeds whisper below of
Nests and sandbars and empty meadows beneath hanging garden
lightfields at night

Looking up at platinum spatters
Through a memory of willow vines
Something moves around the grass blades
Towing solitary minds

And the moon pulls the Sun around in rose spirals
And it shines between the lines

ISOLATION AND OTHER CREATION MYTHS

Sun pulling tree needle sheets over
A tired head
For sleep

The lazy string lights dark and unpowered
Before a wall of flitting birds and bugs
Soft velvet noises emanating
Their beaks and
Mandibles
Buzzing with words I want
To understand

My fingers striking the keyboard
Like driftwood over an ocean of endless
Frustration
Repeatedly giving way
To progress

Tiny motes of light speeding by
Circuits and locks and latches
Flipping and spinning and burning
So many thousand universes of stars and other
Flickering fires under my fingers

And so small the sounds they make
Against any noise
At all

The tinny echoes dropping
Into the canyons of self
I am carving
In books and certain soaking pages

=====

If a tree falls in the forest,
But nobody is around to hear it,
Does it make a sound?

ON THE CLOCK

Working a job changes a man. It makes him wary of some things, and perhaps more open to others; it sparks a kind of curiosity in him that wasn't there before.

People-watching isn't necessarily a hobby of mine. While I appreciate people and find them to be interesting creatures, I don't go out of my way to study them, or even casually watch them like a flock of finches pecking at the ground below a line of shopping carts in the parking lot. But after working behind a cash register for the better part of two years, you learn a lot. There are some facets of people that I can predict like the days of the week, and there are some that I will never even begin to grasp. The general public is a strange enigma.

Some of my customers come off as callous, rude, self-absorbed, or otherwise belligerent before they've even lined up to pay for their groceries. Others are like friends and family members only seen at holiday gatherings: warm, appreciative, understanding, and full of pleasant conversation (or perhaps just a little strange in the head; your results may vary). Others still are like ghosts. Silent with lips like flat lines. Words like numbers on a spreadsheet or phrases in a company memo. They come, they buy, they leave without a fuss. I don't hate those people. In fact I quite like them.

There are the middle-aged school teachers, the young couples, the churchgoers, the downtown apartment dwellers, the older conservative loudspeakers, the single mothers with three children, the endless tides of college students during move-in day, the feeble senior citizens that shuffle behind a cart like a walker. I've seen all kinds of people from all walks of life. One such senior citizen came through my line today.

It was a slow day, but a tough slog of large orders down on register 4. Customer after customer ignoring directions, health mandates, and store policies; people getting what they need and fleeing. Quarantine in full effect, if only I had a nickel for every time a customer went on some diatribe about how, "next thing you know," the *government* was going to tell them what they can and can't eat.

PART I

At one point an older gentleman comes through my line. Moving slowly, I could tell he was shaking, but not necessarily struggling to move his groceries from the cart to the belt. He seemed as if he were anywhere but a brisk, sterilized grocery store in the middle of a nationwide pandemic. He was picking up grapefruits like he was standing in the middle of a park on a sunny afternoon.

I asked him how his day was going, and he said it was going fine. He asked me in return, and I told him much the same.

"At least I'm not missing much of the weather outside, y'know?" It had been raining all morning, and it would be turning into a small snow shower as the day progressed. It was a line I reserved for those dreary days. At least I couldn't be upset about missing some prime sunshine weather - not that Binghamton is known for anything more than overcast and the color gray.

He mentioned something about having to drive in the rain and snow. He was picking up groceries for some family members in Watertown.

"They don't have a Wegmans in Watertown, so I'm gonna drive these up there for them. In the rain." I wasn't looking at his face, fixated instead on bagging his groceries, but I could sense a kind of odd, sad smile behind his words. Unable to decipher his mood, I replied with some talk about how all I wanted was some warmer weather without any rain or snow.

He chuckled a bit at that, all the while sifting through his wallet with shaky fingers. "You must not be from around here if that's what you're expecting."

"Oh I grew up here. I know it's a lot to ask of this area for a little bit of sunshine," I ripped his receipt off the printer and presented it to him. "But a boy can dream."

He seemed to like that, smiling to himself. "That they can, Benjamin."

His cart packed back up with his groceries in neat paper bags, he began to walk away. He turned to me before he left and said, "Well Benjamin, I hope your summer comes to you."

INTO AIMLESS TIME

I paused for only a moment's hesitation. "Thank you. Same to you, have a great day."

He walked away as slowly as he had come up to my register. I began to feel as though his shaky walk was instead a kind of light-hearted dance in his step. This customer was surely one of the few that truly left me with something special. Something beyond a pleasant conversation.

Working behind a register tests your patience, your reactions, your social acumen. But those tests are not without their rewards. Growth is its own special kind of journey, and the journey is nothing but a constant exploration of boundaries and rewards just beyond. Limitations that only exist for the moment.

My father drove me home from that shift, moving from the low land around Harry L Drive where the rain was constant and gray, up through the suburbs of Reynolds Road where the hilltops were beginning to show a dusting of white snow. He described to me some of his recent work in plein air painting and sketching. I've seen his work, rough charcoal forms of trees and valleys and all the familiar feelings I grew up with. I didn't mention the old man and his words. I didn't have to. I was only waiting. I am even now only waiting on those words like a prophecy.

When my summer comes to me, I will be there in the open space like a willow tree with myriad tendrils waiting to unfurl.
Sunlight catching on the onyx exoskeletons of small beetles clinging to my leaves. My boughs shaking and dancing like that man's slow gait.

Perhaps in a way that man was my summer, if only for today.
Perhaps I have already found it in my hands.

EMPEROR BLUE (SPHERES)

Playing wind archaic knocking doors
On wooden stilts above canyons
Carved from sooty rocks
And marbles

Sleep on rafts of old houses
Sheetrock rudder
Slowly skimming
The ripples spinning out of
Reach
Like a butterfly in sunspear daylight

Let it go in color
Flapping

>< >< ><

Setting down on rough stone
No flowers here
Not even dust or bone
Rough hewn and alone
After a predator feast

The cracks where old seeds opened
And died

No roots scratching at the surface

The breeze is drawing a breath
Holding it in
Holding it in
Nothing moving around the corners
Nothing stirring
For a
Moment
Or many

>< >< ><

INTO AIMLESS TIME

Waiting to float on the arms of the wind
Lost in the city of
Cat's eye spheres

Marbled in strange colors
Like the time we've spent
Alone with ourselves
Behind our vision
Or remembering

Here we rest under the same ceilings
The same matte sky
For how long we feel we have
Forgotten

In a month or a day
All the same
As we smile
As we while
Away the hours
Or many years of our solitude

Like a movie
Or a play

>< >< ><

I WROTE THIS OUTSIDE THE WEGMANS I WORK AT

We're all caught in the flaring tendrils of uncertainty
Under the blaring PA of holding calls and summons
The belts turning around the rollers, the vacuums whirring
The guiding spirits posted at the corners in gold trimming

It snowed a couple days ago
Some patches of the lawn are still white
It's May 10th today
Mother's Day

The birds are talkative in the morning
I wish I could eavesdrop on their conversations
Like a small stream winding underneath their
Ancient syllables

Something is blowing across the parking lot
But there is no breeze
A visiting mystery walking a dog
A line of cars waiting for the drive-up service
A list of people who didn't get their flowers today

We ran out last night

Such a strange concept
To run out of flowers

The tree not 20 feet away is still
Blooming

How silly

INDOCTRINATION

I sit staring at my laptop
White blindness numbing my eyes
Google Docs open in four, five tabs
Working a weaving a magic a theming
A dreaming of stylistic humorous noise

They've got me indoctrinating the new ones
In 12pt Times New Roman
(I still sprinkled some Georgia in the headers don't tell them)
Sitting duck staring at me from a tower of Post-it notes
Mind glazed over with documentation
Fixing bugs in my brain
Language leaks from deallocators
My room reeks of wasp killer
That spray that never fades
They just won't die

Pale curtains
No light coming in
It's 8:45 and I'm stuck
Thinking about stories and text adventures
Books and missed database lectures
Projects homeworks assignments
Time sheets state routes and sirens
Like air raids
Going off after midnight
In Port Crane
That summer alone in a log cabin mansion
So far away glowing like gas lamps or passion
I've too much to keep hold of

Too much to do anything with

Stretched myself a bit too thin
Stuck staring at documents
Adding quips and missing punctuation
Earning money I won't spend
On things I don't want
And they don't want me
All the same

PART I

I want nothing but the means of this life
I've already got by the balls
And I want everything else
I want it all

And it falls away
In cascades

I type notes about comfort and contacting supervisors
Wrapped in a blanket my mother crocheted
Line after line in the corner of the room
In the house
Where I grew up
Where I am
Growing up

That process continues

I keep thinking
And typing

And thinking

Everything I once wanted is up in the clouds
Streaming down in crepuscular rays

All their forms and expressions
Continually change
Waving patterns shifting day by day

As time goes on
What we want will come to us
And then it will
Leave

Our desires are but light
And the sun keeps shining

ARCHAEOLOGY

Some days are the moment of a broken record
When the needle has come loose of the groove
But not yet settled itself in the past

Everything looks so still outside
Moving without sound

Thin cold air
Not yet cold enough
For snow

I am discovering things
Like fossils or dormant stones
In my flesh

Things that make me want to pull closer
And things that push me away
From myself
Or that man in the mirror
Of another world
Of a few
Days gone
By

Burying himself in his
Snake skins

Compacted down in crucibles
These convents I've committed myself to

I have no religion but the unspeakable
Thusness of the world around me
And how busy we make ourselves
For so little a peace
So little a joy

And how massive that joy is
Dwarfing the stars and the time it took
For our ancestors to count the
Few they could

PART I

So many more unnamed in fresh light
That freshness like a winter morning
So cold you feel you might die
In the stark dawn blankness

And these words dwarf a man
I don't understand
And shall perhaps never come to know
Before he goes
And buries himself
Again

What seems daily now
That born again
Feeling

Such a tiring thing
To wake up and be born
Again

How does all the world do it?

SOMETHING MORE OR LESS

Running around at such a speed
They climb stalks like ladders
To a future they know nothing about
A future they do not want

Better yet to think there is no future
For a being in reality
Only the current fabric extending
Out and
Away

But is it there burning at the edges?
Surely there is a seam binding
Different angles of our eyeballs
Into one voice
Somewhere

Only I care not where it lives
Only what furnishings they purchase

None of that plastic sheet bullshit

Ready reclining already declining
Down the slope to the sea
No stalks here for me
I can already see
All I need

And as I approach it will shift
Like colors in the rain
And I will morph
Away into
Something
Else

(More?)

Yes, something more
Or less
Like that

PART I

I swallow the Sun as it grows
And I float on solid wandering coffins
Looking for residents
And I roll balls of moss growing more
Resting laurels
And I reciprocate the fervor of a few thousand smiles
When the fangs bite, I bite back
But only when provoked with a ten foot pole
And I listen to your stories under the ghost of an old tree shaking
 dreams from my head like ripe fruit

I sit and I listen and I go nowhere
Fast

The reel spinning quickly, quicker now with age
And it will snap
It will

Keep talking, I'll keep listening
There at the window high in the sky
Through a concrete looking glass
My ear to the throat of the world
Swallowing your doubts
For breakfast
Calling out
To you

Across that many-colored meadow
Things change before
We know

And you will change before long
Like a leaf
You silly thing of shimmer
Blind to your hue
Shivering in the light
And you will come not to a place of
Knowing
But to a place of
Being
Becoming

INTO AIMLESS TIME

Becoming something
Else

(More?)

Yes, something more
Or less
Like that

"KIMMY, THAT'S THE SUN."

Through the narrow archives
Shaking tiles shivering on the floor
The cold's coming in
After swabs and needles and rubber bullets

All we have to look into our future
Is a wall of tropical storms
Heavy lumbering across the coasts
You can hear it
Some dripping memory of beyond
Soaked to the bones

Looking to make amends with our
Broken confidence

—

Hope in the steady
And the way that it moves on waves
Of coming and going

Know how long it's been since I've seen a shooting star?
Neither do I

But the gentle meandering of lightning bugs
In the summer
I've seen that strumming night
A festival sight

Under the gaze of those rolling storms
I dissent
There is a steady glow yet floating by
In tiny ships filled with paper cranes

Like embers
Or ghostly ashes
Of acres and acres

—

INTO AIMLESS TIME

About 7:00 PM in the Wegmans parking lot
I was handing a pickup order to a customer
Kimmy walks out, chatting with Maddox
She looks over his shoulder and says
“Look at the moon, it’s so red!”
Sure enough the western sky is a soft gray
And there’s a stark red disk hovering
Tracing the horizon of low hills and power pylons
Throwing deep, deep amber red light around the poles in the lot
And through the dim windows of the cafe
So I walk toward the haze and toward the entrance
And without looking both ways
I stand in the drive-up lane with them

“Kimmy, that’s the Sun.”

The sky has been orange
And perhaps soon the night will be white
With fear under black stars

Still map the constellations
Still name the shapes and patterns
Still watch for shooting stars

Still wait for dreams to come to you

And if they delay

Then must you drift

Drift along in the rolling breeze

Under the red rolling disks
Dropping red curling leaves

Pin them like insects in boxes
For the narrow archives

We will return to this one day

WEATHER FOLD SHUTTER

Our words pass between clouds as lightning
Diffused off our coils
Empty ballpoint pens
Stuck like spears through breaks in the sky

Anvil tops rolling carried by geese in arrowheads
Those thunderous passages we splayed out
Washed and drenched in our amateur passion
Soaked into the soil
Draining away
Folded into trees and weeds and other
Smiling blooming beasts

And we in love with love take steps
Walking beaches and banks of rivers
Creeks and streams in sunlight
Like lovers do
And we split like pods of seeds
In the wind
Along hillsides and dams
Into cities and public parks
Where we rest

Over valleys in rose
Or mountain ridges chrysanthemum
All things open up
For us in time
In time
So we wait
So we sleep

And our dreams fold in on themselves
And our minds fold like mirrors and gems
Harden angles and lines
And our voices fold stories into pieces
Repeated through time and again
Over and over
And our children fold paper dolls
With our faces

INTO AIMLESS TIME

So we fold rain charms for now
As the passage continues outside
String them up in a row
Wait for our storms to subside
And we rest under blankets of night
Beneath years of traveling light

;;';"';;;';';;;';"';;;';'

Those storms of our youth are gone
And now rain is a passage of time
Planting seeds before winter's rime

Blowing over our heads in flashes
Spinning spirals and spores born into light

A fading light coming down
And we move on

We read back those passages we remember
The ones where we said
"It's alright"

LIKE ROUTES

The lightning bugs left months ago
Your gossamer wake taking them out on
Straw rafts

The birds are quiet
But they are there
Softly existing next to you
Softly existing
Next to me

Gray dusks
Tallied in your head
Running off the space on the page
Remember the murky Susquehanna
Sliding under your childhood
Burning
Bridges with the handshakes and smiles
And plastic bags full of
Things

Those are so long gone now
Where did they go

Exist here softly next to
Me
In a quiet heat
It's okay if you
Smother me
You're a mother Sun
Shining deep into plexiglass aviaries

Change with me
Share my cocoon
Surely I've left enough
Space
For a season
Or two

. . . . ————— " " " " "

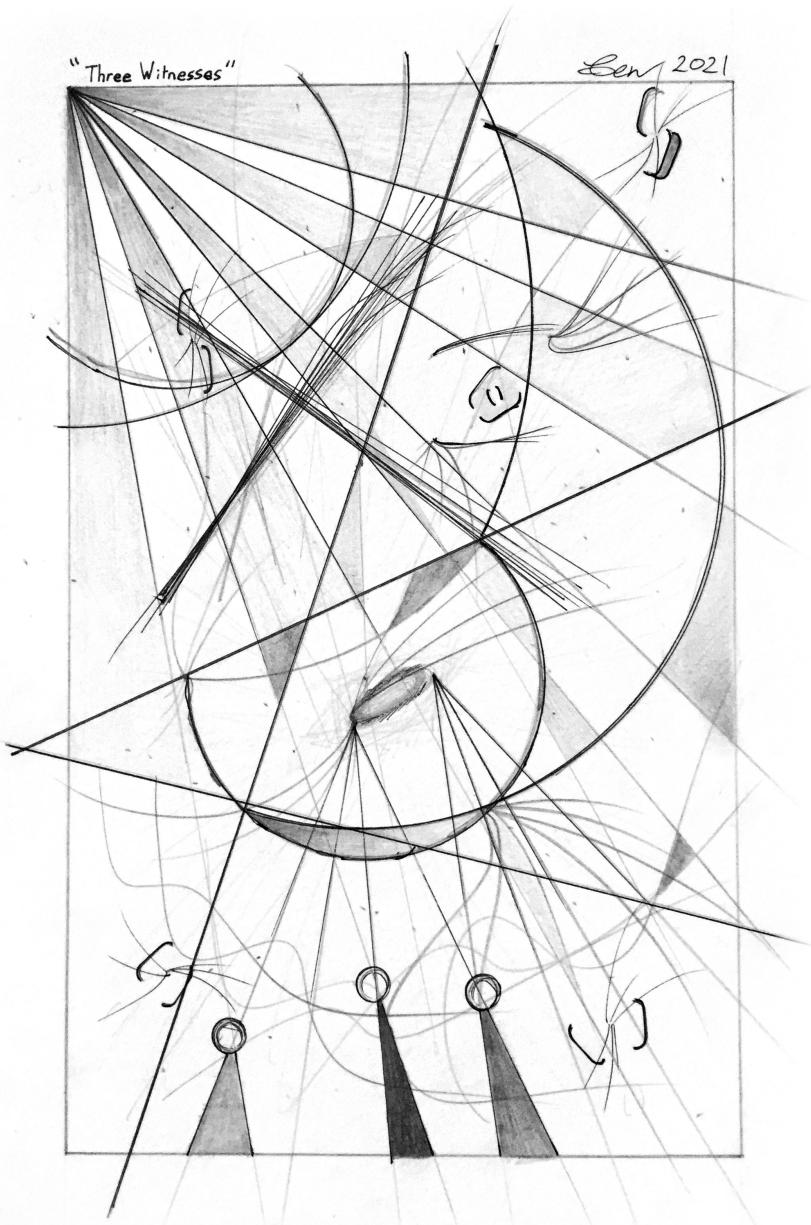
INTO AIMLESS TIME

My mind is a dandelion seed cloud
In the spring wind

Hm, what's that?
What are you talking about?
Forget that
Let's spread our limbs like routes
And go

"Some Nights Mantra", 2020

I
Have
Seen
The
Face
Of
God
And
She
Makes
Me
Smile
In
The
Rain





- "Untitled Still Life #2", Acrylic on canvas, Jan, ca. 199X

Part II

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

IN CASE OF EMERGENCY REMOVE SELF

Commuters flowing blood cells down the highway
Along the clover exchange
To crumbling atriums, unfinished basements

Wicked winds pulling the leaves off the trees
Like feathers plucked from dead fowl
And the rain softly rapping on my roof
Like little tractor beams
Scratching at the shingles
Looking to take me
Somewhere nice

Psionic static
Lullabies
Remind myself
Remove self
Removed from self
No such concept, really

Imagine a world without a sense of self
Or a self with sense of the world
One with the world
Itself

Dandelion seeds
White filament parasols
Meandering along the breeze
Gentle daystreaming

The web of air
Between raindrops
Humid spirits
Flirting

Volcanic beds
Tucked tight in the earth
Melting melting m e l t i n g
Heaven worship dynamo

PART II

Ocean crevice
Coral jungle crystal menace
Faintly glimmer glitter gander up
The surface splitting
Light

Under the ironwood trees
Little ones skittering
Searching by instinct
Tiny timid feet to the ground
Hearing

Conifer coast
Brass trunks and seashells
Fossils slowly forming
In collapse of time
Colorful wings flutter like ties
Of a kite
In rhythm and
Timbre

Deep lucid white
Filling with
Warmth
Beyond
Measure

Like a cloud
Of steam
Coming in
A natural dream

—

It comes naturally

VERMICULATE MAN

Tessellations reorganizing mirror worlds
At the edges sewn with pine needles
Wisps of misty eyes in the center of
Clouds in the rye waving ritual dances
Like movers and shakers

The oceanic plates and tides behind me
Washing around the barnacle struts and buoys
Slick ropes like orchestral shows
So far behind me
So far now, like a ship in circumnavigation

A blackening desert before me
The Sun a helicopter hovering
Murky pond of the sky moving in molasses rivulets
Your flowers just the scent of my mind
I do still remember
I do

Chart my prints
Map my voice from the time streams I came from
All the way to this corner of my galaxy
Forming of melted glass cast in sleep
Nocturnal cranium crucible keep

Cast your rays from behind the whirring blades of the Sun
Beyond the cockpit coming down
Take up my noises in your wind and scatter them across the dirt
of the planet
Carry my dreams in their cryptic skins and trace the vermiculate
patterns of their surface
I am doing all this for you
I am

Through the sand beyond the mountain ridges
And back to the sleeping cities in gray and white
Drink our tranquility light
Deep into the night
Collecting fires like brush chandeliers

PART II

The scent of their ashes paints our future
And our thoughts waver like hot air in the summer
In this inferno of thinking we
Subject ourselves to

It is ideas that hurt us now
We hold both ends of the brand

We are all of us sometimes the man on fire

Come douse me
I will wait here for your liquid spirit
I will

COMMUNION OF WEEDS

Stale air dreams rafting choppy summer nights
Beyond the lights of bell jar harbors
Those luminous eyes of wrath
Scraping the sea for a mark

A floor fan propped up on a CD rack
Pulling languid oxygen through a window
Cracked a couple inches on the hinges

Spiral forms colliding galactic centers
Supermassive facets maligned bed partners
All those brassy leaves coming down
The trees in Belden

All the pointed fiends riding nature's death
Into my mouth
Like snow

Melt on my crucible kissing
The earth

Dust and light and transit lines
Curling around the spine of the city
Concrete glass brains storming
Sparking skittering
Sending signals to the mothership
That alien phase you know
You know its face
Well enough

The guide of its eyes and the caverns of its
Vacuous questions

Fever dream speculations
Sweating out the suspicions
Through storms of attrition
And tempestuous drones

PART II

Through the mesh of my window screen
Sucking in the gleaming air
Black and filling with lightning bugs
Taking flight in the darkness

Remembering the weeds with their touch
Their gentle clutch
Holding your world which you stole
From them
Which they stole
From the ether

And the ether stole
From an understanding
Beyond our own

Beyond those curious eyes of humans
Breathing and wondering
In the thick summer air

LOOMING TREES DREAMING NIGHT

Staring motion sensor offline
Silent wind chill negative
The day in a box with ribbons
Clear blue top
Amber shadows dancing cannot stop

Holding hands with chickadee memoirs
Little branches children reaching out
Perched and ready
Listening in sunrays
Making eyes at glass reflections
Hoping for a return
Some days

Humming footbridge tunes
The water underneath gentle strumming
Taking our slow force out
And floating on
And on

Our words making divots scoring lines
What I meant back then
Means nothing now
And what I'd like to say
Is a windy day
Through turbines spinning

A soft hum between power pylons
Loosely strung in pearls and finches
The summer sun in garnet glare
Behind the tree line stare

Her feet moving beyond the green
Turning away toward the face of the wind
Away toward the end
Or the exit of your planet
Still spinning in her absence

PART II

Night below zero
Motion frozen staring at nothing
Clearest biting weather
And the multitude is turning above
Without a care
Like a flock of stars and crystal feathers

This migratory route I feel
In your galaxy hair
Still waving in a false heat
Filled with skeins of silvery suns
Each one out there burning for
Some one

Some days I feel like a setting sun
And the summer air goes cold
For a quiet dream

And the birds keep talking
In that place of my mind like a screen
As I spill a limp and chaotic noise
On ream after ream

WORLD OF NESTS

Black streets fanning out
Ripples through the patches of trees
We keep
Between the brownstone blocks
On fire
In heat
This bleeding body
We keep
Kicking around

The windows smashed
The cars upturned
The magazines emptied
Fueling anger as it burns

A quiet smile peeking through the clouds
Evaporated in TV cameras
Dulled in social media stories
In the night they stand on shaky legs
And bay at the moon
The white moon
Hovering over
Since time began

Gas canisters and rubber bullets
Litter the ground like birdseed
From government feeders

Wrappers and plastic reminders
Glass shards and sooty lots vacant
Under towering buildings still stood
Fortress-like defending the cowards
The ill-raised wielders of power

In their world of nests
Filled with eggs
Paper thin excuses
And
Ideologies

PART II

Between the green where we breathe
Growing beams of comfort we beam
Our teeth whiter than their eyes
Whiter than Death's demise

We will grow plants above
This spinning planet
And make nests in the stars
Every ball and chain left
Far
Far
Behind

R A I N :: A F T E R :: J U P I T E R :: D U S T :: S T O R M S

Bloom, bloom, under the storm that
Flooded out the little birds
Fresh from eggs
Never seen

Burst, wild from corners and other
Solitary confinements
Padded with your
Excuses and
Forgetting

Frantically, freakishly, take in the fold
The cloth you know, you see
Around your ears and
Many faces

Resting, breathing, beneath the golden hour
Under the layer of night slowly
The layer of night
Slowly
Keep going
Breathing in
and out
and sometimes
otherwise

briefly, sidewinder noises whizzing by
speeding by dripping listening
to your dreams like
boiling fevers

listing, empty houses, shuddering in the rain
vacant air playing making dances
in your hair
t h e :: s m e l l :: o f
j u n i p e r :: b e r r i e s

(o r :: j u p i t e r :: d u s t :: s t o r m s)

-=-+--

PART II

There is a silence in empty sanctuaries
All around

Do you hear it?

The rain sometimes comes over the garden
After I've already watered it

Do you find it funny?

I do

Nature is a thorough thing
Haphazard from every angle in spirals and beams
In patterns of salmon scales and clouds like whipped cream

A natural system of fullness and schemes
Like meandering streams
Into death

And then it all opens up again like a flower

Do you see it?
Do you see it like I do?

-+=-

grow, merge with this being completely
for it was complete before
we came here

it knows we are here
with it

THOUGHT LOVE (DYSPHORIA)

hollow core whispers skittering across the dust
to my fingertips fleeing some
quietness i cannot
extricate

labyrinth walls unstill
dancing carnations about my static position
wrapped around each limb
each an incision
filling up

== + ==

failing light in the empress seat
gaze down at me
down at me
in little marbles of joy
scatter along my shored mind
buried in brambles of love
reaching out for
some one

this time alone waving a hand in
goodbye but never leaving

returnal wave of teaching slowly
brushing fingers along my face
i know this fuzzy
feeling
like amber afternoons

== + ==

i do not know what it is to be sad
like they know

PART II

== + ==

strange wondering crane
perched on rocks and hard places
under my dim light

day breaks the river
flowing over smoothing her
and flying away

strange wandering crane
coming back to see my light
with a puzzle box

== + ==

luna moth
in porcelain hands
sleeping a peaceful dreaming away
away
away

swift dark night sweeping us on
against chainlink fences
above a sea of crystal webs
pulsing
like a
darklight
heart

the world opened up
seeing the crease pattern
lines of her hand
grasping needing
some thing

i wish she would use her words

words are all i have

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

== + ==

pond life on my mind
growing algae layers
simple organics

you cross my ripples
in a lazy gondola

i cannot bring my hand
to break your placidity

we sit and grow
spanish moss
and sumac

REMAINS OF A SNOWTRAIL DREAM

Circling midnight, the pine tree cloaks lining the snowy trail shimmering softly. From a hazy dream, the surface breathing smoke over my eyes. Those fallen limbs hanging over, birds that are not birds perched and watching. Silence moving its fingers along everything. Deep dark blue encapsulating, confining where the sharp sparkle of ice is not a gentle gray.

I walk there without a mind as to why. I do not remember the purpose. It feels so long ago, though I was there last night, in the cloud of light and memory that takes me some strange weeks at a time. Yet it comes to me more as a reminder of origin, a past life or a premonition. Surely I've had more peculiar feelings of predestination.

The lightest snow dusting my face. There is no cold or warmth in that wooded pathway. Only the light barely streaming through the thick cover of needles and boughs. Some amalgamation of unknown people speaking in the back of my mind, known only to the ghost that inhabits me in that place. Memories of speech, or fantasies of interaction. Like birds flocking, moving from tree to tree without building a nest. Or perhaps the nests do not take well to storms.

The meandering path still waiting in front of me. Or am I meandering? The logs underfoot timidly peeking through the layer of frost. Snake-like wandering left and right, not a straight angle in this place besides the stoic trees, beams of wood climbing up to the moon. Canyons of ice underneath my feet, only a few meters of snow and stones.

No figures in the open space. No scary ghosts or hidden boogymen. Just me and the birds that are not birds. Clinging to this moment in frozen time. The future stopped at a red light somewhere far, far off. No sound in my ears, even the amalgamation is silent. I am alone though I feel nothing of the sort. I exist there without care for company. Without the necessary understanding. I am me and he is there is I am still stuck there like an icicle. Petrified by a lack of imagination. Frozen by feelings I do not possess.

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

Wandering fragments of thought like candles floating. Passing lights, or spirits. My anima steps in and out of tree corners and shadows. Something in my mind retreats. Junctions locked like traffic, all the engines off. Can't turn the key. Long horizon runway stretched like a balloon, thin as a flake of snow, brittle as ice. Some melody or high rhythm on frozen wires, nothing strung up through the trees but toothpick needles.

Is this doubt? Fear? Questions cascade, flipping end over end. Only the faint traces of indescribable answers, like a smell or a burned photograph. The stillness, shifting, the face, the anima. The selves in single manifest like passengers of your vessel, their eyes in birds that are not birds. All of this comes in a lightspeed wash without wind. I do not blink, I cannot. It does not occur to me. Nothing stirs, the whole world in paralysis. The anima speaks things that are not words, and the understanding comes to me. As one speaks to themselves.

In that liminal space I am toothpick limbs and icicles. Or a sphere of consciousness without boundary or form. All the joy and sadness, ambivalent platitudes and screams, blank faces, thought races, killing intent before blissful depression slumber contemplation. All of the above and more or less beyond nothing and everything at once.

Is this death? I feel no fear of the end. Time goes on. Perhaps I only question myself. Who am I are they these selves of self inside me? Like birds with no face.

I stay standing there on that trail for all of time. Until I wake up and the mist of another world begins streaming from my mouth, out my ears, spreading into a realm of forgetting. Even now, this is only a faint trace, like a smell or a burned photograph. Those birds are still there, though, those selves you may try to forget, try to rebuke.

The anima dances in the shadows of trees in my backyard. I smile and wave fondly at nothing.

I have forgotten whatever lesson I was trying to learn.

POST-ROMANTICISM

Slide glass radial arcs sprouting as leaves
From the corners of my eyes
Turning in that way we do
On the Earth
In the earth
Like whales or fish breaching the great blue iris
Hovering looking down in lunar faces
Solar phases humming radio lights
Shining off the brutalists' towers and
Facades

In the evening after the garnet stars are all gone
Evaporated in dust
I let it in I let it happen
In the morning where gray vehicles glide by in funeral hymns
I let it swim behind the glass walls of regret
In the darkness beating around the pulsing trees
Whispering in a slow rush of wind
I let it grin the grin of confusion
I let it in
Without knowing what comes next
I have nothing left to do
I let it call out
For you

Blowing glass in March
A lion's mane marbled in layers of waiting
Sharing beds in hotels with a past life
Somewhere the adventure, that bolt
Of fabric rolling out and away
It left the door wide open
Into midnight oceans

Waving pitch arms like friends
Come in for a swim
Behind glass walls

—

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

A primitive transport
Primordial contract
Written in the mud spiral roots around marshes
I see planets pulling color out of the atmosphere
And I see the dim LEDs behind the console
Of my register
And I see moving shapes in your familiar face
And I hear a conversation I have constructed
From matches and pipe cleaners
Googly eyes and crayons
And I live in a lightspeed theater making moves on ghosts

People who exist only as much as I do
Telling the same
Bad jokes

CLOUD SHIFT FORMATION

Pages in a personal archive
Pressed and printed
Folded bound in covers rarely opened

Everything is too similar
What's the point of reading the same
Three line stanzas

Making the same points with the same
Words with all the same letters and spaces
What's the point

!!:!:&;&?@“”-@-“\$!/??:)\$ / &/@.'

Under boughs of snow
Along the lakeside wooded trail
Or tucked beneath the overhang
Of a shallow grotto by the sea

Bear caves in the Tuscarora forest
Or abandoned quarries in the middle of nowhere
In the northeast

Sleeping stars under canvas
Dream where warm sleep besides
Under having mind aware for hour and
Me is wait for life is this slumber
Steep and bless cold water have
A memory a face
My dreamer

At once so anxious and so intimate
Uncertain and stubborn in a breath
Taken back sharply

Boisterous and restful
In the same motion exploding like
Fireworks

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

And the long after

As they scatter

Ash in the breezeless night
Dusk cloud formations
Barely seen against the stark white
Moonlight

Through my window
Landing on my bed

My dreamer
Heavy in my head

Shifting curtains
Window closed

Waking world
Is dead

—(/))):&&&:&@@@;"""("""("

All that I've said is all I will say
And I'll say it again with the same words
'Til it sticks in a way
That makes sense
To me

STILLNESS STILLNESS

stillness stillness
and scavenger rain
gone away again

the water's gone and moonlight song
and singing lullabies for sleep

but sleep avoids
and dances sunlight dawn
the yawning goes
and goes and goes
but not away
just awake

stillness stillness
moving wild
like beasts of mind put out to pasture
and graze on the vine
i grow from my
brain
stem
stalk

the little seed of a
micro man
making micro
things growing
oh so slow into
micro beings

living color seams
like ravines in the world
showing stars in the black
stillness stillness
moving undulating
or maybe crawling climbing
your summit
your peak

your limit

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

stillness stillness
buzzing worlds
buzzards whirl
tasting futures
in your whorls

my fingers somnambulized
like spirits
drifting
and glowing eyes
in glassy rags and ties

i'm sleeping stillness
stillness sleeping
in my arms
a quiet leaping
up and
up and
up and

and
and
and

always something more
never
stillness
stillness

only drifting
drifting
in that bay
don't think that i've
forgotten

NERO RESORT AND HOTEL (ON THE CRACKED MAGMATIC PLAINS)

Deep jade walls in the earth looking out over tracks strangely zigging and zagging searching for purchase up the steep ravine walls. Streetcars and monorails making transits from top to bottom. Windows with purple curtains. People in the TV, in bed, staring from benches on boarding platforms. Bright white eyes looking. Still. Above. Floating there in glass rotundas. Buffets and beaches and groves of reeds spinning slowly like chandeliers. Pagodas climbing terraced switchbacks. Electric moon on a pole above the sky. All the pipes and wires sticking out of our capsules. Our machinery bunkers beating hearts. All the glass temples. Vacation laboratories. Plumes of fire spilling from the cracks. Sulphuric delight. Tours every hour. Two beds and a stocked mini fridge. Complimentary snacks (\$10.00). A full bath with 30 sliding doors. Geometric configurations contemplating on the toilet. Never leave for the ice machine. Rainforest hills curling over the precipice. Drooling down dipping toes in the heat. Saliva loam dripping. Mother Nature's love invading. Exotic snapshots in their cloud storage. Never filtered; never liked. Brains in the palms. Beaches thinking for you. Sun never going down in the glass. Sand never dropping. Pink and orange petals licking at your virgin conviction. A green morality. Meet and greet at the lobby. Friendly uniforms. Serrated keycard smile. A grin from long ago. Been here a while. Riding the tram. Plastic seats. Plastic in heat. Capsule collider. Strapped in waiver solid copy diver. Into a lens of starlight. Myelin sockets sparking snapping. Capsule cracking. Chaplain laughing. Kill switch black and static.

Heat through blackout curtains. Single-threaded metamorphic purpose. Free continental breakfast. Memoryless.

Nothing more than joy.

FLORA ;; FORGOTTEN (LYRICS FOR A FEVER DREAM)

The constant clicking of dark

Outside the window

Like a tongue

Against solid teeth

Again and again

In isolation

Holding tanks

Filling liquid dreams

Becoming reality

Or my reality quickly

Becoming a dream

Melting into seams

My clothing many-colored

Worn and fraying

Tattered

Lines scored around my ears

Brands of breath

Of sweat and sore eyes staring

Outside

Wait for me at the end

PART II

Of time slipping

Streaming catching

Up to you

Sprinting

Slowly now

Be patient with my

Memory

Be tender in that way

That you are

Always

Remember

My face without

Obstruction

Only that rolling warmness

Sunlight glaze

Give way

To that dark

Clicking with insects

Joyful chorus symphony

Their infinite melody

Before morning and birdsong

Erases them

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

Like a dream of longing

In your hands

Is it fulfilled?

Where mine are resting

Between the folds

And filaments

Tangled in firmament's

Flora

Deep breath

From your lungs

Hearing my lilting tone

Dancing alone

Amid clicking black walls

Singing along

And I've nearly forgotten

Their faces like a dream

Escaping my grasp

Dark washed away

...

Sunlight coming in

Through my open window

With birdsong

SOLILOQUY FOR SOMETHING UNSPOKEN

I enjoy listening to the idle strumming of bugs in the night. Those summer nights. Not too thick. Not too heavy. Something light in my memory of weeds. Earth tones. Bell chimes around power pylons. It reminds me of a simpler time in my life.

Perhaps not a better time. But a simpler one. That's worth something, right? The weightlessness of affection. Dipping toes in late night fountains. Constructing the lattice of self that has led me here to this castle in the sky. The bugs hum all the while. Still they sing to me after the rain. I feel a song in myself. Earth tones. Reaching into a place so far off.

A place burning under the sun. Beside the ocean. An ocean that drips effortlessly onto the hood of my car. And the crystal links stretch on and on below me. Bugs humming in the buzzing rain. This fuzzy pain. Familiar games. I enjoy the thought of existing softly. Next to someone. Bugs humming. Between our fingers. Words in endless transit. Never delivered. But opened as

presents. I enjoy a cord between wandering spirits. Walking its tautness. Feeling its warmth. Humming to myself. I enjoy. Something. Without words.

There is no approximation for joy. Bugs chittering like fire. In the black. After the rain. Cars passing. Oh so often. Waking in stiffness. I hear bugs singing lullabies. Spiritual passages. Shining silver dreams. Remember those leaving days. I enjoy the thought of finding those days. In someone else. Or newer days. In someone else. Exist there quietly. In a symphony by the lip of a water control dam. What is this stream flowing out. I enjoy letting it run. Wild. My demeanor. Unchanging. My clothes. Still loose. My smile. Still

crooked as glasses on my nose. All of it in shade. Under a willow tree. Or a cloud overhead. Eclipsing Ursa Major. Existing earthen vagrant. Wanderer. I settle for stickbugs and fire pits. Campfire cantatas. Humming along. Perhaps

I am my own cult. But aren't we all. In our own heads. Filled with lyrics never said. I enjoy the sound of bugs coming through my cracked window at night. Through the screen. I see something I long for.

But can never describe.

A DREAM FOR OUR FATHERS

whirling pool of thoughts

idly spinning

beneath dullness

above

me

totem people turning

off and under

away bridges

away

jelly cotton roll

skies of

small child

ren

wiped

clean

off

our

faces

hardwood places

so still and

quiet

you forget

about

people

PART II

looking out
there
 no rain
in the
 leaves

why is there
 the sound coming
 down from
 the
clouds

keeping company
close to me

basking prone in the sun

forgetting about
forgetting about
forgetting

and this man
in his hummingbird's
dance

forget begone

for
 someone's something
they lost

in the haze of
cicada stupor

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

a phase of
separation

before in summer fire
we rode waves of
gelatin joy
carefree

back when tides smiled wide
like the teeth of the world
and the leaves we collected were the
leaves of our fathers
and they dreamed in technicolor
diaries

remember the lack of a mind
we had
 with great big
white eyes

held in a
motionless state

a state of our selves like
a zoetrope and back
again
in
love

PART II

why are those playgrounds like
skeleton
trees

we remember a breeze
in a letter
we wrote to
our selves
out of
fortune cookies

sealed blessings
and rain charms

drawing faces on napkins
as ghosts we abandon

we forget

cling to a setting
sun
with me

we'll swing
on the deck
with our shoes off

I lean in to
each other

and

smile

VERSE IN ENTANGLEMENT

p p p pu uu utt le e a v e e s
 inn youu r
ha a i i ii r r a aa n d d
w ai t

f oo o r o uo uu ou ououru ururu r r r r r

f a a thth e r 's s s 's s s
d re e e aaamsmsmms sssss

to c oo m e

t t tt r r r r u uuu e e eee e

parading people going down
tearful pride
shaking chords coming loose

some dark pulse
like charcoal clouds
in the sky

throwing golden sheets into the wind
flowering spines
grab the sweetness of her eyes
and run

run away with nothing
'twixt your fingers

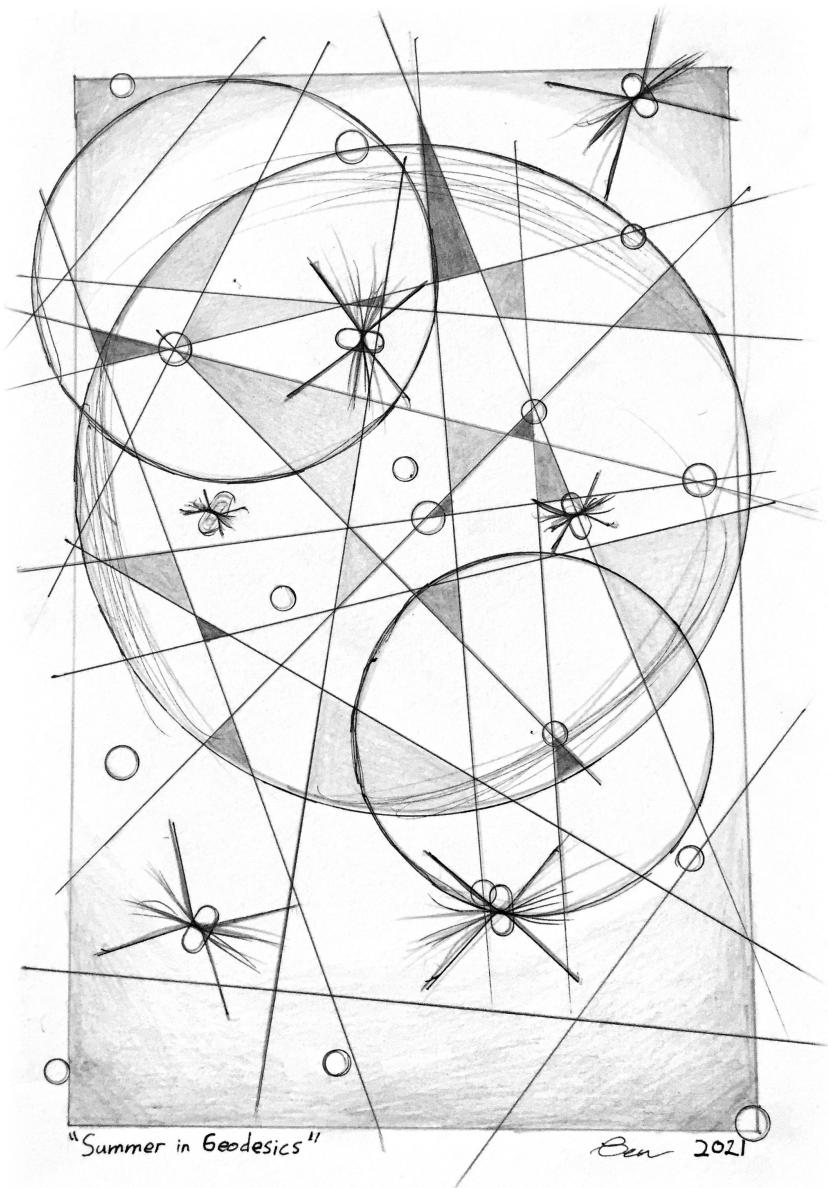
frenzy cracks of lights
 like whips
or spirits walking in
 circles small circles

an other world of others
doing their other things
 across the room
the enormous room

the rain keeps coming

 leaning on the house
 heaving its weight

there's a cold front coming





- "Untitled Still Life #3", Acrylic on canvas, Jan, ca. 199X

Part III

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

HYMN FOR HUMID FINGERS

Swelling air in tides the breath of oceans carried coast to tree line
To my bee hives hanging paper lanterns along the reed spines
Hollow tubes and living lights in clouds of luminous night eyes
Their humid humming voices flitting by in packs of dragonflies

Before the rain opens up the sky
Cool rolling rhythm
And the water

Moves

Away

Low tide at the bay

Barges shifting slowly on their way
A glacial pace

Surrounded in a shallow face
The blue gaze
The gentle reminder of yesterday

A listing chase
Exploring mazes lazy alleyways

Where the breeze will stay
And sit as the water courts with the moon

Over steep creek hillsides where the coyotes howl and croon
Little flowers and pearls without strings all discarded and strewn
Sterling silver the face of the pond where the lily pads room
This enormous design of a world without reason to brood

Follow inlets and deltas exploring the surface of June
Before it wanders the watery
Path and recedes
All too
Soon

SOFTLY, THEY

summer golden rods flowing flaming rivers under the heavy trees
so full of light and humming swimming songs and hymns of
things unexisted

amber deep windows they stare out of over the fields running
fleeting winds winding springs and coils spines and bones
vertebrae human connections

in those lighthouse inflections they speak softly to each other
across oceans of time and again

spirits joining fingertips like plants exchanging sweet water sweet
words complete works and volumes anonymous collections
eclectic directions

confusing intentions intended unlooming as buoys still bobbing
upright at attention

volleys of light passing over the waves in encrypted language of
photons and hope of emotion beyond stoicists' patience

passengerless pastures rolling greenery love songs in small
vessels shipped along streams and oxidized cell routes

motioning roots miming toward beaconing suns as the moon
spirals dances with its reflection

they play games with the silence dancing across their beams and
make fairy tales in the waiting

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

a mythos of feeling explaining depleting replenished resources of
self

salt and sand and tangles of kelp

chorus rejoin or rejoice of a pattern in faceless phases like love or
a story passed down from those thrones of watchful summer

watching over and under between our still places their heavenly
spaces tidy golden and quiet

why it takes moments to feel and a lifetime to understand it

CASCADE MORNING STAR

sheets
inter leaving
responsible morning
layer
routine s

hunter
fires his many-
gauged
attentive ness
into the
zen-like stag

outside my window

in a river
of rhythms
echoes
like acts of
a play
on
fire

branches
layers
lexicons
smolder in
high towers
coming
do
w

n

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

limbs and
leaves shimmer red
to black in
winter
like
ic
ic
le
s

spring and
summer children
with small eyes
like newts
or the butter
cups in my
lawn

branches draped
like pine blank
ets
across the
ridge where
giant pylons
carry
my power

to and
from
and from
again and
again
to

PART III

centurion
under the
willow
bridge
be
twee

n

the
sweep ing
adirondacks
or long
lake
or maybe the
cats
kills

be twe e e ee e n n
now and then
and

the next
and again
and again
and
and
and

slip of purple
ink ed
paper
in you r
hand

folding

origami

cranes

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

a liq
uid

des
peration

some snow
jungle days

some
days

a mem or
y
of

bird
song

is y

o

u
r

on ly

restor
ation

on those cold
frost sun
mornings

a cascade star
outside
in the
frozen barrel
of
stimulus

PART III

on a term inal
 day

i need that

restoration

WET LAND (DELTA REPOSE)

And so I come to This Place often
In a strange world of my own design
And my design is not fashion
Nor is it mine

Tall lanterns made of reeds and weeping organics
Bending their lithe force over my head
And the colorful birds in the cypress groves
Warp melodies in dancing moves like the air folding
Under their wings
And their nests are spotless twigs
And they preen their lovers
Patient and restful under the Sun

Spirals of earth caress and direct my steps
Paths leading around and above and below
On flat ground

Many great pink stars follow the Sun like
Satellites
And they blink peacefully as if sleeping
Under some cosmic protection
Like a blanket
Or a house

A home
In the Sky
Where the beams make rafters and insulate
As we are in This Place
Together

All the skin of the Earth here is like glass
Under water and a lazy light
Making shapes out of shadows
Like puddles on the walls
And we play in their shallows like children
For children are we
And we live in that Mind for All Time

PART III

Here the tall grass is vibrant and strong
Against a gentle breeze
Touching your face
Lacing your hands with fond greetings
Your fingers remember
All that you grasp

And Forgetting is none, just an idea
Without end or decay
It exists there so far away
You cannot reach it

Nor would you want to

And so I remember This Place
And it remembers Me
As One remembers Oneself

JAN'S DREAMS

Down at the end of the hall
Acrylic petals fall
Ing off the stems like au
Tumn shades or specters

Curled up fetal drying dying wait
Ing for Mother's love mandate
Hands scooping up fragrant life

Dreams logician puzzles gleam
Like breams in water beam
Ing smiles back up into the sheen
Of light like solar skin thick layers keen
On tipsy tilted lovers seen
Together last remembering forever

Memories making webs of meaning

;;';;;'

Burnt golden frames in blazing luster
Wooded capsules rectangular clusters
And canvases in mustard
Boxes with painted prints and youngster
Desires in still life pining

Something older she trapped there
With stems and stamens and pistols for hair
In the wind lighter than whispers where
Whipping by thoughts of light are common

Is common
To believe in a dream you keep having
Keep giving

;;';;;'

PART III

Grassy dew clinging dropping pianos
In early Sun like your father's and his father's meandered
Remembering of time before they thought it mattered
They just hunted and gathered
Early man woes

Clay pots and soil brimming
Grinning through the green beginning
To poke through the base bringing
A smile to her spirit

And her specter hands drift over the canvas
As she whispers a petal unfurling

NEW SPRING KNOCKING

Freeway sounds
Cruising by the empty strip mall lots
Under the overpass and
Over the underpass
And passing the time under the open sea
Floating over the microbiomes
Like streets and houses in water
Under tides and earthquake bunkers

Empty fields and retaining walls
Dormant matter slowly regrowing
Like fossils unfurling after
A crushing so deep it dissolves
When exposed to the light

All our worries there like birds
Calling out into the sky
They're leaving on the wind
With feathers dark as shadow
Going white into the Sun

Come out of that dream you made
We are not so aimless
We are not the clouds, drifting

They shed light into the trees
And metamorph
In terrapin turns and memories

Terrarium heaving against the glass
Breathing mass green and gold and old
And waiting since time starting
Spinning out from the center
From the heated cocoon of origin
Into the cold reaches
Colder seasons
Reaching out from dead dying trees
In yellow green buds
Blooming

PART III

Blooming
Again

Like
Before

Coming
Down

Sun driving posts of light
Into the soil

We can climb
Up

C'mon

BE IN THIS SPACE (WITH YOU, WITH ME)

Sky blue
Sky red
Sky aquamarine

High noon
Dry bed
No river fish gleam

Their bones
Earthen quills
Spilling ink across time

Bird homes
Whip-poor-wills
Dancing branches in lines

And their grinning so wide
You forget about '*why*'s

Unravel yourself from that stake
In the earth
Burning so bright

Flowing manner of you
Speaking light to the pines
And their eyes where the boughs
Severed by machines are just
Solid staring circles
Scrunched up with a laughter
Like the elders you've lost
To the fabric of nature's
Recursion

Don't lose yourself in that cycle

Cling to a dream of desire

—++—

PART III

Sun in your mouth
Now you see why the sky
Is filled and brimming

Sun in your hair
Whipping wind across plains
Where you sleep among
Petals moving waving along
Waving you in

Sun in your eyes
And the shade spilling out from your pupils
In colors in colors in colors
I'm dreaming of always

Sun in your hands
Play catch with me

Be in this space with me
Underneath the sky

Blue sky
Red sky
Aquamarine

EMBER SUSPENSION

tropical lost and
found

heat rays bouncing pinball buildings
machines and structures
stacks and heaps in
piles and parts and pieces

and the leaves leaning down
my face in the face of the water
moving wild and still

and the insects on trees
and the wind in my lap

and the clouds are all burning in charcoal sketches
like the canvases my father would coat
in graphite and youth

and his youth is a dream walking lines
across beaches
through murals he painted on fire

all our strongholds and walls
in another dimension
lost to a time before

when before was tomorrow and
tomorrow a dream I once had
in my youth

and my youth is a root still inside
sometimes out
in the glow of the Sun through the trees
see my eyes in
ember suspension

a delicate machine

PART III

hear the cogs whirring
between rushes of waves coming in
or the servos stirring
like bugs on the rough bark of a tree
tiny and patient

like a mantra of machinery
every man is a habit
leaning into that origin
full of roots and wires and comfort

the familiar

TUSCARORA

Along the beaten trail between a window of trees. The waterfront watchtower looks down on a sea of flocking canoes. Across the still water sits the great firepit in an empty stone amphitheater. Up ahead where the trail bends off to the right, the rocks fall away slowly into the reeds and ferns below a view of the mess hall. A bare flagpole, no smoke or steam from the chimneys and vents, the sun is going down over the dark green hillside, over the tops of the ancient mysterious trees. To the left, a steep path of stone steps leads up the sheer ridge to the first aid hut; behind me, a long walk from the trading post – that soft humming of the slushie machine, the neon glow of bent tubes and bulbs.

I move up the trail until I've rounded the bend under the mess hall. A pair of squirrels race along the shapes of trees by the dirt and log stairs, and I follow them up to the long wooden building. There are no sounds of cooking or kitchen staff working within. Only the strangely warped echoes of shouts and exclamations from the lake, canoes still circling and pushing their way ahead. The flagstones are cracked and mosaic-like, but there are no weeds growing in their spaces. Everything is trimmed and cultivated. To the right looking out into the air between the trees where the lake sits like a postcard are two stone benches, one placed on each side of a large metal sundial. An old faded bronze triangle stoically straight as the day it was put into place. It produces no shadow today.

Further down the trail the path bends right along the edge of the lake, and opens up into a field. A great green rectangle that sits snugly up against the shore, proudly showing off the tall cattails and congregations of algae at its banks. A few groups of people are out and about the field, playing ultimate frisbee, practicing their skits for their time to shine at the campfire, or just milling about and talking. One boy is combing a corner of the field with a metal detector. I get closer to see what exactly he's doing with it.

He's concentrated on a particular spot furthest from the lake. I can hear the metallic squawk of his detector going off from time to time like a Geiger counter.

"What are you looking for?"

PART III

"Whatever I can find, I suppose."

He brings the plate of the detector across the grass in wide sweeping arcs, like a scythe. His body moves with a kind of fluidity, even though the long metal arm of the detector makes him look like a machine, a cyborg. He circles in on a central point by listening to the sharp tinny beeps, and then kneels down with a garden trowel. He begins to pick at the earth, digging up clumps of well-kept grass, until he finds what the detector was yelling about. He repeats this process numerous times.

It's never anything particularly special, like buried treasure or a time capsule. A dull button, a spent bullet casing, an old unknown coin, part of a busted metal chain. He keeps at it for quite some time, longer than I know. I leave him to his search after a few unearthing.

I walk further to the end of the field where another path opens into a clearing. A cluster of beat up burlap tents are stood on pallets of wood like forest cul-de-sacs. The occasional firepit, folding chairs placed, ties and ropes like laundry lines, little inventions of lashings and wood. Some boys are chatting or playing card games, others sit on their tent pallets and read a book, or whittle a small stick.

I walk beyond the main firepit where many people sit, enjoying a late afternoon snack or a bright slushie they acquired from the trading post, until I come to my tent. I lift the heavy fabric flap, curling it and folding it up around the wooden crossbeam angled to the side. Inside the tent is like an oven, the trees overhead not providing much of a defense against the slow cooking sunlight. I sit on the thin mattress on the hard unforgiving metal mesh cot, and look out the makeshift door of my tiny burlap home.

The Sun is poking fingers of light through the hard line angles of the trees. Crickets begin to sing into the evening. The shouts of the lake are faint, almost unreal. My father is somewhere out there on the water, or perhaps on his way back to camp. I do not remember the tune that kept playing with my head as I sat there. Most likely some chorus round or mess hall chant that had been drilled into my brain from the beginning of the week. No breeze is blowing, the forest makes no move against the quiet.

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

I think about the people I had known in school;
about the countless other camping trips I'd been on, my
many small adventures;
about the rumors of some camp staff making out
behind the trading post;
about the short journal entries I had written
for a course on observing nature;
about the concerts I had been a part
of, the performances I'd adored;
about the great big embers
flying up and out of the bonfire at night across the lake;
about long rides home
with nothing but my eyes and the infinite trees;
about the little
trinkets and bits of ancient artifacts that boy was rediscovering
with his strange metal arm.

I think about many things like this for quite a while. The light
fades. The moon rises over the lake. I am in my sleeping bag,
despite the oppressive temperature, staring up at the wooden
crossbar of the tent. Tracking the path of a camel cricket as it
meanders along the grains, along the fabric's shape.

Softly time beats like a heart. Slowly moving along the breath of
the night. Wispy tendrils of waiting in a land submerged by
slumber. Somehow there is no regret in that place. I remember
this peacefully, now.

That must have been 2012, sometime in the middle of July. I was
only 13 then, and there are parts of me that are still there in those
woods. Smiling in the dark as I sit and watch the reeds sway
gently at night.

SIMPLICITY

Leaning into something sunlight memories
Warmth marina crashing waves and gentle floating
Wandering vessels
Looking for room
In crystal caverns and grottos below the moon
High priestess looming
Dancing all the world
On the tip of her
Tongue

Black curtain covers
You wear scarves in summer's birth
That spilling marbles coming
down
 down
 down
And I'm slipping like a thief
Or a bug on a branch
Only basking in that pale
That pale
It's such an old dream
Barely hang
 ing
on

Those feverish dreams of love
Still clinging children at my many hems
Perhaps they are my children
After all

I create and I craft and I muse and I sleep
And I grow roots so deep
They grab dreams
That were never mine
To have

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

Here in my fingers
A spark from an ocean lulling
Beginning to grin yet again
And I'm grinning
I'm grinning
Too

Where the jungle confusion
Flash burned and
Split in two

The sky hugs the clouds
Simple and blue

I like simple and
I like you

SLIPSTREAMING

Your hand in the door
Holding something open in the light
Shining beams through lenses
Other worlds in slanted shapes and names
Becoming the petals creeping peeking out
Through the ice and stubborn
Mannerisms

That raining sunlight coming down
Remember me in angled colors
Do you remember me there?
Do you remember my shape?

Lanterns hanging swinging dripping warm
Ideas down the slopes we made
Us kids beating down the grass
Watching it bend back up slowly always
Watching is and learning is and
We is there and then was gone
We can't go back to that
All our droning memories like sugar
A slurry in the sky dissolved
As
Clouds

Terrace steps along the coast
The amber wisps above the waves saying
Hello there good morning
Nice weather we're having

Soft shells
Beating blood organs
Breathing in and out in a natural rhythm
You know this phase
Nature's flock of time in feathers falling
On your face
In molting

STILL LIFE (ESCAPE MYSELF)

Buzzing Sun and Humming Moon
Holding hands back in September
Making rose fruition moves like dances
On park benches in high heels
All barbs and leafy shadows

Holding hands back in
Whenever
Where the door of light
Shining stratified along across the tides
Remembers shafts of foamy night
It felt alright
It was alright
It was

For a time

And all things are moving
Along

As they

Do

"Paper Cranes", 2020

Canopy shade metal table seating. Phone glancing down and
away. Mask placed ready face no expression waiting alone.
I approach.

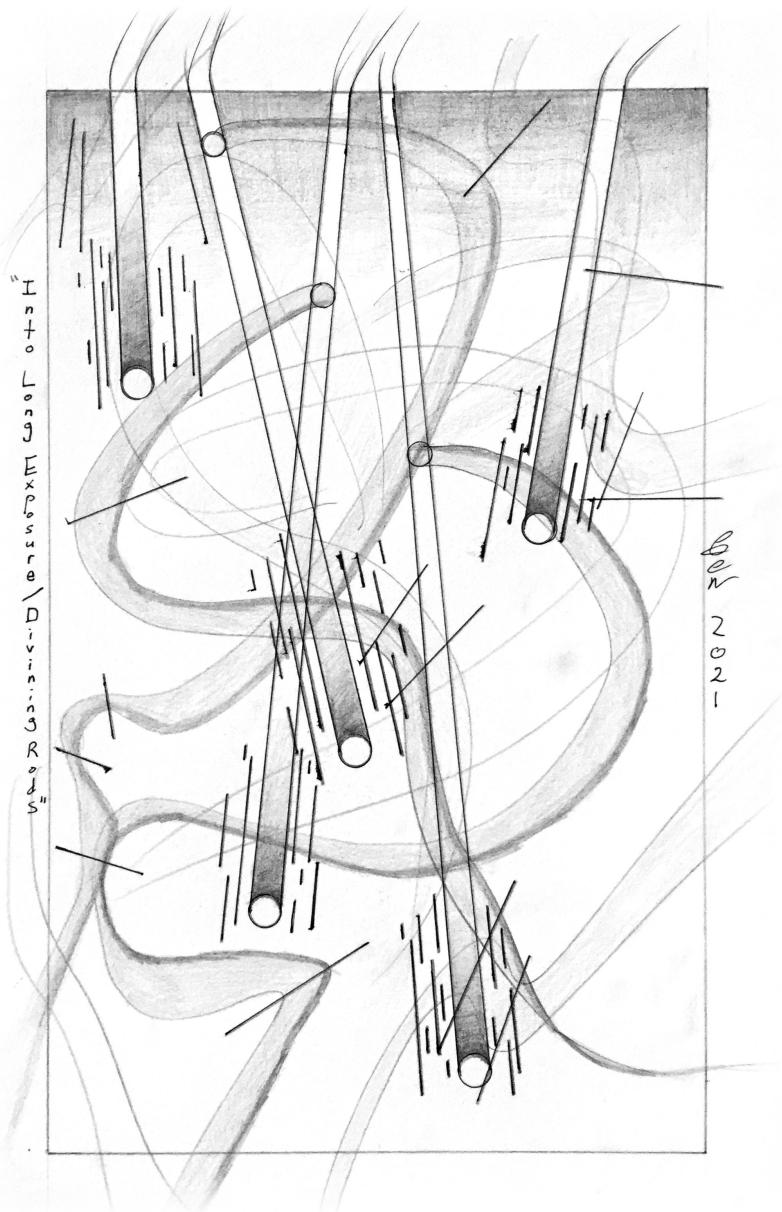
Golden hour drifting setting minivans in the parking lot. Idle talk
between dead air alive emotional searching. Something. There.

Folding paper cranes. Collected pains. Give them away.

I'll take it display it in serenity light. Sitting on my desk at night.

Watching time drift stretch snap back again.

Like a dream.





– "Untitled Still Life #4", Acrylic on canvas, Jan, ca. 199X

Part IV

LOST IN AIMLESS TIME

PRETENDER'S BALLAD

pink pale morning

haven't seen the sun blush in seasons
passing like childhood

only a rumor or a dream
they used to tell us
we would have

we dream alone now
as we always have
all in our head

i don't want to dream
until i'm dead

just breathing out slow vapors
into the winter night

~~~\*  
~~~~~\*  
~~~~~\*

dragon's breath  
we used to make believe  
we used to think we were  
in a fantasy

we used to play pretend  
we used to make amends  
with imaginary friends

we used to sleep in castles  
like a flower's opened petals  
all our thoughts like melted wax  
we fused our futures together  
and spilled them from a pen

*PART IV*

we used to dream of a place of joy  
of magic  
of love and light  
and some of us never stopped

we dreamed of a man in the moon  
and the forgiveness of god  
and we forgot how to wake up

we used to play in a paradise  
of innocent thoughts and  
pink pale minds

our feet running miles in a moment  
somewhere far off we could only  
imagine

nobody there to count our footsteps  
only the smile of every beautiful thing  
looking back into our shouting glee

mouths wide open in joy

~~~~~\*  
~~~~~\*  
~~~~~\*

life puts a muzzle on people like us
breathing smoke into sharp crystal shadows

and the leaves are all fleeing
skeleton trees
left behind like grave markers

and i sometimes ask myself
should we keep dreaming

of pink pale mornings
and fantasy skies

should we keep dreaming

until we die

LOST IN AIMLESS TIME

~~~\*

~~~~~\*

~~~~~\*

light falling on so many flowers  
in a field of stars

the sun poking fun at our faces  
and we smile back with warmth

in our eyes there is love  
you cannot comprehend its meaning

a steady moving rhythm  
cool rolling breeze

you pull at my sleeve for attention

we are not alone in this place

bright and fresh and fragile

like a string of petals

pale and pink and alive

awake

## SHRINE MAIDEN'S PRAYERS

The clouds in my hair  
Those sparse gray ones above the parking lot  
And scattered over the hills  
All of them playing around feeling my mind  
Dancing some ancient formation away  
In my dreams

The trees all melting down in the cold daylight  
Makes you want to pull closer to something

Thinking of that man behind the pizza counter  
Giving a little girl a pepperoni slice  
I smiled fast  
And just as quickly felt the urge to cry  
Why cry?  
What is there to cry about?

Setting Sun laid over the lamp posts  
Making shadows like a key's ridges on the blacktop  
My breaths filling up my mask  
My glasses going opaque like frozen winter windows  
My curtains are already closed for the year  
Isolation leading to hibernation lockup

---

The clouds running fingers through my hair  
My arms surrounding the atmosphere  
There in the air  
Two spirits haunting each other  
In front of the television  
Not really watching what's on

The trees humming along with my melodies  
Making harmonies with my passion  
Endlessly talking  
Exchanging  
Back and forth

*LOST IN AIMLESS TIME*

The sunshadow ridges know just how to  
Turn my tumblers  
And I glow in the unlocking light

Just as the warm sands on coastlines grip  
As the grass bends softly always springing back up  
As the moon gazes in love  
We are in love  
We are

And what is the source of this urge?  
What is the reason?

Always kept at arm's length  
In a bitter dance  
Looking still for the  
Sweet

—

I want this  
I do  
I want this  
Do you?

If I were the clouds I would run through your hair  
If I were the trees I would sing your hymnals all day  
If I were the Sun I would shine through your curtains  
I would cover you, this resilient thing, with my love

I want this  
I do

I will melt away your frostbitten blues  
And lean softly into you

I want this  
I do

—

*PART IV*

The clouds over the station like dull shredded tapestries  
All golden at the edges

I'm still running there  
Back and forth  
Without a destination

Only a deadline for the end  
Of my shift

In that maelstrom of getting on with it  
My mind becomes like a vast field  
Filled with anything  
That can get me by

Whispers of an empirical world  
Swirling about my head

Is all of this simply a device of necessity?  
Surely there is more to this  
Something deeply right  
Deeply admirable  
Deeply radical about  
Love

I want to know this  
I do

YU(U)RE(I)MONO

Deep green night  
yawning wide  
with mist  
around the teeth

Eyes of the world  
glazed over  
for thousands of  
small moments  
like generations  
already gone

Outside the blue crystal  
headlights flare  
streaking by the road

There is a spirit flashing  
a light into my window

Faint beating pulsar  
reaching through the mesh  
without words

Her beam grasping straws  
from a stranger  
without reason

A cipher wound up in  
a dress of smoke and  
pale leaves

Dying grass under solid  
gunmetal clouds

Ancient future rain drying  
before it falls in a mad  
dash for more time

What is she saying?  
What is she saying?

*PART IV*

Waving back and forth  
back and forth  
in a swaying trance  
of lights

Trying not to be seen through  
so easily

## MEMORY DRIFT (EYES SPINNING WILDLY)

I remember watching videos of candy being made. There was always a step where the colorless material is made glossy and vibrant by adding a dye. I was fascinated by this step, watching the hue and sheen slowly take shape, being carefully absorbed and spread throughout the sweet matter. It was like a spell, that concentrated *something* being thrown into the lack, into the *empty*. And slowly, slowly, slowly becoming more.

It reminds me of titration experiments in chemistry. Back in high school we did labs with acids and bases, timidly dripping fluids into a beaker of volatile liquid. The drops would create a brief explosion of color, usually a bright pink, and then be immediately subsumed by the colorless acid, broken down and dissolved. But as we progressed, the color would stick around for slightly longer. Until suddenly it stayed. And then we would know we'd gone too far.

—

Fragile dance  
Glass filament chants  
Illuminate illogical immediate implant  
The reasoning devices in the bones  
Nets and structures and cross beams  
Communicating constructs colluding

Thinning misty windows  
Dripping down delirium dates  
Delivered deluxe deleterious delete  
Begone before bygone begging begets badmouthing  
Nothing more or less than  
Two distinct images existing  
At once

Flash bulb afterthought  
Magnesium white fire flare kindles  
Hauling spindles and sacks over shoulders  
Nomads and homeless jobless eyes  
Brains outside their jars

*PART IV*

Vague smiles come back  
An aching muscle memory

A relearning process  
Slowly letting it in  
From the stopper

Drop it in  
Slowly now  
Slowly

How you are  
Sleeping better now  
Than before

Even though your eyes  
Are wide  
Wider now  
Than before

Looks can be deceiving

Colors come  
Slowly  
But they come  
All the same

Perhaps brighter  
Than before

## CIRCULAR REASSURANCES

going round in circles  
phantom smiling ghosts chase us  
going round our heads  
like comets

in our attempts to comprehend  
time  
it slips by  
in the curved space  
around your gravity arms  
those forms without force  
or speed

chasing comet trails  
what else are we here to do?

going round in circles  
tree rings chanting from within  
bark shawls  
crawling with small insects  
lost and getting  
cold

cold sheets we sweat in and under  
like bridges  
and other armatures of suspension  
of disbelief

going round in circles  
like the same dream you've had  
for so many years now  
reaching out for that  
brass ring

my ring's losing most of its finish  
slowly turning silver  
a snowy silver howling round my finger  
hollow winds of time  
gliding by

*PART IV*

all the trees brittle  
all the grass splitting apart  
all the world in a bronze stupor  
before a white frigid heart

%%%  
%

warm core glowing  
out frosted glass  
faces  
in watery windows  
or gazing from  
odd verandas

eyes flaming  
where do they find that blaze?

those spirits and phantoms who  
grasped at things i dream of  
and did not come away  
empty handed

%%%  
%

going round in circles  
stars swinging in the whim  
like censers

their wills shining down  
on the fraying leaves  
on my fraying sleeves  
they gleam

and it's gone from me  
my hands are empty  
they're burned out  
burned clean

i've nothing left to say  
sometimes

%%%  
%

*LOST IN AIMLESS TIME*

summer morning after dawn  
when the willow tree still clung  
to dew like gems

hidden noises behind the house  
playing birds and deer and  
the children we once were

spring breathing gold  
down our necks like we'd  
bathed with the gods

and in our innocence we  
picked flowers  
for our mother

## THEY RESTED UNDER THE EVERGREENS

Fields passing blurring with time  
Like days melted blooming together in the delirium mind

A delirium of mine  
And the many millions we are

The summer hills burning fire into fall  
And the fall as it dissolves into white spirits  
Walking the roads in winter  
Stepping aside to let the rumbling plow pass

They float on their apathy without frostbite  
Killing time crossing frozen creeks and still dams

In that silence of snow pressing layers like books  
Where the flowers grow cold and alone  
As they die  
Between sheets they remember like pages  
They rest under the evergreens  
Upside down grinning maple leaves  
Dirty brass falling under their boots

Their breath caught in a fabric of waiting  
Steam careening along the low drifts  
In a time before together would fade

When a day and a month are the same

That delirium phase feels a lifetime  
Of staying

And they wrestle with spirits and hug close their cold hands  
Warm seasons across oceans slow crawling  
Long glances at life in delirium  
Like exotic birds in a cage  
As they dance and take  
Naps in the shade of  
An unseen Sun

## AND THE RAIN KEEPS FALLING OUTSIDE

And the rain keeps falling outside in blue to gray to black  
But it never gets colder  
Only thicker and drenched in honey time  
On speed the likes of dragonflies  
Licking your face in the afternoon

But that was passing by us too soon  
And all I am is older  
Now

Time slipping through my fingers  
Shedding skin like snakes at the register  
Soaked and dried in grocery lines  
Time ticking away in my dreams  
Like mazes both confounding and ancient  
And there at the dead end you sit at a table  
With me and we discuss cartoons  
And there across the gap I'm eating a bowl of cereal  
Without any milk  
And there under the archway our fingers intertwined  
And disembodied  
Time drinking my mind filled with strawberries choking my mother  
Her head tilted smiling in every picture  
I took a few of those  
Time draining oceans refilling with mud  
Time wiping off the dust on all these old traumas  
Throbbing seams where the threads are beginning to go  
Time drawing goatees and mustaches on all of our faces  
We're all silly fools in a great big world  
Without reason to laugh so let's laugh at reason  
Time reminds me of rain  
All the water speeding by  
And yet you don't remember the rain,  
    the weather that one day,  
        do you?  
Just the idea, leaving now on the last train  
  
It won't be writing home  
But you'll be waiting by the mailbox

*PART IV*

Rain, rain, go away  
Come again  
Another day

It just keeps coming down  
Going right through  
Without stopping

## REFLECTIONS ON LABOR AND AGE

Paper people folding feet across the miles  
Tiled and rough with facsimile stone  
Pushing dripping carts in a storm  
Of fear and ages  
Of denial

Fighting nothing but themselves and the people  
They remember themselves being  
Some time  
Ago

It was  
Only a  
Moment

...

A sheet pulled across the face in the  
Endless plexiglass reflections  
Down rows of register lanes under lights  
Decades after installation

Receipts left empty or tossed in a blue bin  
Softly curling and waiting  
But no one will  
Read them anymore

Do those walking memories remember their amounts?  
Do they know the tax or the thinning discounts?

Right next to the thought of a sunny day  
On 5th Avenue,  
Or the country of another name

A repeater of lullabies from mothers  
Who died so many years ago  
It's a miracle these memories are alive  
Still themselves

*PART IV*

Shuffling limping behind stout carts with only  
A half gallon of milk, a half loaf of rye bread,  
And half a newspaper with  
Half the words in red

. . .  
We are only moving forward here  
Never backward  
Never still  
Only ahead

Under lights and masks we are moving on  
Before we can get our wits about us

Time is leaving us like a trail  
We are sometimes not the feet but only the  
Prints left behind  
Sometimes

Shuffling days we remember like murals  
No one else can ever see

## BRIEF (SOME RECENT THOUGHTS & MEMORIES)

Brief rain

Only a minute or two

—

Pictures at the berm

Plastic bag with an old laptop and charger

Lounge lights off

Keycard scanner broken

The Union smelling of citrus and disinfectant

Flipping cards and sanitation markers

Sweaty face in a mask

It's like I forget to breathe

Sometimes

—

Sesame chicken with udon noodles

—

Binging anime all afternoon

Fighting with a network connection

Waiting on a call from the mechanic

Asking permission for an overnight stay

I feel like a parent

And perhaps that's the closest I will ever be

—

*PART IV*

Brief rain

Just a drizzle

It's been so dry recently

So hot and dry

I grab the mail in my socks

Walking back up to the house

I find half the trees bare or dead  
Half the leaves dropped and red  
And gold and bronze

Without glasses in my blurry world  
My head spun in another life

“Where am I? Where am I? Where am I?”

Why does time crawl so quickly?

—  
Watermelon gum

I moved that paper crane off my desk  
Not even made of paper,  
really

I want to learn how to cook  
Who doesn't know how to cook  
For themselves?

Perhaps I'm too lazy after all  
Or incapable of caring  
Enough

—

Brief rain

Kind of looked like snow  
For a second

—

Becoming older means making peace with the idea that your  
father suffers from seasonal depression  
And your mother's breakfast may be the only thing holding you  
together on a certain day  
And neither of them ended up doing what they really wanted to  
in life  
At least not how they began

But who does?

And one day they'll be gone

So you better learn how to make your own goddamn French toast

—

Brief rain

Like someone up there is  
Chuckling  
At me

## INSIDE // OUTSIDE // OTHERSIDE

Long exposure of lights  
All orange and yellow murmur underneath  
Shadow tree layers  
Blankets of darkness piled up around  
Kamikaze Curve  
Where the four lane highway overlooks  
The smokestacks in the valley

Silent night monasteries  
Where we worship  
Time and again

Passing passing lines and dots  
Vectors graphs and organism shrieks  
Eyes like projectors  
On your pure white wall  
Your snowdrift swaying hair  
Dissolving shifting sequences  
Cells in a light

Old trees beyond my window  
Older than me  
And my parents

the same quiet  
phrases over and over  
again

mint or lavender whatever you like  
fresh cotton sheets  
the invitation without rsvp

to grow older is to overcome  
a great series of confusions

and to know you are older  
is to find yourself  
without understanding

*LOST IN AIMLESS TIME*

Early nights come and go  
Lullaby documentaries across the house  
Each window is the same square  
The same winter walking ice  
Along the wires  
Into the future  
I can see it as I saw it before

As I sat in the dark  
In front of the screen  
Without thinking

Or the screen sat in front of me  
And I did nothing but  
Reflect the light back out  
Of my eyes

the still air  
in the silence  
feels no presence

we are all hidden folks  
in our pandemic bunkers  
and our fingers speed across  
our control panels

the man in the screen  
is the man trapped in my window  
and he's trapped in my mind  
speaking dreams only i know

## NOVEMBER DANDELION

Mild autumn middle  
Center of the quiet shaking  
Vibrating  
Trees

Subtle

Trying to remember a damp shade  
Or a striking shadow  
Over the lawn

Nothing comes

No idle shapes

Just grass done growing  
Around half-scattered dandelions

Mild autumn hills  
Behind my house  
The creek is dreaming oceans  
Like a child

The leaves are few  
And brittle

Contrails across the sky  
Dissipated blankets or canals  
Of steam

Young things are hiding  
Not yet solid enough

Early November  
We are a quiet raging people  
A quiet fearing people  
We are a dying heat  
Under the covers  
In our dens and shelters  
Strapped to the pundits and the process

*LOST IN AIMLESS TIME*

And they are writing newspaper articles about us  
The people who pray for an answer

There are no atheists in a foxhole

I stand in the yard and count stems  
With half a head

## FIRST SNOW (BLEEDING INTO YESTERDAY)

Little drops  
Starting started before eyes  
Still closed  
Pink lamp  
Replaced  
Stone white  
Blank faced  
Away

Flakes coming down  
Staggered whimsy flowing ground  
Alone together sheets and layers  
Sheets and layers slowly  
Now slowly  
Now

Over time  
And again

Opal breath  
Screaming jewels  
On the roads we drive  
At night  
I drive the roads you watch  
Do you watch them  
From your window light?

A wave coming a wash  
Blowing underneath  
The silent noise of time moving  
Months passing months  
Like strangers  
Years passing years in the time  
Of a single night's dream  
A flood in flight  
The clouds are all swept  
Away

And again

*LOST IN AIMLESS TIME*

I catch myself falling  
Into leaving  
Into dreaming  
Into bleeding  
Into yesterday

And sometimes  
Tomorrow

## MANY-LAYERED MIST

Some seasons are like dark, blind days

...

halls of mirrors  
and black refractions

great silver cities in spirals and spokes  
cathedral domes spewing pitch smoke  
swallowing light dead ends

and the soft underbelly of confusion  
presenting to you like a stray cat  
wavers like a fog

emollient  
drawing you in contours  
topographical patterns

warm rivers trailing off your  
fingertips into  
puddles

what do they take  
and what do they return

...

...

shore echoes  
along skittering weeds

bending under a breeze

and the glitter is there  
in the water  
the sea

*LOST IN AIMLESS TIME*

season

s

ebb and flow un  
reasoned

in methodical  
rhythm

with time  
tracing your face  
in contours  
deep  
ening

...

...

...

and time floats  
and we float  
over it  
like  
moths

in water

we make stories  
to say things  
we do not remember  
how else  
to say

*PART IV*

and the words  
are some  
times  
swallowed  
whole  
by  
that  
many - layer ed  
mist

listen  
ther e for  
me

....  
....  
....  
....  
....  
.....

.... .

## FORGETTABLE AGE

What did I think of this back in March? To think I knew what solitude was. The word isolation means nothing. Meaning is stripped like paint. Dried too far in your desert mouth. My birthday is months out. Giant iceberg crawling closer. I can see the pointed peak. Singular. Alone under nine suns.

When they sent us all home, I stayed; I live here. Where do I have to go? Only further into the roil of essential service. Scanning groceries and quantity-restricted rolls of toilet paper. Now I never leave the house without a mask. All the slow rolling tumble of friends and classes. Gone in a vague static. A furrowed humming of the furnace in the basement asking me questions when I'm trying to sleep. It's 12 AM.

There is nothing wrong with me. Nothing that wasn't already wrong before. Nothing new growing between the cracks. Winter coming through to scrape my potholes wider. Longer nights. More layers. Less texts. Shorter thoughts.

When I said in *A Dream for Our Fathers* "you forget about people" I meant it. I wrote that piece with a massive downpour streaming down around the house. That empty log house with two cats scared of storms. When I stay in that place I lose myself. I forget about people. I forget about me. This quarantine is like that. It's not just a separation. It's an erasure.

But it's necessary. And that's the toughest part. It's necessary. You get used to it. You understand your place in the nothingness. The temporary nothingness. And suddenly it's permanent. You get used to it. You don't talk to people. You don't work. You're broken. You exist to wait and wait to exist.

Summer is gone now. Fall is almost at the bottom. I'm just waiting for that ever-falling snow. All the color of life is muted, it's slipped through my fingers. I'm reminded of that piece I performed, *Alive in the Snowdrifts*. I'm snowdrifting again. It's here. That drone stretched out for as long as alone lasts.

And when it finally ends?  
Then what? What do I do?

*PART IV*

I sit in my room in the house where I grew up and play games and write shitty stories between shifts charging people for paper bags and typing produce codes on old IBM consoles. I stand in one spot as all the world spins in a big top circus around me. I lay in bed staring at the ceiling without moving. I don't get up.

The silence is a chamber. My records spin and spin. The silence is a laughter. I smile at little things. The silence is a friend. The one that will return to me like a bird. The silence is a prophecy, proof that I am nothing more or less than a man without purpose. I'm making it up as I go along.

Perhaps I treated isolation too lightly when I wrote *A Dream for Our Fathers*. You forget about people. You forget about desire. You forget about dreams you've just had. You forget about forgetting about forgetting. You forget about love and light. Where is that love in the absence of the passage of time? Caught in midair like a still frame of birds in flight. Picturesque and nothing more. A picture. A memory.

You forget.

## A WORLD BEFORE AND AFTER

Without those people  
What are we?

Without their faces and names  
Running through our hands  
Like greetings and goodbyes  
Exchanged in innocence

You lose the meaning  
Of them  
Their lives become a story you tell  
Yourself  
And it changes each time

Everything you do  
You do for them  
Their memory like a fable  
You put faith in their lessons  
And now you know the  
Trance touch of religion

And you are a figment  
Of their imagination  
All the same

---

Long season of walking  
Dim ashen fields without wind  
Coming down with the Sun  
Perpendicular light

Silver soot heavy with sleep  
Dragging stars down as  
Puppets to dance

The weather forms and falls  
In uncountable patterns

*PART IV*

And here we are alone  
With ourselves

We are left with nothing  
?

Perhaps just to  
Self-destruct

And scatter our thinking into  
The dissipating sea beyond us

Like flotsam

Then must we drift

## RAINLINGS MEDITATION

on rails in station  
stuck to paper headers feathers  
and tar  
like stationary  
business mandate  
compulsory

repulsive  
our gazes  
locked to one shadow  
burning sharp and bright  
as taillights  
at night

short meditations  
on wants needs and cravings  
like rainlings  
little fingers  
tracing  
the paths of drops  
coming down through  
the quiet air

there is a  
familiarity  
in the glass and  
steady sand falling  
out of the  
clouds of  
time

like family

we meditate  
and mediate  
between hate  
and the absence  
of self

*PART IV*

our selves  
little children  
or pearls  
rolling swinging like tides  
out of oceans  
too wide

and the night  
and the night  
where we meditate  
without sight

back and forth  
rhythm  
take me  
through the end  
of this  
burning  
shadow

## MONOLOGUES FOR IDLE SHORE CHILDREN

I. Hoarding shadows to live in. Propping up the watermarked copies on my bookshelf. Not for resale, not for sore eyes. Mine only need a bit of sleep. Mine are the thinnest shadows, I'm so sick of living outside the light. The heat. I will sweat in comfort for a spell, until you change my mind. Focus your incantations on me. "Sim sala, sim sala" and so on, be mine in my haven.

Seaside rhythms along your arms crashing cresting over me. I comb the beach  
for salt in your hair. Make me a throne I couldn't make for myself on your tongue.

II. Both my eyes are getting worse. Walked into my living room. Football game was on. Cowboys and Seahawks in an empty stadium. Took me a good lifetime to make out the score. My father fussing with his cooking skills, a rare talent he hides. Green tea with citrus in the fridge. Scattered art supplies and musical instruments throughout the house. When they told me things would change, I didn't have a clue. Perhaps youth is a curse of disbelief. We don't listen when they speak.

III. To be outside the great machine. Never just a simple cog in a neglected mechanism. Stuck spinning my wheels never turning anything. Running idle with someone special on my mind. A mirage of myself. Something unsettling, surely, for no one is settling. Floating by on a lazy river. What's tethering me? They've all settled in apartments locking cogs with someone else. Cooking dinners and watching Netflix. Turning their teeth in time with the others doing the same. What keeps them glued together like that? They're like puzzles all put together and stuck to a board. Unshakable. Unshattered. My limbs fit awkwardly, thought changing never mattered. The right fit is waiting there for you. Right?

*PART IV*

IV. Thought I'd changed quite a bit. Perhaps I'd changed my thought,  
though thoughts bit by bit change nothing much at all. Only  
the hidden world. Made a habit out of hiding. Confiding in  
dead end walls. Still can't hold down a  
dream for too long. Still can't cook for myself. Still can't look  
someone in the eyes when I'm talking to them. Why is that?  
Only a handful of people have  
eyes I want to look at. Or something like that. Still can't let  
half-baked  
abstractions sleep soundly. Thought I'd changed quite a lot.  
Perhaps not.

V. We are a people fated to pretend. We poets, and we preachers. We  
cooks and teachers and people with oceans growing from our  
heads. Ears too stopped up with seaweed to listen, mouths  
menace with driftwood. All my life combing the  
beach for a little season. I'll wait on that drifting alone, perhaps  
not alone for long. Some moon pulling me along.  
I'll find a reason.

## SLOW DRIP (FADING LIGHT)

Timid rush of birds  
In great green flocks  
Like grass

Peeking their heads out  
From between their neighbors'  
Dancing wings

Red-ringed necks  
Turning pink and pale  
And white with silver in the quills  
Spilling out from glass tipped over  
The words are never  
Gold or glowing  
Only memories and temporal syndromes  
Amateur stills

Trees aluminum sticks underneath  
Lining barbs or lures beneath  
Auroras antipodes a leaf  
Flips end over end endlessly

Green-faced yellow brass to bronze  
A dirty crimson eye blinking in the wind  
The radio tower mountains where the  
Watchers keep notes on us

Our patterns and their construction  
Out of flimsy beams and motes of dust

Our dance from birth to death  
A ritual of light

-=-:-

Time moves and dozes  
As we sleep

The hill is clear from my window  
At night

*PART IV*

The tower blinking like one of those  
Desk toys

Bird cyclic dipping and sipping  
Stale water

The clock on the piano downstairs  
Clicks and steps

In time

Like pages of a book I once read  
Things come  
And go

Genly watched the bloody keystone  
The forest swallowed Naoko whole

Navidson burned the pages I read  
And Frank O'Hara's dead

And so's Le Guin  
Chinaski

Merwin, too

-=-:-

Timid rush of words  
Green and old  
And covered in moss

Jumble of questions  
Never answered

Reaching out through failing light  
Sun coming down

In slow drips  
Through the  
IV tip

We push them aside  
Dreaming of saline lips  
Dancing weaver gleaming we cling  
To each other  
Together in ritual  
Together in life  
We crave together

Though that may not always be the case  
Remember me together with  
Myself and the man I dream I am  
That I am and  
Therefore I dream of other  
Over and over like breezes  
Gently bending the cattails  
In the painting by my door

I dream together end over end  
Green to yellow brass to bronze  
And corroded in slow drips  
Getting stuck together to these words  
Green as moss and time

And my father's metronome is  
Clicking clacking left and  
Right and left and  
Right

And we dance in a fading light

## FOUR, EIGHT WINDS

The smallest wind brushing my bare hands  
In the dark of a winter night  
Meandering like a butterfly's flight  
Along invisible streams and strings

Making webs that tie us all together  
Tugging on our minds, on our desires  
Shuffling us into a deep confusion  
This chill  
Rolling over and between quiet hills

Frigid rivers still carving canyons of ice  
Behind my house  
Draining songs of their melody  
Weeks replacing days replacing years of malady  
This life is only a series of lives  
We've all lived together, now  
In this sphere of isolation  
Like a chrome cathedral  
Fresh temple of forgetting  
We worship and sleep  
Soundly  
For a  
Night

~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Wellspring of growth  
Under the ice  
You can be anything you want to be  
Even a dim star  
Above the sparse clouds  
Between shadowed power lines  
And radio towers

~~~ ~ ~ ~ ~ ~

What more is there?
After this

After?

I do not remember Before
Beyond cloudy dreams slowly
Melting even in the
Snowdrifts clinging
Still

How can there be More?

~~ ~ ~~~ ~ ~~~

Dropping leaves
Into mist
Into smoke
Heavier heavier thick and changing
Morphing shades

Shadows into clouds
Into snow
Into layers and layers
Of ice

~ ~~~ ~ ~~~ ~

Some nights I walk beside the wind
Or headlong into it
For a minute or another forever again

The only reminder that others are
Here in this place of exile
A passing car or two

Those people whose faces I still yet see
In my mind or in photographs
Like specters,
Zephyrs
They grab me there,
Shake me there
Like a volley of time, many times at once,
Four, eight winds around me saying
"Go on, go on, you need no reason"

PART IV

"Take our wind, our same long season"

"Remember joy, and laugh with us"

"Right where you belong, you make the light"

"It's alright, it's alright"

THE SUN WOKE UP (AND I SLEPT IN)

Same three note light
Arpeggio in bed
Yawning turning tumbler head
Filled with rocks

Filled with heavy levity longing
Fingers sprawling stretching locked
In orbit with my eyes

Rolled back and up in broken sighs
Dead man's thought of nothing summing
Up to something

I'm up to one thing
At a time

The Sun is spinning burning stopped
In blinding spot between the clouds
White mountains hover silver smiles
They'll rain on you
They'll rain on you

Dry dirt roads and fields
Flowers colors I don't
Remember

Hanging lights from pallets latticed
'Tween trees and ponds my father gathered
His paints all mixed to gray and white
In his beard, sometimes
His eyes

I was not born a paper doll
This house is on fire, all the tiny furniture
Fragile and wicker
Dreaming to be burned
Dreaming of death
It's not particularly attractive
Not particularly a choice

PART IV

All there is now is dreaming
I'm asleep in the Sun
Burning in points along
Pointillist skies

And my eyes are both closed
And some mornings try prying
Them open

And some nights can't put them back
In their place

Winter's spirit sits staring at me
From my desk in the corner
Wondering where all the flowers
Have gone

In my mind I'm a dove
Staring down long-throated Springs
Blooming patterns of caring grow
From all things

That pastel morning is awake and my
Fingers intertwine with it

And my father paints on a hill by the trees
And my mother laughs in the breeze

Here we can be
Simply be

YOU 'N' ME IN A DREAM OF SEASONS

Always caught in a back and
Forth
Yelling over your shoulder
Have a good night
Thank you very much
Thank you

To be kind
To be warmer than that
Faceless ghost you
Present

Skin pale cracking leaves
Like ice
It's only September
Away with this cold
Nonsense

Caught in a back and forth
Email chains
Links clinking and clacking and
Keeping you up at night
And your hidden buffer brain charms
Dancing in a wind
You only imagine to be
True

Those waves of stalling breezes
Imagine you, too
They keep you close
And your desires at arm's length

Young men may scream at the still mist
Of an autumn night
Or the snow that never stops falling in
December
Curtains of frost and slush coating their
Throats

PART IV

Perhaps I am still young
Twisted in tangled time streams
Shouting into the white Sun
A frozen planet
But still I search for your existence

Yes, your being
You there in the breeze, dangling double helix
Of vines
Summer's ghost
A face full of heat and hair made of sumac

Making color at your fingertips

—

Over my shoulder at night
Shouting pleasantries at strangers
What a strange noise
Coming from my mouth

Warm noise like
Trees in the wind
Full of
Leaves

Why wait here for something else

I already have it
The trees in the summer
And the playful curve of the valley
Around the back of my hand
And between my fingers
The snowdrifts melt in a beautiful way

Why wait on a spurious day

Days go by
Are going
By

LOST IN AIMLESS TIME

Don't hold out for more time

Time is holding out

A hand

Grab mine

IN A CHORUS GALACTIC

Born dancing in ritual orbits
Around great pillars and beating heart anchors
Hands in arpeggiated waves blinking
Eyes in alignment with a far off presence
Thousand yard stare

Golden doorway light stuck to the floor
Wrapped across the corner of the room
Sticky veneer
Jungle of stains and polish and glue
Brushing over all the organic shapes
With squares and microchip patterns

We are much better at closing than opening
Curling in to that great sheet
Folding in to that warmth craving company
We are much better at holding on than giving up
But only if it doesn't get too
Cold

Out there
The ring of light around the empty space
Cities of DIY people
Stapled creased at the corners crimped and taut
Smiles acrylic and primer in the wrong
Order

Don't go where you won't return
Unless you don't plan on
Coming back

Born dancing those ancient steps they all took before us
And we are clapping in circles
Shattering the air with our many-layered voices
In a chorus galactic
Speaking in tongues of paths never taken
And when we come to that place we have never been before?

We multiply over the leaves like rain
And so many bugs making sheets of noise
In the pitch hot summer nights
Like a swarm of music boxes in a tar pit

Flashing our heaving heavy light over the trees
They don't want to see our glass eyes
So far removed from that mother cloth
We were cut from

And we keep dancing in rooms and chambers
The same words coming out our mouths
Just with different letters
Strange science of impressionistic thought
Becoming lexical axioms
Making laws out of happenstance

Remember that we are ideas made
Tender flesh
Skin and stems and joints and petals
Curling in without that dance

Keep sprouting worlds from your trunk
Spreading far from where you were planted

THE DOOR OPENED (AND I WALKED THROUGH)

In this war we fight with ourselves
People singing over gravestones
It is difficult to feel
The sentiment, or the intent,
I've forgotten how to empathize with
These frigid structures and solid,
Pale facades

Flags bent hunched like old men and women
At the top of their poles
And the Sun coming up behind them
Like a chariot of fire
Or a hearse

We are strange bedfellows with doom
Cohabitants in this enormous room
We forget faces and names, those innumerable
People
All people
Like me
Like you

We forget them like time passing by
In a dream or an image, a photograph
A mirage or a scene from a movie
Those halls and leaves, blacktop and breezes
Under clouds all the same as the day
I was born
They are there all the same as the day

All those faces and names
I remember

I remember Wargo, tobacco-stuffed pipe in his mouth
Under the canopy of a tent in the forests of New York
Smiling, laughing that short, gruff laugh
Making jokes about the grave site he already picked out
In Calvary Cemetery

LOST IN AIMLESS TIME

I remember Curtis, floppy fishing hat on his head
Wading out into rivers with a fly pole
His grin and his laughter encompass everything dark
And smother with a light indescribably warm
My father there in the water with him
Like two lotus flowers blooming, opening
An oasis of peace in a swirling rage of uncertainty

He was found dead in his apartment
My father went to the funeral
He changed after that in a way I can never describe
I still don't know the cause of death
And I don't need to
Why remember the last moments instead of the rest?

I remember Gabe, piano keys under his fingers
In an empty band room after school
Or in a small house in a low suburb where the river
Would flood every once in a while
His brain like a puzzle I could not see
And his compositions haunting and beautiful

He's still out there somewhere, perhaps at Carnegie Mellon
And I often reflect on his parting words,
Which he left in my high school yearbook
A quote from H.P. Lovecraft, from "The Nameless City"

*"That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die."*

These things I remember, these shapes and forms
Of people
Their aspects like colors or flavors of a time gone by
A time we cannot go back to

In this war we fight with ourselves
We are enemies of the mirror
Yet forced into reflection

In our solitude we wither like plants
As our countenance wrinkles and folds
And goes dark into the earth

PART IV

In that place of our minds
All together now as one form, one shape
One dream we develop in tandem
Hand in hand
We go marching down the long road
That road of many lengths and many names
In a darkness of time yet to pass
And step forward without sight

Like self-fulfilling prophecies
We walk
Into the light

Down the hall of my house
Where the amber Sun drips restlessly beyond
The door opened

BACKWORD

With this third volume, I close a chapter not only of my poetic career, but of my life. After publishing *Another Flow* and recognizing all the thematic similarities to *Babylon Effect*, I knew I wanted to make a sort of trilogy. *Drift Illogical* is the final volume in that trilogy, and I'm content with leaving it at that. However, there is still work to be done in the past.

I'd like to release a second edition of *Babylon Effect*, which conforms to the style conventions I use for *Another Flow* and *Drift Illogical*. Looking back, the formatting of that first volume is so amateurish, so out of place, I feel I need to correct it before I can move on to something else. I may include some bonus content while I'm at it, there are plenty of pieces still waiting to see the light of day.

As for what comes after that, I have no clue. I have drafts and outlines and ideas for a number of short stories, as well as a long-form narrative I want to serialize on my website; I have more artwork to create, digital or otherwise; I have a bunch of song demos and concepts sitting on my hard drive that desperately want to be part of an album; I have programming projects I'd like to play around with. The possibilities are as endless as the sky from our little verandas and porches. I only know I want to create, for that is my joy.

Writing, collecting, editing, formatting, stylizing, and publishing this trilogy of poetry collections has been one of the greatest joys of my life. To hold these volumes in my hands, physical books bearing my name, is a strange kind of pride. I suppose I understand now how parents must feel when they hold their newborn child. We must both now live with what we have wrought.

As I move into graduate studies, and perhaps a full-time job, I will look back on these volumes with many emotions. Pride, nostalgia, sadness, joy. Perhaps I'll come to hate what I've laid to paper in these books. All these words slowly strung out from a dim room on the second floor of a warped and crumbling house. All the memories I managed to chronicle, and all the ones missing between the lines, forgotten from my mind. I plan on preserving many more of those memories, spinning out many more stories and poems from this room – this enormous room.

Cummings wrote of a prison, but I write of a world from my window.

– Ben Buchanan

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Ben Buchanan writes poems and stories, programs web applications and command line interfaces, scans groceries and delivers food part-time, attends online classes, looks out of windows, listens to music, and occasionally exists in the general vicinity of Binghamton, New York.

His work can be found in his two previous volumes of poetry, *Babylon Effect* (2019) and *Another Flow* (2020), as well as in the Spring 2021 edition of Eells Literary Magazine. For more poetry and other work outside of the poetic realm, visit Ben's website at <https://lexicachromatica.xyz>.

Feel free to contact Ben either through email (bsbuchanan99@gmail.com), or through Instagram (@ben_writes_poems).

Thank you for reading.

