The Bean

There's a crowd around it. Kids, teens, parents with selfie sticks, all blown up and reflected back at themselves. It's smooth and shiny, overgrown, a tuber of flotsam, though nobody knows if it drifted from the lake or from the innards of the city. People touch it, walk around it, touch it some more. There must be a couple hundred people in its vicinity, which is understandable given the weather: about fifty degrees Fahrenheit, a few clouds, a fair breeze. Most of us spend about ten minutes in its company before moving on to food or other attractions. If you're like me and have never been this close to a large body of water that isn't the ocean, you keep expecting to smell sea salt, but that's not here right now. Just this huge, silver body, and a lot of people.

There are skyscrapers too. You can see them to the left and right of it, and above it, linear and unwavering and unsmiling. Yet their reflections are goofy, stretched-out curves, losing balance deliberately like children in a mirror maze. In this other dimension they forfeit all their somberness. Here even the sun can't help but recline, wilting in its own warmth.

Some come here out of obligation, others for the Instagram ritual, and a few for the Facebook Events: "Release the Bean into Lake Michigan and shout "You're free!" "Deep Fry the Bean and Eat it." (The reason why the bean is so clean is because of the "Windex the Bean" event.) Nobody tries to get a picture by themselves; it's inevitable to be encapsulated with others in the photographs, since the reflections come from all angles. In this way, we have a collective knowledge of every atom of the bean's surface. We've documented its entirety, physically through photograph, metaphorically through meme.

The bean stands on two legs. You can enter from one end and come out the other. Underneath, it's cool and dark. You have about twelve reflections here, each looking at another with removed curiosity. The surface of the bean feels cold, but it's hardly neglected: there are white fingerprints everywhere. There must be at least fifteen other people crammed underneath here. Even then, it hardly feels stuffy. The bean stands on an expanse of square tiles, steel on cement, grey on grey.

Surrounding the bean are less-interesting things. There are street performers playing percussion, an art museum, all other components of Millennium Park… and of course the city itself. Willis and Portillo's and the CTA. Yawn! These all orbit the bean. Everything revolves around it and their only function is to adorn the bean and give it a setting, to give it things to reflect across the universe. It tosses these things about in a game of lacrosse.

Does the bean have its own shape, or is it a parasite to its props? What I mean is, does it need the polygonal towers around it to craft its own profile, its bellies and crests, its grammars of smoothness? Or is it simply the consequence of some God-imagined hyperbolic formula? How does it assert itself? My favorite bean-themed Facebook Event is "Watch a Koon's Dog and The Bean Hump and Make Shiny Babies," because it points to the mystery of both the bean's origin and its perpetuation. What were the other options—binary fission? An extraterrestrial seed? Where will we find a balloon large enough to craft a fitting mate? In death, will it remember itself through its photographs or its memes? Or will its memory exist at our fingertips? What are we like inside? Who chooses our names?

Does the universe shift stance? I think so. My friend and I smile for our photo in front of Cloud Gate and then head toward Navy Pier. We later decide it is not worth our time, and instead make our ways West along Riverwalk. I already have two Instagram captions planned out. The one for this picture will be "bean bean bean bean bean," a tribute to the bean's hegemony. But for the next visit it will be "bean there: done that." We'll pose unhurriedly about a hundred feet away from the bean (don't worry, it will still be visible in the photo) and fake uncaring shrugs. We will do this because, although everything orbits the bean right now, this arrangement is temporary. The bean is a stranded whale and, like any, it will soon explode. From internal volatility, or from our own inventions… who cares? Drenched in whale guts, we will laugh and cheer and finally disperse. I wonder: where will we place our universe's center of gravity in the next millennium? Where will we store our new obsessions?

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Badness
Vice
Improbity
Flattery
Exaggeration
Expansion
Superiority
Goodness

Gary Oak

Or crouched in the brush. Cramped, grazing
sleeping in tall grass, rare
stars above us, breed a town’s edge
or half your charm on me together
cruising, throwing up cut
from error, we’d settle home.
If you would a bridge
the lone path towers ahead
in scenes not ours in hiding, chaste
after you I repeating, after you
over again.

For you’d rather name plaques
while I learn your defense.
Always in front of us:
Dashing repellant fleeing.

ghazal poetry examples english you tube

learn net—worth reading—string work rosin space
your web—linked in—cross hair confession space

‘tween tabs—two lips—stalk cut root original apple
smile state—surveil—your picture regression space

profile—screener, gaze—your class project resumé
covet neutral—my sick—raw sin profession space

talk with other men—colonies—in churches observe
those women—in suits—is it your consultation space

cascading style—bedsheet—gauze geographies your
icon—my bold finger—worship twitch addiction space

“Who lies beneath your spell tonight?”—word—hub
history limits—an other visual—cloud option space

video category—your mutual body—friends hyper
reference fiction chat—fan page—eyes elation space

new school partner—hand—nude update win jobs
birth—your instant grammar—is this revision space

who tells you—good buy—now spends your home
shop—mark face book—photo paste obsession space

search your copy—for get loss—need knowing nil
JPG grain—is it true somewhere—file extension space

offload it—feel my self own first—hello world am
mnstrviola his—or all we—I left consolation space

August 8, 2017

in twilight I am in the last car to 54th street
my arm passing toward the moon above having its dinner
in windows I see myself again without having thoughts of looking out or in
road turns to the green moon the red moon seats itself by the Real Moon who at the head of the table proposes a toast
(myself still passing these orbs revolving among their homes or reflected by them)
"Ahem!" it looks at each moon to get their attentions "Ahem!" they put down their utensils "Ahem!!! I would like to thank each of you for joining me today to acknowledge what a wonderful day it has been, August 8, Wednesday."
when the other moons realize that was all Real Moon had to say they clapped and cheered. they tapped their glasses and ate. Real Moon smiled and was glad to have a seat at the table.
the car passes by what I can make out—despite the rain—to be Lion Plaza meaning I am three minutes away from the apartment. I see myself walking up the steps to the doorway to wipe my shoes on the mat. red moon will greet me at the door as I enter the room Real Moon claps me on the back and I smile to green moon.
now a block away... the night fades softly from the warmth of my cheeks
it's a radiant parting, a crowd applauding a wonderful yet frightening thought.

January 8, 2020

over a marble atoll, or rather an intimation of its contour, myself standing
thanking home appliance displays: depending on their bantam signals while I make hot water, "Good Morning Love!"
pre-dawn tasks like rituals, confidence in a stove clock and what's left between blinds. i tie knots for myself, pour milk left out last night somewhere
then, beside a gas heater, standing again, a number of comfort. another wakes up
mirror's still unsure what the day can hold
kettle on counter, heat following edge, dissipating quantities and lots of it. luminence. the LED stars finding sanity again, and thus forgetting other properties
(myself remembering myself through photos on the fridge, or rather an extrapolation from them)
eager to labor but dreading the day or rather all things i will miss of these middle folds which moments ago were unbaked, or leftovers
electric kettle reverses its hue, "All Done Love!"
dawn leaves and I peel off its magnets.

Bedside Photos at Grandma's Apartment

Left: I trace the roller rink like a neurotic parent circling the cul-de-sac of their child's first sleepover. **Middle**: My sister leans against the wall of the women's bathroom to send a text, the rink's glow on her dim form like a department store's pleading holiday display. **Right**: The youngest sibling. She moves steadily, ears at the music like a spy at a lock, the blue and red strobe lights a blunder away.

Not pictured: She glides backward weaving incalculable tangents, demanding the gaze of her phone camera which instead documents us, her children. Flimsy men stall around her. She is the black diamond skier throwing herself into the air to film the novice slope from a better angle. The foreign anthropologist who wields our own tools. We relieve ourselves and choose pretzels from the concessions stand.

Exquisite Corpse

I. Your peripheral vision has gone bad, says the optometrist. The obvious metaphor is that I've lost some creative faculty. The less obvious metaphors elude me because, as I said, I have tunnel vision. This worries me as I continue home. Will I sense the passage narrow, the water at my neck? If I start to slip then

II. yeah, they'll eat it all up. That's right! It's Family Game Night. I've been good to you, and you me. We have a large capacity for courage. It's very commendable (and highly marketable!). Do not misuse our foundation's mission; go forth into the day and be entertained. We have a tendency to forget our own personal statement. So print it out! Let the armature of psychology toil at your faulty guts, or upcycle it all with synchronized prayer. And spreadsheets! Make use of space and its charged responses. Let's retire to our regular ways, our

III. vicious instincts. At least the butcher: warm-blooded. Kind. Carried me from the freezer. Cut plastic. Under a running faucet. Allowed a last expiration. Watched. Then, sliced. Glad to be made useful. Fascinating, our abilities. Like fledging creatures. Should have see me in the dark. Perched on stalactites; screaming. Tissue slices: fiber, gelatin, gonad. In sickness and health. Piecemeal. Am the sum of my parts. On stainless steel, lighting fixtures above. I remember now. Those

IV. glaucous pools, their mineral histories, the fish I knew with their mouths at my feet promising a waterfall. I see it there, the gorgeous pit. And I hear them in real time, the dining room armchairs, speaking the TV adverts, peeling my film off.

provide

bread . . . . . .
spinach .
croissant .
tomato .
egg .
chip .
banana .
blueberry .
onion .
apple .
tea .
beef .
chicken .
broccoli .
strawberry .
pepper .
butter .
lemon .
popcorn .
chocolate .
carrot .
pasta .
milk .
jam .
potato .
pea . . . . . .

you hold a box and I make a joke
you place a whole box in its place
and talk to me about a place I like

I let you give me a box while I talk
and look at a shelf I like and you
place me like you get to give me

you place a box and let me talk
you get me there whole the Card
you give to hold me in a place†

$XX.XX

†of course it is not mere formality
or necessity or ease. I want to put
your hand in mine at the traffic
light. we talk about similar things.
you move to the kitchen. years
ago, my brother would make us
dinner from a stick and a willing
gumball machine.

first date

orange sodas. we sit on my bed, listening
and summer turns onto itself

how we knew the scenic route before
the nape of our own neck

paradise before the sun itself, its UV attention

soon, you will leap the lofts and
picket gates, a rosebush surrender

and I, mean-streaked and butterflied
sipping, will leave upward

only now we can only hold ourselves
and it's how you found parking,

how a heart's recognition
is made plain to itself.

Dozen | for Tarsila do Amaral's "Abaporu"

How many ways to count a sun's fruit?
I'm stunned and soothed. I'm thinking about you.
I'm vegetation smoothed. I'm snoozed and I'm loose.
Love me, or love me a lot: say it soon!
I'm all out of myself. I'm hungry but I'll wait.
I glow and grow. It's only half-past noon.
I'm a kilo of feathers. What's there to say?
I'm a flower pressed between the moments in a day.

Prologue

I think you knew it just the same. But for you real labor proved too nutritive. Oh well.
Unbothered, I press the trigger and the ground, now untenable, erupts.
So long! I've beheld first kisses and the last ones too. Now is the time for false idols.
My wanton blast leaves me unscathed, innocent. I grant contrition only to
the atria left empty, the earnest pining, the circumlocution of satiety.
Departing from orbit after all those revolutions.
Sensory experience, its pacts and posterity: diminishing.
Third and fourth eternities whiz by. Ultimatums and manifestos. The romance monuments:
I lied on all their plaques!
The phenomenological world recedes, and I consider its landmarks
and signposts. It always kept its promises. A mistake, to
forget about my panic button. Now I'm propelled by memories of lock-and-key models, my speed
redoubling with every pastiche: milk chocolate, dirty dancing, old age. Sunday mornings.
Doves and cuffs stumble around, equally inept. I somersault (I've gotten good at this)
between Alice-from-wonderland and her furniture. Gravity grasps at us.
Its effort is wasted on me: I've already given myself over.
The debris of the future for the rhizomes of the past.
Netherworld after netherworld. Now what?
I start the video. The song begins.
I watch as you freeze in the light. If only I could share my momentum.