

DEUS EX MACHINA:

Notes from the River



OCT 2020 – MAR 2020

A.S. AHDRTZ

1.

The horizon wavers in the city smog
a timeline wrung out and lost,
faded by the sun, a process
older than the silt, grayer than God,
older still, than the lonely faces:
brief dashes of fading color,
in your image of the west.

But, seeing my face,
rising through the froth,
streamlets of a dream flow:
the path of least resistance:
a lone image blurred with smoke:
intractable, undisclosed,
hanging on a string through
the navel of the world.
And so we thread dusk to dawn,
the capricious future to the opaque past,
a time that moves on and on and on
in the river delta.

My thoughts digress
through the wavering horizon
through the choked mist of this coastal plain,
and I let the river run its course,
bending memory into shape.

2.

The city is silent as I walk along the river.

Loose figures of thought enter and exit the lines of this journal, as I

swat the words that swarm before my eyes.

Black bodied ****splats**** of words on the page.

All are shadows, rising with the falling day.

Black silhouettes, scrawled.



3.

heavy heeps his figure, a wayfarer hulking
between shroud and sun, the gaps in his body
like cups

offered out to strangers, but still warm, sweet
his little rocks forming bowls and gradients
to be filled

dusk spreads its wings, casting shadows
on our deprived cavities everywhere
the fires have left their hearths

love has stopped its ceaseless murmur,
I hail the wayfarer, the way I was taught
and wiff wads of his indefinite material

vacuous fumes foaming frothing about
my head walks the river length with a
host of cold fog and otherness, heaped heads

on rolled-in shoulders and now i'm drinking
the space between us, these cups filled to the brim
with lost hymn, feeling the draft of voices needling through.

4.

there goes another man
without shape

a condor trapped
in a sack of skin

on his dark-wrung retinas
night flashes

between twisted molars
meat is torn from femur
while I stared
he flung his arms in the air
and in three great bounds
flew into the night
discarding his skin
in a pile on the floor

5.

A boy is a small thing. He is frustrated that he cannot see. The things behind things. The love behind his father's eyes, the divinities hidden in the waters. Standing at the highway edge, he tries to shape words, small little quips that substantiate his feeling's lacking of shape. Alas, he became instead like words in a sack: jumbled. For he is not Adam, and everything has already been named. He wilts like a flower into the concrete.

The differences between things, erased.

6.

A little mountain stream used to flow here. The treacle of a rivulet, meandering this way
and that.

Deep subsurface flow, deep meaning (ha!), its waters percolating through the sand.

A museum of senses:

Wide, long alluvial plains; open lagoons and salty marshes.

Dense forests of willow and sycamore, elderberry and wild grape.

Brambles, issuing their wild roses in super bloom.

In my memory, the bands of antelope drum the silt, the night hawks caw their long, piercing
notes, and the roadrunners... run.

But most of all, I hear the laughs of bare-footed children, padding the clay with their little feet.
San Gabriel showed them the doors to heaven and hell. Weren't told which to choose.

It won't take long before we, too, are left behind in the penumbra of words. Likenesses;
substance liquidated by form. Names, bungled and believed.

A dream, lost now.



7.

I stand as an extra
drifting up this channel
the passenger of someone
else's story
a blurry face among many.

8.

Some faces float, for no reason at all, in my memory. I have a compendium of them, you see. I remember the slow arc of a lady's face on the metro; the face who you had turned to, having just mustered the courage to inquire about the book they were buried in, only to have them stand and exit on the next stop. Perhaps she'd return someday again. Maybe in a dream. A face that might join that great masquerade in there, a cast of extras in the enactment of your life, something only belated certainty would come to know. Dream people need faces too.

I make love with these faces from time to time, these visages flash deep within me, day to day, of the lives of others. I kissed a face made blueish by the sun's tint and another drained of color.

Vagrants move along the river, transient souls flowing on some ill-defined route. The sand nests in clumps in the channel. I move on.

Deus ex Machina.

9.

It's nice to feel small. To be insubstantial, moons lit from other moons... You could be the little one, the loving one, the soft one, hiding in a crowd, sitting at a train station not knowing when the next hulk of steaming mass will roll into view. Feeling the hush of the bells and whistles of the world.

10.


summer
hovered
in your eyes,
that day.

that day
you were
lost in
small rains
and breezes

that day
came like
super bloom
that day
when all words
whispered

that day
(that day)

There is a thingness in me,
calling itself ambiguity
but I never understood why
it was there
so I operate, wedging a knife
into some unknown orifice
of mine
and watch religious messages flood
the wash basin. Thick,
wet, moving.

I used to be original,
not calling Jesus this or Jesus that
but now I'm screaming it
and streaks of black red dash
the bathroom canvas (what an odd place to paint)
and the toothbrushes all line up
chanting in pious concupiscence
go, do it, this way yes! And that!
and I, still screaming,
am splashed onto the empty spaces,
the white on the walls
dash dash cover please black
and try to brea-paint it black,
please black
rush rush 

Administration	Percentage
Current Administration	85%
Previous Administration	15%

12.

many nights I look at her in passing,
as if love were just another sad something
buried in the everything (a buy-one get-one
free coupon placed triumphantly before
the store clerk only to understand that:

- you didn't bring enough money to cover the first item
- the item isn't (and was never) sold at the store
- the coupon is for a different store entirely
- the other store went bankrupt three days ago
- the coupon expired in March (of last year)
- you've transformed into a monkey

and things are so fucking bad that you
just smile... smile that big monkey smile
of yours and think, *I'll come back*
tomorrow and move on with your day)

13.

But it comes sometimes in a raging torrent, often in a couple of hours, sometimes with the sun still shining. Those deep boughs of inflection spoken from that low, booming register. Pascal's wager, you then might think. Good words can rake the sentiment from the gutters of our soul, sewage stuck like strawberry seeds in our teeth.

Pumping, pumping.

The words are hackneyed when written down and read later. One might think oneself a witness again. But that feeling, that *fuck it* that ended all fucks gave, still moves within me. A thought of those ragged breaths I drew in, as I tried to keep my head above the wash of words. Thinking between each breath, that I won't be able to (I just can't!) make it to the next. The precipice looming with its wide face.



14.

And so we too, become split.

God, and a flash of light.

15.

I'm at the edge of the city now, lowered deep into the valley under its shadow. The river moving me along. Strange to see only empty culverts, masses of pipe and sun beaten stone. It's no river of myth (it might even be too generous to call it a "river"). I've been told its fed mostly by waste treatment waters, over-embellished by the grand, arching slopes of concrete that enclose its sputtering flow. Really just a urinary tract.

We might, for a second, be able to peek through the froth—through the experiences that are prefigured—and touch at something else entirely. Even if it is only ever a glance, a near miss that slips past. Getting just a sample of who we are, of the essence of something, is enough sometimes for our eyes to adjust. To see in full force, the comedy of creation.

16.

It isn't that which lives between us,
but all that stands apart. Can
we speak of life, write life in
language, carve paths
that do not settle? Catch an
understanding where things rise, as
if articulacy itself could be given
voice, and let words fall enfranchised?
While I drift from bank to bank, alone
and dispossessed by name and sign,
motion carries me over and through:
don't discern me from your tempest,
know not what I say, and speak only
in whisper. Apart from the world we know,
the unlit, undisclosed parts of things
catch on our tongues like fishing hooks.
tearing blood from melancholy.

17.

We don't have a theory of dreams anymore.

The suddenness of thought, surprising in its peregrinations, is now without structure. How do we fill the gap between our dreams and the hours of our day? What runs through these missing spaces?

Series of dark silhouettes flash on the walls. As if the bright light had shone away from the world. As if memory could do no more than imprint, dispose, imprint, dispose, imp—

It is hard to see beyond concrete. So I've consigned myself to the raw fact of all I see on this river. Piles of soggy clothes aren't some environmental truth. There are no perfect ideals of the "shopping cart." And so, I've just learned to be patient in the presence of my thoughts.

Awareness illuminating passing birds, washing dashes of black on blue, sunspots left with their passing.

18.

Sounding these caverns dark in me,
I explore projections of creatures
bewildered. A throng of wet mouths
met by translation, jeering at
my aversions. Their eyes hanging,
as dark circles, indiscriminate
amid the knot of twisted limbs,
my veins crack, and nostrils flare,
in the miasma of ragged breath.
A grey wash runs over cheek and chin,
Ripping through my shaved skin,
and my little voice becomes a howl,
lost in the comportment of the dark.

As my voice slows to a sibilant hush,
and the day returns with its light,
I remember seeing my twisted face
in the projections of the night.

19.

A breeze arched deep in its enclosure
whistles in the spring cold
through the branches of the trees.
whose limbs
probe empty space
signatures above the river sands.

There isn't much water in the desert,
but a rivulet carves a space for itself.

She was lost somewhere,
wading up its leaden course
and her eyes were curved deep in inflection,
loose amber arcs in the smoke, testing
the spaces between the banks, from which
voices rose, voices I could not hear.

Stripped of chassis, her soul
answered in inaudibly,
lipping the airy nothingness.

Receding behind her two hands
coming together, clasped
I see what gleams like fear
in her eyes and have heard the
the utter mystery of her authority
sounding hush, hush from her lips,
and I have said to my hands
trembling uncontrollably,
she knows whereof she speaks.

Coiled emotions multiply their ohms of resistance
and it seemed to me a limbo of sorts
through which no thought could wander,
no figures or apparitions revealing themselves in the dust,
no image of her family in the ever rarer and paler twilight,

Hush hush
her voice radiates swift eddies of syllables never reified,
but understood,
as she moved in the general direction of herself
out of nothing, going nowhere.

I knew little but the observed,
mere semblances of gesture,
the shadow of a brightness lost,
a paradise never found,

Prayers rise from a low murmur into
hacked jerks of empty sound.

The way was long, this path through the desert,
never reaching the spring, from which she flowed.
no end in sight to her voiceless wailing,
no end to the rushing through
to this exhalation breathed forth by her dark, brittle bark.
to the alluvial sediment deposited on her dusty cheeks.

She hugs me then,
and I walk with her along the river
parched, silent, in this liminal state
unable to drink from the flow.
until our arms are hanging beside us, like the dead trees,
whistling carcasses, possessed by the wind.
parts hung up to dry in the sun.

We walk the long way
turning over and over a heart made familiar
by the recurrence of other days,
tasting in the language of memory,
beauty as a dream of some other world...
shaken from the empty space.



20.

i find something small in
living as ghosts do, lingering in
passing momentums like this:
drifting on in dream's inertia,

i'm told
no divinities hide in the waters,
that there are be no beautiful ideals
behind the things we see. a river,
might be just that: a river:
washed silt, scheduled diversions:
low murmurs, choking up weeds:
furballs of some subsurface flow...

but how can i not smile?
marooned in my little world of flux
moving round the tapered end
of a thought, playing
in its waters...

so i tilt
the basin and see the world unzip
down the mountain's cheek (tssss....
letting the mountain cry
in my little little dream.

21.

I was told to gamble, to shed restraint
but I sit here alone at each night's oncoming
like a sprout of green, in the riverbank faint
severed at the stem each dusk and mourning.

You crowd the pages of my mind
tomes like tombs for lifeless shame
writing signs in every margin you find
including the gravestone bearing your name.

Like a thrush cooing from the world above
nesting lonesome each changing season,
I grieve for you here, my love
humming words ripped of reason.

For my heart lies alone, buried, crying,
keeping watch over this unpolished surface
full of darkspots, lightdrained, and dying
treated by the pain below the surface.

22.

The last breath of color closed its doors on our day. Squabbling clouds made sullen contours in the gloom. Rocks were made into shadows, people into silhouettes. Then, there seemed to be nothing there. From God, we were given light, from light the image, from image the word, and look what we made. Absolute shit.