

PARCEL ONE



PARCEL ONE

A great Parcel of Earth is every Year carried into the Sea.

PARCEL is a non-profit online journal that publishes innovative poetry, prose, artwork, essays, and reviews. Long poems, collaborations and works from a series are especially welcome.

Submissions & Queries

To be considered send up to 10 pages of prose or 5-7 poems to: Parcel c/o Andrea Rexilius 2174 S. Grant St. Denver, Co 80210 or submit by email at editor@parceljournal.org. Please include SUBMISSION in the subject line. Submissions are read year-round. New parcels will appear every 4 months.

PARCEL features visual artists, filmmakers, sound artists or any variety of these, in each new issue. If you are interested in becoming a featured artist, please send a query with a brief description of your work to editor@parceljournal.org.

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FEATURED ARTIST / ELIZABETH DORBAD



This work speaks a language that most closely resembles the language of dreams. Constructed of found and fabricated materials, the works juxtapose image and text, the decorative with the symbolic, the rational with the ethereal to render depictions of the mind's theater. The forms collectively create a traveling circus with the shows moving, changing just as realities or perspectives change. Each piece is a document of thoughts regarding nature, culture, art, politics, hierarchy, the human condition, the emotions, etcetera. As a work evolves, it moves in a space between language and vision creating a collage in a nonlinear fashion. The result is a sort of poetry that invites the mind to distill narrative associations. The reading may leave an impression rather than a firm story, or create a jigsaw for the mind to fit together, taking down and reassembling symbols, and ideally, deriving pleasure from that which is not specifically prescribed.

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POEM

Retrograde mind: Beehive: Yesterday's drone
repeats the vibrating stem into flower-dull
field, buzzing near blindness, the live-feed
grown grainy, grown gray, as the transmission fades
on the screen: A day, the pollen-weight
of pistil, on leg, now weightless shadow
in the mind, the mind's sterile heat, a bubble
lodged in the matter, electric hollow
where lays my claim: This amber resonance,
this field a frequency lost in abstract
reason, in truth, in hope cast to further degree,
a clover absence, a lover missing the sea,
the torn-in-half field cut by economy,
hemispheres, hives, a road on the synapse.

ADDED HERE FROM LAST PAGES OF NOTEBOOK

We learn to understand others before we understand the self

Anaximenes saw the soul as embodying self-propelled motion
For Pythagoras form is identical with soul, matter with body
He ennobled the soul with divine origins

Plato (Meno)—The Soul has lived before
(Phaedrus)—has no beginning can never have an end

When the soul entered the body it filled the vase like water

The word soul is feminine in Greek, Latin, Arabic, German and all the romance languages

2nd Century A.D. a beautiful female Orante on the crypt ceiling at Lucina

his house is destroyed by fire and he becomes occupied in rebuilding it

“Here we have no abiding City” —Hildebert of Lavardin

We have a single, emaciated man lying on an embroidered cloth in an open landscape

A corollary of guilt is punishment

According to More the soul has an Airy Body

Still the reader asks “But what type of body?”

Returning to the meadow the Soul a shaft of light

It is the iteration between body and brain that *is* consciousness —S. Greenfield

In the portrait of the imagined viewer no wind moves the cloak

Mysteries and corn stand side by side

DARK MATTER

For (matter) he has made my soul
Just as a mirror (is) held up to a room
For how (else) (to) else know thyself/himself
And in so doing a dark otherness

local in his throne the nameless He (World)
suspended here indefinite, indefinitely
spans an immense universe—the night sky
and the night we do not see
the book a prostrate ANGEL and extended DEITY
the lashes of closed eyes engraven
midway in eternity
our waking dreams are fatal—born
on a collapsing wave perpetually

W.W.

Tumultuous versions
Quite put out
Really popular version
Of this quit spirit
You'd not even recognize
The face of God or Love
If she peeked through the hedge
Offering herself
Anima climax
Mismanaged outfit
No legs in these trousers
Get home stay there

Routine renders us amnesiac
A change of dressing
Nights in the chamber
Sir Francis Drake drunk in a coracle.

Flowers of the field
Varies considerably
Capsella (shepherd's purse)
The only species a common weed
To be found in almost every part of the world
Varying considerably in luxuriance
In stony ground it grows only a few inches high
But in rich soil as much as two feet.

Marsh marigold
Resembling a giant buttercup
Abundant by the sides of streams
King cup or common garden

The Poppy tribe
Soon falling off
Under the name of Opium
Laudanum and Morphia
But its native country is unknown

FROM “THE HISTORY OF THE HUMAN RACE”

We are told they were nourished by bees
in infancy—community held—coincidental.
The passing of cars and a people
Incidentally after little sleep
And alcohol—the clarity of recent loss
Dull residue of unresolved anxieties
Friends—which can mean pleasant strangers



Between That Earth and That Sky

THE IMAGINARY REAL

I apprehended nothing till on a day roving the field, I chanc'd not to defer hunger and thirst at once.
Strange alteration in me, to degree of reason in my inward powers and speech all with capacious mind and want too long to a shape retain'd.

Now, if thou accept my conduct, I can bring thee thither soon into bankruptcy of familiar
as when you held yourself as gift, as affectionate ear, when what became written appeared.

Nearer, comelier, scantily afforded latitude leant full over when want disbursed as greater sum fell to a loaded swelling,
to tide swung in longing, into feral kneel. A spell of time to entice garland through forest
so fonder regard might linger among limbed eye, mouth open for departure

to hover and blaze in delusive light amaz'd and misled from reason and for awhile swallowed into delirium
and broken open while still far above ground so, finally, to have a place to wreak my furious drive into this station of fire.

FIRE

fire of all things is the judge and ravisher

—*Heraclitus*

Fox on secret rapine bent, breaking my line of sight,
are you a cunning man or an attractive woman
flashing your tail through the land?

Hush, I sing your ear alive in a dream with blood from your hen
to bring vision dim and repetitive—
a place for the world to walk in and out while you lie here alone
while fastened to your hair the summer evening forms a play within a play, a ghost within a ghost,
the very soul of nature spinning, doubling into a truer home—a dream full of love and possibility.

HUMAN BODY

Our voluntary muscles are soon tired and require rest, or they get weak, but those which are involuntary are in perpetual motion and are never fatigued but keep acting without rest from the hour of our birth to that of our death.

Bones consist chiefly of cartilage and require treatment for maintaining resolve in form and to hold as frame from which an oil film may, at times, leak the possibility of tracing the muscle in its attachment to insertion and, after examining this point carefully, pull the muscle away. Movement results due to remaining unmoored to the ends of the muscle and motion in tides half drowned in my own water and the world's.

When we run fast, our bodies acquire so much velocity, that we cannot stop at once, as we can in walking, but are obliged to check ourselves by degrees, if we choose to check ourselves at all; if we once gaining momentum, can bear to slow again.

Standing is a voluntary action.

And though we might manage to leap; we thereby cause harm to ourselves and others and everything in our way. This part is as unseen and involuntary as breath, as the sound of a star racing you to the sea.

The bones are held together and their ends are lined with sinew, snot, silk, and honey to ooze and glue a stiffening procedure of erection with purpose and integrity—corn stalks, calcified stems, of teeth to snap the rabbit's back, something to burn on the alter of speed.

SO SOUGHT, SO OUTSIDE

What is morning inside can be found outside

I seek you in a place made permeable,
negotiate passage to angels and blow a barbaric trumpet in the library of the mind—
find tongue and lift in cry to hear such a tale. Your lips, my ear.

Lips— 2 fleshy folds which surround the orifice of the mouth, formed externally of integument and internally of mucous membrane, between which are found muscle, vessels, some nerves, tissue, fat, and numerous small labial glands.

Ear: Outer Ear—a trumpet of reversal to bring the sweet world in and again—more deeply—in.
Wanted not long, though to this shape retain'd.

Internal Ear or Labyrinth--The internal ear is the essential part of the organ of hearing, receiving the ultimate distribution of the auditory nerve. It is called the labyrinth from the complexity of its shape. The vestibule is the common central cavity of communication between the parts of the internal ear.

Small circular depression. Enclosed within. Closed.

And would this fence serve to pierce a deer
And would my sight pierce your frame
And would your fall pierce my back
And would my god outshout your god
And would that veil draw in a crowd
And would my laugh scare the crows
And would your tongue dope my fiend
And would we sway unsure and lost
And would such fire rain down rain down

During his experiments with hypnotism, it seemed to Elliotson that mucous membrane was more sensitive to the magnetic influence than normal skin. Thus, experiments were run timing the onset and duration of the trance when the operator's finger was placed near the lips, near the open lips, near the everted underlip, when the lip was touched, when it was touched hard, when both lips were touched, and when both were touched hard....In all, Elizabeth seems to have been put into a trance at least sixty times during this session.

In the midst of wind and gorgeousness, men came sailing over seas in cockleshell frigates during the age of science when every change was part of the forest epic. In those days the only investigation that mattered, the only hope offered, was the forest everlasting.

HEART

Is the constant action of the heart necessary to our existence? In childhood the heart beats upwards of a hundred times in a minute; in youth, about eighty, and in adulthood, from 60-70.

In fevers and some other diseases, it beats more quickly.

What is the heart, and where is it placed? The heart is a wonderful piece of machinery, and the heart is a bag on the left side of the chest.

What can this bag hold? When must it be emptied to rain fire on anyone near?

The heart may be called double sometimes more;
when feverish and diseased it beats faster, veins pulsing ever more wildly.

Contracted into the world with one vein wound around the ankle to tether, to trip, to splash out into a floodplain dry for the last 100 years, in this way the blood changes as it courses through and through “where are you?” red and soaking, “where are you?”

Electric display cracked through the night to where I saw you at run there—something in your mouth.

And this is where I branched into various ways, one of which could refuse love, and the rest I let slip away.

And this is where I branched into various ways,
one of which could risk everything, and the rest I let slip away.

And this is where I branched into various ways,
one of which was rife with humiliation, and the rest I let slip away.

STORM

*How, from a fire
that never sinks
or sets,
would you escape?
—Heraclitus*

Surrounded by the darkest hue, you feign to be dead —afloat in ions seared to the world,
welded to the back of your eyelids. This is when I come to you.

The electric flame, which we call lightning, when it strikes a tree or a house,
either damages, destroys, or sets it on fire.
If it strikes men or beasts, it stuns, maims, or kills them.
In her mercy, however, nature generally protects creatures from harm,
and the benefits that attend thunderstorms compensates any mischief they do.
And so thunderstorms cool the atmosphere and purify it from noxious vapors.
And the rain, which usually accompanies thunder and lightning,
promotes the fertility of the soil and the growth of plants.

With all that light bouncing around
you would still like to be able to see,
to not be blinded,
to not start a fire in yourself or the world.
Instead, you find a dark place to see in a horror of great darkness.
In a stormheated and electrical atmosphere,
you breathe in the hope of breathing out.

My breath descended in the shape of a star. It glittered; it pricked; it, fading, called everything else a lie.

The storm came rattling in full fury. There was a violent wind and rain.
Great drops began to splash around her.
Shrieking wind ran into the trees around her.
She stayed, shouting around her,
weeping until the rain was nothing around her,
and it burned until everything was black, and was the ground, and was the same around her.

BRAIN

The substance of the brain is soft and white and is arranged in the most curious manner, that is being divided into 2 portions—one of which occupies the front and upper part of the head, and is called the *cerebrum*, or proper brain; and the other the lower and back part, and is called the little brain, the animal brain, the thing that must be kept open to lick at the world.

The brain is also the seat of the mind, or of our intellectual faculties, and if it be oppressed or diseased, we lose our consciousness, or sense of being. Were it not for this organ, we should not be sensible of any of the beauties of nature, and the whole world would be a blank. We should know nothing of the light of day, the warmth of the sun, the beauty of the night, nor would any of the sweet sounds which now delight us ever meet the ear.

The world is blank. The world is teeming.
Which is life? Which sustainable?

Though many parts of our bodies are sensible, the knowledge they convey is shaded.
Clarity, it then follows is a product of the imagination.
Does this make it more or less valuable? More or less true?

If my love was based on flickering images in uncertain light,
was it more or less valuable? More or less true?

When the bond of union between the various portions of the brain branch dissolve, the great longitudinal fissure divides the cerebrum into two hemispheres. Other fissures, which are constant, divide each hemisphere into lobes and smaller fissures, which are more variable in their position and constancy, divide each lobe into convolutions. Certain portions of convolutions preside over definite actions or functions or convulsions or fainting from the closure wreaked by arrogance and fealty to law that results in the failure in the bond of union and the wreak on the pathway where the senses make their home.

BREATH

Breathing consists of two actions: *inspiration*, or drawing the air in and *expiration*, or forcing the air out. When purified by exposure the blood turns a bright red, and when taken back to the heart is thrown into the body for support. The blood being thus charged creates an observable change in expiration, where breath now evaporates.

and the sea said the world walks out,
and the sea said the world walks in.

When my heart slowed it could no longer do its throwing work,
and so blood slowed; breath slowed, and I no longer rose up to meet the world,
but lay down in such a way to induce a world of camouflage, of foxes
with their crepuscular breath and psalter and broken sight in the world,
and the world, it pulled and fell—and the brook, the brook, she came.

FROM “ELIZABETH BARRETT’S MAGINALIA IN HER GREEK SEPTUAGINT AND HEBREW BIBLE”

Note: EB’s marginal notes are arranged to best replicate their original position on the page. Not knowing the Greek and Hebrew words she often writes out prior to defining and/or commenting on it, I indicate the missing original word or phrase with an underscore preceding (or within) her note. All other underscores are Barrett’s own. I’m interested in how, lifted out of the margins, her notes and comments form an undertext to her poetics—no, I’m interested in the poem she was writing in the margins of her reading. At the end of the second volume of her Hebrew Bible, on the inside flyleaf, Barrett wrote, “I finished reading the last line of this Bible, at Sidmouth, September 25th, 1833.”

bitterness of mind.

to look on

to hear

to join

to intertwine

___ a coin on which the fig. of a lamb or sheep was imprinted. Compare.

to forget

Parkhurst is of the opinion that the Hebrew wd does not signify interpreter but interceptor mediator, the offices appointed as advocate.

Parkhurst objects to the idea of divination and translates it thus—___ surely teach accurately

and one shall grope in darkness

___ Those whose eyes are open. Closer to the sense than the English version, "the wise."

no material tabernacle can be intended or implied by this word.

"a land of cutting off"

___ applied to silence of voice as well as to quietness of situation. Compare Dante's "dove 'l sol tace—: & Milton's "The sun to me is Dark, and silent."

The word is applied to silence of voice, as well as to quietness of situation. Dante says Dove 'l sol tace—and Samson Agonistes, or rather Milton, under his name, The sun to me is Dark, And silent.

rather in ___, the name of a place than in the jawbone.

like nothing: good for nothing.

with whips, with goads attached
to them like the stings of a serpent.

a rock. a vibration of light.

who built oceans of sepulchral mansions for themselves

a word came to me secretly & mine ear received a whisper of it.

There is a resemblance tho' no
coentity between this ___ to the ___.

___ the incarnate

Can the fire be the separating fire of Death.

We are said to be baptised in it; and in other places
we are said to be baptised into the Dead.

___ fully opened.

Dr. Clarke considers this expression to mean fulness
of grace, after I think Dr. Pierce who quotes from
Euripides

The church. The Lamb's wife.

not exactly acc.
to the Septuagint but very nearly.

inspired?

The division not equal: but as each had need.

written in the yr. 58— 4 or 5
yrs after the Edict of the Emperor
Claudius by which all the Jews were
banished from Rome

justitia Hebraismo justificatis

justificatio

circumcision arising out of this faith
& uncircumcision remaining this faith

justificatio

The Jews should glorify God for his truth. The Gentiles for his mercy— The fellowship of the Geniles & Jews justified.

“One thing we may remark, that there is no mention of Peter, who, according to the Roman & papistical catalogue of bishops, must have been at Rome at this time!” —Dr. A. Clarke

___ comparing scripture with scripture

I think he is not right. Is it not, rather, that the ___ means the spiritual things? which are ___, the internal impulses of the Spirit?

in the mind in the word in the action

“since ye ought to come of the world.”

That is a clear precept. I do not enforce it now.

if in anything ye be variously minded.

walk by the same rate.

justice a church a house a church

a pillar in yleih in spirit

The latter is grouped especially to the believer, the brother, & the sister.

The Holy Spirit does not deal in synonymes.

BIRDSONG WAKES

Having been breathed out the missive

body spills ashore

like votives burning, irretrievable hands

one watches them as if

there were more than two persons in the world or two

persons in the world for watching

summoned to evidence to share the common to speak

this chronicle of those that endure

she is not forsaken here where
there is water then sand where in
sand there is a standing tree half
live half burnt she is a bird
on a branch half writhed half burnt

she thinks this the just consequence
of a broken body and through
the twined limbs of the bone-tree

a dazzling dazzling light

the day she grew wings and rose up
with collection and new noise if one asked
if she were a sacrifice of knowledge he might say
listen this is a kind of telling he might say look forward

and the moment that
whole bodies
could be joined

when he leaves though he never leaves
she conjures him his substance in the tar
of minutes swallows him into her seeing
makes low sounds in his ear she knows
she is a bird but not why and in this shallow
absence recalls only their feeding only
once at the water's mouth only ever since
so often she wings away

a thing fit to the hand
she is fit to the world like a frayed rope and when
he calls and calls to her at night's end mouth welling
the sea she would reply but for the mass
of yellow flowers tangled and stuffed in responding

summoned to share the common to speak
this chronicle of those that endure

he observes how the eye cast down
is suddenly under and the tongue cast
out learns its other ways at night
he thinks of her managing knots
and notices she does not show
the underside of her wings for him
anyone and him

before memory contents speak glades
of light such things the dead change

like a broken apart ship spilt back
into sea neck hung
sideways sea gashed by splayed
wings air split in her throat as she spilt
from his hands

he recalls

lifting skies ruins seizing horizon he calls her
bursting black tongue when she recalls

the body's lamp lit by the mouth's fire the mouth

lit by the body's lamp

she takes her smaller body

to sea he hears from trees tides shore

all the watchers of this place summoning air

out of silence the bent wings of the throat

having worn this world having shed

the slow howling bells of survival

FROM “LATE RADIANT”

Like stars against a tacked-on planet

one gets to one's knees

the screen is so beautiful and approaching

the effable eye cuts across it an albatross

bending the neck of what world

There is something fragile about the field

one is asked not to pronounce

as if it might grow wings itself and unsteadily sail to us

whose nature bows, shudders, claims

Our hands are like nests
foregone

immolating tongues

What things one could say of burning fields – what things one does

the birds cover elsewhere

A slight moon
set fast in a mournful place

chimneys like vast smoking arms, arms that are stems

sap rising to twist-away light

how does one give of hands accumulated, withering
gone, now gone, gone



Conversations with the Soothsayer Birds

PLEASE REVIEW.

please review
your luggage

what carry
what carry you

keep tiding
i am huge

nails
the croissant
to the cross

nails nothing

go ahead neighbor
pucker

cloudlings
catcher
the bottom of the pit
of the air

i hadn't pitched
anything
yet

until the 3 songs
bear
easy easy

always
to the edges
8 hops

you are enormous
all over me

pineapple
some stickers
i had sleeves

or not
on a cloud
at the museum
of listen

take me
it said
feed me blisters &
seedlings

ceilings over
the air
anatural living
harder than sky plaster

plenty of ceiling
for all
of you

a missed midwest
slightly easter
than thou

math is true
you know honest ice

your face parks
love your eyecones
how myopia

the white on white package
serious boots
a moustachio

six times nine
you are free to move

swatches blue
through white seen
seems above

like the arctic nothing
skirt
over a bodice
often you
the body
stamped land
glower

radio tower white
simple mind blue
deck of cards black
house green

what is that plastic spot
a single nipple on earth
from here

the phone in me says
go
with tambour hair

here is a case
for you

may you simple
viral
perfection
under microscope cope

could you get to me

red gross hills
children rack

everything
is from a can
one tin

‘SO PANTETH MY SOUL.’

nestling the covert attitudes of amazement
marvel the great champion

the woman discovered nebulae
a non-naked planet
who is the focus
of little glances

mingled with a vaster
punctiform
i am given to be in the orbit

we count them as refuse
placed in the shadows
we are happy to pick up a straw

for the love of
of utter poverty
& cling to mammon

war is boring
gee, i punched u

talk about fangs of the mind
these are my paws
that i mentioned

children strangely bleating
it was strong
he was stronger
i'm a radio

can a chest still follow you even
while you're swimming?
woods that end in questions
= deserts
do we have activity

i have harbors
of unfortunate
election

YOU AGAIN.

you again

into positions
he maps
opposers

as an accident
an accident

each twist
empirical
from the general

corporal
gathering
cell

biggest toy
space-whatever
struggles
a character

also became strangely
and terribly
luminous

state the rain
endows things
draws it towards
a luminous

the organic
golden
not as

a largest
unity way
a cell

a parallel
cell

don't lean
(appear.)

for wood
invents
the genre

your physical
bone
tries

a solitary
man
a couple

old serbian
old swede
in reverse

mod etcetera
literally familiar
old passive
perhaps
aweather

awnless

hungarian
the consequences
start

and he was fauve

special use
of woman's name

the hospital in
in the public

a place
for the keeping
of a watch
a specialist
a mob
in the canon

they had not been
in this relation
foreign

SIERRA SET.

sierra set
the slow way
we can still die
on a mountain
those people
the ones that
trees forgive
bury it here
in talking mountain.

like diamonds
on a water
in a canyon
corrugated sun sheet
you lie.

we cannot pass
the mountain can
beat sages
their ubiquity
muscle under thrill
he punches
until bloody
that bag.

the passage
the western phone
a sunfelt
wants you
walking.

hit it
we're not over it
yet
two boys
in black shirts
hold hands in the sage
brush
call me when it's over.

been getting
off on platforms
in the sand
junked
heaps of iron helps
three blondes hug
but don't get on
no moving.

the mine was severe
with mists
yellow does it
goes the moon
i never
saw it.

now this
this scape
don't lean
nightness in the mouth
of a cedar
the month the slingtree
don't slash
only sunlight
counts.

rash is
waiting to mount
rock river
behind your caboose
on a plume
that feels
like a string.

pardon the pardoner
the sierric oh no
won't ante up
made *f*'s in the air
made a river
the sordid ouest
lake-smart
tunnel owes
that body water.

notness doesn't mar
rapine tied limb
that i timbered sola
no feat brings me here
no light horn
though the mountain announces.

what kind of blindness?
the work is equal to the work
i am equal to it
and not a daniel.

tell us a horrible horrible horrible story:
after i spoke with you on the
phone everything got better.

fool plum!
i don't want to miss
the story.

very clearly
the sierras are alps
its own despite.

not industrial boy on a cycle
beehive keeps count on the bathetic ground
not technical by numbers
i could train my eye on
all the dead things
all the time.

UNEXPECTED PARTICLE.

Unexpected particle
blessed one-sided Morning

A here
let me
in front of it stand
Beselved

A sylvan nearing
the throaty Clime

That water strip
in scrubby green
no horn calls it
lacy Music

The lousy south
window in a tree
go in
parade the View

Racy tonal dye
makes a foxy end
sunset is private Cup

Pupil of the fuzz
that fruit they call two fruits
escapable
for Dinner

They had dinner
a number of confusions
Enssue

I had been out-lonesomed
so far
a migrant
baker
in the room
his last name
we Recorded

The migrant baker
on the porch
where he double-lives
in ecstasy of fur
red or white
or Blonde

No serious hill rises
no serial anatomies
bring your color over
fetch Us

An awful high
to Bear

Told to wolf
tell it
with glad eyes
orphan annie Eyes

What *kind* of Pointing?
What *kind* of Horns?

THE CORNICES OF A.

the cornices of a
cow
blond
no more darkneses

this side of the train
funicular husband
has disbanded

discards the sun
for spittle

that the grey sheets mornings
help your horizonas
is irrelevant
to the alewife
in the greener



Starlight Fantasia

THE “BLUE BOY”

void the gallery appears
and its parquet
trigonometry of perspectival art
at the new century

what have you dispensed
withal what not

Admiral you have no sextant
mate no Morse Code

untenanted is not the sky
ridiculous

this I take it must be England

rare tenacious shrubbery
phantoms of libraries
like the one at Philadelphia

old men walked there
housed in doorsills
by reflection
his way as much
as to go along the narrow street
happenstance revealed to him
presently
invaluable dignity
sourer curded churned
into gladness

this is nothing more than exile
away from summering boards

Michael the Archangel
sweet-tempered
better is
to know him

come his equal-tempered sword
gilt-lain with pithy sayings
in a tongue of faëry-fire

as it grammaticality hath
and declensions by the tonne
some do say

I am no good Publican
masters mine bethought
well

no parson neither
wake up Pompeii faun
in Villa Getty fountains
sleep again

toast hills and sea
in punch

you've been there
all winedark is the sea
a phenomenon which I have often noticed

Odysseus sailed over
the world's edge quite
onto the Pacific

the function of art
Secrets of Magic Craftsmanship
to have a formal venue
for mind and body

says the travelogue writer
the diary keeper

O scapular of might
'gainst the roadways
and cold necessities

barked like a dog for his supper
and no bone
well the disculpations

shall begin

Father
guiding mariners
crest and fall among
lookout from thy
crow's-nest gather
perfect measure
the sailor is not there
swept off by crashers
to sea
and gone

where is the ship no tell me again
by wire and wireless
I read you not

a tale to tell again
the doctor's art
in the Crimea
would you like to know
would you not

the most delicate operation frees him
to go
you must needs find
the stitching of the whole
hangs together

widows and gibbets
a tableau if you like
picture
and golden myth

what a potherb
you can thrive on that with myrrh
and frankincense and money

stood the mother
stark and staring
with a pain
past bearing
another boy he says

that's the boy

ladders knelt so soft in dirt
weary of us bound in tedium
decanting sixteen stars redwinged blackbirds on the thorn
whither they had sung it
so melodious

even comes later now
Daylight Savings are in
travel not in the dark
we arm ourselves against it

the moon a pleasant place must be
governing our gatherings not
nor we have not talked this way
at long heuristic themes
is Vaughan that way you ask

starry mechanics of art
all we have achieved
have described

all that good description
a task like all others
bears witness
well and good

keeper of the true rock in candidness
I've all the cards in view
my gypsy mistress wardheels
all our fortunes says this card is for a reason
next this city state our country and the world
she traces all sidereality and the planetoids
and spheres and what astronomers do not know
as when internal guidance systems true
upon the realm between Betelgeuse and the lair of Satan seeking north
and there is something to be divined ought to out of all this happy cosmos
gladder in the addition



Thoughts on death, the little death and just general walks in the wilderness

LEVITATION

It is night and I am lying—my body level, low along the floor until I take a hold of me; I slowly rise. Each scientist in the room reaches for his pen (breast pocket) at once. They make note. One considers my appearance “possessed.” One guesses I retain assistance. One sees my lashes spark. (They do not.) After recording a blank mouth, slack hands, straight back, all will conclude that what one witnesses is made: string, smoke, mirrors. It is not. The walls hum and quake; a grim, audible gasp escapes the lips of a lady (ivory broach, brick locks) in the first row. Then, (most bewildering of all) my ascending body floats out an open window and into the evening. Branches are stripped. They crack beneath my skull. Later, I read that my body circled around the building and returned through the opposite pane. Tell me how that is possible; I could not see it but I was there.

TABLE TALKING

It is the influence of the loss of his father's leg
that biographers credit William James'
early and lasting interest
in finding a form
for spiritual inquisition beyond

religion beyond his field of study—science—beyond
psychology *The red hopping-hot hot-air*
balloon bobbed over the barren
field before it dropped
to the floor of a barn It was probably

not the leg directly although his father did believe
his own childhood tragedy represented
the constant undeniable
force of evil in
this world Around the same time on a farm in

upstate New York the Fox sisters—ages sixteen fourteen
and eleven—awoke to sounds of knocking
inside the walls of their bedroom
He was in science
class "learning the principles of flight" Table-

talking was often practiced in the late 1800s
to communicate with the dead One would sit
with a psychic or medium
and when contact with
the spirits was made the table "hopped crackled

hummed like a vibrating string" Occasionally spirits
would scratch Sometimes tap Sometimes knock When Wilkie
James—William's younger brother—lay

dying just within
the threshold of the family home William

sketched pictures of him on his side—ear to the floor Wilkie
had been wounded in the Civil War a war
in which neither of his brothers
would enlist *He ran*
over to smother the flames “Were you murdered?”

the Fox sisters asked their housed spirit Two knocks (Yes) Then “Can
your murderer be brought to justice?” (Silence)
 Constant undeniable force
 His pant-leg caught fire
Later when William joined the Society

for Psychical Research he remarked “the phenomena
are there lying broadcast over the surface
of history” But at the time
he sketched Their father’s
wooden leg would echo as he paced circles

around his sons telling stories of his youth deep into
the night Wilkie lay mute waiting he wondered
if he would die His ear quivered
and pulsed Their father
demonstrated stomping out a phantom fire.

HERBARIUM

Transcription: I Ivy I Bittersweet
Thistle besides me Beside
me note Daisy
Note I be me Backwoodsman I Woodsman
from Dogwood from Jasmine from
Calla Note here
Hop Clover Horsebalm Nightshade and Lilly
Note entire body mine
collection fixed

*

Modern Equivalent: I am led to
see to see I am not me
to press this leaf

*

Transcription: Bloodroot shoots through veins Note no
rot in a Bellflower marked
Throatwort Body
marked Fern The impression left upon a
leaf preserved leaves nothing Or
nothing my mind
collects Perhaps my eye plucks Cotton Grass
Hollyhock Yellow Lupine
False Foxglove Moss

*

Correction of Identification:
I is stem with no leaves I

is body with
no mind I blooms in sight of pressed stem still
yet blooming When first did I
inhabit the
body that pressed this body I mean when
first did I inhibit it
Mis-named have I

*

Modern Equivalent: Plucked the Common
Dandelion I took it
to the leaf I
pressed a question What found you yourself in
name Where fit my stem What have
I done to note

VISIONS, CRISIS APPARITIONS, AND OTHER EXCEPTIONAL EXPERIENCES

Name Age Address Sex How often can you recall
your dreams Would you say they are logical Lucid Alarming
Dense Do you wake up distressed
or disoriented Do you wake up then
again wake up

once more Have you experienced any trance-like
occasions How often What were they Describe How often What
were they Describe Lenora
Piper was smacked on the skull with a rock she
began her life

seeing by wailing SSSara...her aunt's name rang in
the air and from there to find out Sara died Do you hear an
eerie rustle strolling a-
lone in the woods Suffer measures unknown by
your senses Are

you aware of events in the future Do you
question what's "there" or what's "present" Once I dreamt I was thrashing
under ice then awoke to
my husband howling *Help* in the darkness Wild
beside me he

dreamed the same dream as I Dreaming I I was still
hearing the same dream Have you yet to abandoned your body
I ask have you clear-witnessed
yourself from afar Once Twice Three times or more
Please be honest

if these occasions occur Do you see phantoms
or shadows Could you sketch them Were you invited to summon

up death's final breath If yes
please describe what you noticed Did you feel an
unusual

pressure Where was it Were you afraid Were you called
back next It was "in a bright cloud at night" Home's first vision
appeared The sighting declared
his friend's death to the minute Has your life changed
for the worse or

the better Are you distant from your friends and your
family Do you find yourself distant in general Please
state the time Exact time Place
Confirm your name Tell me why Why you think this
This has happened

SERENA

Black-edge red-edge of the salient sun
severs a spine The head sighs spilling waves
An aria arc incomplete A song
then song's wane Glare then—blade in motion stays
him *After axe plead accident* I think
plead still The body is a way to make
one low material (his eye in glint
sure err) See now nothing remains in face
See now nothing in him at all The black-
edged red-edged sun: a silent siren slice
of stone At first the weapon light then lack
and lastly bone To rid disclosure hide
his mouth—held *O* in terror—sudden awe—
wry tried agape astonishingly flawed.

SPIRIT CABINET

Knot first I will bury what I never intend to let This rope
This fright It could have been the door slamming— the wind—or the
sight of you glancing through the door's window It could have been
the house the house again What did you glimpse out there Was
there another Was there room for you to leave Go—I will
not What I live with in this house is mine I did not make it What did
What is mine made me ask if what made me made me love it
less I will still copy this down for you to discover—unearth first
the knot

FROM “OUT OF WEDLOCK”

*

a basket of eidelwiess. out of wedlock / poems become vows. white petals redress the empty field. when we thread words into baskets / how will we know which petals to gather / from the fallen. which petals to ground into incense. to press into flour –

*

the vault or arch of the sky. stars / become harvested through story / aerial syntax. bound to inscribe gravities / we return to the poem. shore our voices against silence / a second language. that guides our first syllables –

*

they say you should not sleep in unfamiliar places. where earth loses circumference. against foreign doors / stairs / where shadows dissolve into motionless. disowned wind / like unwoven fronds / we are not the moon. yet we bear this desire to occupy its places –

*

something separated during the night. absent tendons / revoke embrasure / something veiled. was it you / she asks talking in my sleep. whispers / contoured space / what falls. resurfaces –

against the geometry of the changing moon / wood resists fire. we create maps made from splinters / our cut skin bled into earth / raised dust. the landscape hinges. between two apocalyptic nows. she says my heart is a ship / no, she says my heart is a ship –

*

within the shadow of a cresting wave / reflection and infraction. water mirrors water / does not mimic the body. within the distance / of a cresting shadow. we hold our breath / waiting to salvage / one more line –

*



FE: Rose's Rancho Reversed

:: III ::

This is my self

some things are supposed to be

& then the whole world bursting new

all those complications & what matters

is the chill in the air & how it's making
one less leaf in me

one cloud this one bird

I want this to be the first time
the whole world brand new again

I'm myself & I'm unsure

through the long night of
the way things are supposed to be

an already dark sky
& the whole world brand new again

:: IV ::

One less leaf in me

I'm losing leaves

& branches & each one

is one less leaf in me

these last fall leaves

blink to rainy grey & there is no dawn

& me & you naming everything

one cloud this one bird

I'm not a tree

I'm just this sky & whatever's left

whatever rainy grey & no dawn

& I'm just this sky & whatever's left

each leaf in the chill air

making me

:: V ::

I'm speaking from the middle ground

& these last fall leaves

make darker gaps against

the way things are supposed to be

as if you could see

into a deeper night

slipping from me

I'm just this

that I'm making up

as if you could see

all those complications

chill in the air

& what matters

& it's making me

& me & you naming everything

I'm not a tree

I'm deeper night

:: VII ::

Each leaf

an original relation

I'm lost to myself
this is my self

as if you could see
into a deeper night

& these last fall leaves
nothing at all but something

branches each one

making up
one cloud this one bird

these distractions waking up

this is my self
full of distractions my self waking up

:: VIII ::

& me & you naming everything
all those complications growing darker

the last fall leaves

 I'm speaking from the middle ground
 slipping from me & I'm just
in it myself I'm not sure

the way things might someday be
 an original relation

the whole world brand new again

 chill in the air & it's making me
one cloud this one bird

darker gaps against

 & me slipping
 from me

:: IX ::

an original relation

a rigid reminder
an already dark sky

chill in the air & it's making me
chill in the air & what it's making me

the sun is bright

slipping from me I'm just this

the stale sunlight the harsh

slipping from me
I'm speaking it

I'm myself & I'm not sure

I want this to be the first time

& me & you naming everything
& me & you naming everything

legacy driver so sol a harmer how money &

cranes lag ahead in lieu of paper foods
the lionizer cries (lacking crisis) & woodsy
drool mark apposite wind socks harmony

in the topiary, thieves, swing sitting ur
untimely sped. Doctre, she can't take
much & hark melomel spit the differ man drake
hero wine honey brewd, she can take anymore

Terroirj @ all grap a must fellow ow yoghurt
smear jean writ embroidoissee, micro love
make me unagi speedy maximal pedicrow overture
scintillant showering swabby callow boulder

--welcome, make myself acceptable & secondary

Date-Me-On-Top favorite oneiric, mandible & legend

sonneteer 18



BUTTER



SONNETEER "20"

B a m booz led into wearing bowling gloves
while eastside bamb beenies packertini
to one building edge meat, shiny
Lucky Me the one with the surf belt & coves

pillows in their origins, field or goose
or micky, how he songs, tough flies lie locked
popularity 6 population oneless hammocked
& emscarfed a starter animal loose

womb tuesday, Tiki zoning now emforced
so lighten up & tock. drown the real sidereal
cheerl. Undergrown Uppercuts won't conceal
nothing: simple, batter, bicep, divorce

speedsilence cranium. Did you get born or
susan, into either boxing willow/seminal what w arn her





what goes on in the scamper? key thinky sevens
wicked thumbrest, Chucky . 'So what dropped
in the city: a harp, the war, universal copper
kegs, b' o o g s, &, finally, the cites ovens.

Handrails were offlimited, collages. Handstand
cut into papiers in their sleeps/are we not bois?
Wire memos. Grand Atlantic. Sheer white neckties
for tentacles, glad libs surely cardinal mantic &
sold. When's thee gold rush, when's 60's at six
this will be our: empresse, earlesse rusty adamante
listening sticks; undress, outlast typy snapchants
with licking . That's the part about beginning, Trixy.

So pacific. Type C woodsy without marble
counters N, G hostess garam. & y ou know I willnot harm you

sonneteers
tw entytwo

Games for adulterers: timeaway showcase
they say that batailles is a test doma
they say that ballustrades less roof tramau
if hoof then ll psych ology leafs nix snowbrace

Don darling i apologize for the bastille; i left yr bowl
in stead of you shaking. Babs baby 'tis hard with weir d keys like these
they say rock--how come bom the syllable cymbals && each tomahawk's easy
to tag. Shroud makers take it easy, symbolismo aint enough light for the servile

mass (they build jobs) hands. 4 bucks a tangram
gambling & gambol they holler on mustangs & off ram

i talk u tigger finger to a trapper will mop salve
off your adult self. EELS share the shining valve

all winter under the freighters. It is good to play
to cry, with ads, clockerss, sporting mensfolk were hoo lay

sonneteers 23

antiseptember tex kits we run no sweat
nearer than due vert icle ice our rizon
37 mileized sad soap which kim right soma-
machination washer. so we wench it sweet

lamp sends, smell this water. well waitress
sick wisher how your hopper tumbly suffragette
elastic pan cake what reason does jumbojetee
make for ugly pie? corpus crumb fit snakedress

Watch the Train full Fellow Marx, Cobbler
Gladys, & don't forget to make something every
animal. & miss connexion. & sack yr flora variously
wear smocks. Ignore it it's a small hernia/too blurred

to remain. We run well if not quick. Ow god
march march . sloped morals, stellar fam, thick sodal

AND I CAN'T AROUSE SUSPICION

the Landscapes and inside a large white Victorian house where everything is carved out of bone. And someone keeps filling my glass with very thin, light, mud which I blatantly pour out onto the floor and grind into the carpet with my shoe. And a huge fern in the window covered in tiny mirrors which do not reflect my face when I look into them. They reflect the many faces of the fern. And a huge oak tree surrounded by a circular building made of stone and sugar. And a garage that vacillates between a garage and an airplane hangar where I sit on a bucket and count from a large basket of peas, shelling them into a bright yellow rowboat.

the Events and I bite down so hard my teeth break, even though I spend all of my time trying to prevent this from happening. And I talk to a small boy with red hair and a large woman with blonde hair. My hand is on my face and later, when I look into the mirror I see bright red splotches and also notice a small area where the skin is peeling off. Looking into the mirror, I peel my entire face off so that I have no face. And afterwards, I fly across the rooms of the white Victorian house with a sharp knife and slice all of the chandeliers down. When they fall they sizzle as if dropped in oil or acid. I want to change into one of the hundreds of long pink silk dresses that hang in the windows like draperies, so I take one down from the window frame and put it on. I sit in a green chair with a pair of scissors and cut the dress I am wearing into several small squares and stuff the squares into the green chair cushion with a small pair of needle-nosed pliers. And someone comes to me and asks me for change but I have nothing to give. And I have the feeling that the police are coming to this place and I want to leave quickly and I can't arouse suspicion.

THE SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE

The village believes.

Trucks filled with film canisters and the station where a mother drops the letters is full of steam.

A girl believes everything.

In school, she puts eyes on the wooden man. In the movie everyone watches, Frankenstein is killed by the townspeople. A girl asks her sister why they had to.

After school the sisters go to the abandoned barn. Sleep that night. The sisters run to the train. Meanwhile, the village and the school and the furrowed fields.

A mother has written another letter next to a glass of water. It comes or goes, it reads loudly from a sheet of him. Whispering, the man, a lover, a cloud of steam. Paper in their bedroom or a husband who is there and smoke.

A girl and her Frankenstein. She tells her sister that he is real. Almost everyone is a spirit and she is certain she knows one. On the outskirts of the village, he is near. The next day, the war.

The one named helps a true man and gives him an apple from her satchel. The windows are hives and everything is honey-colored. Smoke and beehives and the man who has been called from the well. This is what one sister believes. She goes to him every day.

Their father seems to be several beehives. He knows about bees and mushrooms and tries to write something down. The sisters spend time near the railroad tracks putting their ears to the rails. Alone and in the beehive, the sisters run poisonous in different rooms. He tries to write something.

Across a barren day a girl hears the fields. One sister tries to strangle the cat, a trick that she learned along with pretending to be dead. That night, there is a bonfire and other girls. They all jump through the flames over and over and over. A girl goes the next day to the renegade. The father follows.

Her Frankenstein is shot. She sees the blood on the walls. Soon she leaves and goes far away. Everyone calling out. She will not forgive them even when she is found.

The doctor tells the mother that the girl needs to rest in the dark. "Bit by bit," he tells her, "she'll begin to forget."

ASSEMBLAGE

A loose assemblage of broken stones erected in water

soft ground as foundation

having to do with the river

The levees

When rains come suddenly

The underplanes of the overpass

Scaffolding disappears into water

It is sky now I am looking up when I look down

The first time I saw the wind is the sea

A sudden sweep

A loose assemblage

Crossing twice each day

There is the strength
of bridges

Where do you take your sorrows?

A rock

A minnow

Too far down to the bottom

and then there was the

problem of opacity

He would read it Wing dams

and sand bars

You could only go if you knew how

to go

Mysterious sweep of current Learn by watching

The black rocks lining the bank could be birds or black rocks

There will never be a tornado
where three rivers meet

Dredge and sludge

What a river does is move

In the vicinity of where I used to be

a river drags itself down

A loose assemblage
of mud and root

Every step the step of resistance

Erase what you've already seen

What was unknown in
a world of velocity

A burned path in the prairie grass

A fire line



Travelling Circus

THE ISLANDER'S LETTER

certain body parts will never naturally meet one another,
for example, the inner ear and the other inner ear. we like to dwell
on the idea of connectedness. "everything is connected," we like to say.

it is true that all of the continents were once one giant continent, but we were not alive then,
so it feels as though the continents were never connected.

vines crawl the sides of our houses
and if we remove them, they leave trail on the wall, their own type of footprint.
a vine once entered an open window and overgrew the living room.
we admired its yen for exploration.
it died during the winter and we closed the open.

if you were a vine, you too would climb through,
if only to feel the light of the television on your shiny leaves.

what is distance? the inner ear, the heart.

i will tell you about the room i'm in.
i've put a purple flower in an empty bottle. the wall clock makes a loud ticking sound, which overpowers the
sound of the refrigerator motor and the water flowing
the pipes in the walls.

this is what i imagine it was like living on the continents before they split, when a prehistoric creature could
stand in the center of pangaea and see nothing but pangaea in every direction

DIRECTIONS TO A KENTUCKY

then at the turn of a road, a walk, cut through the brush, a mark for
the dirty banks, the end which will be an entrance, mouth of the cave,
the lost river. a grand ballroom of earth. stoned in, rocked under. a fall
of a loose boulder.

closed the dance and sent them home.

re-routed the road.

took the turn too fast, head for the tree, the wrap-around.

flip. flip. flip.

a field of polished corn.

the cave runs the length of the state. i say show me a map. i say i have seen it.

when a hole opens, the field sinks, in. the horse and the goat. the lake.
roots of trees, trunks struck and split. the storm in the sky, flips the slip.
takes a limb or two to grass, to roof, to spark. what a blaze they said, so
hot, so hot to melt and melt the metal. what came from a hand fit to a bag,
it could be carried, and charred, it was carried off. to make paper. to photo.

market of trinkets down the way. it is a special occasion, a small wooden box.

place it

in view of the window.

will walk the churned ground, will step uneven, not find the headstone, not

make an offering, a treestump, a limestone, a slate. a body for the trees, a call.

what we know of this has been told. the quick shut eye. the path of flight, duck.
pick the fallen walnuts, first the chestnuts, the cherries. a pack of starlings and
white web nests. an arm, a leg, a smoke on the stump. this river to the gulf, all
the way to the sea. it is called green and barren. it is called small
house.

the turn took,

left a cross.

then how we measured the turn into the trees. the trees to homes to houses
the fields to streets. to one yard to line to yard. brief cattle. grass cut. planks in flames.
so a tear, so a shed, so a paper, a photo. so

a cross of roads, removed the tree. the tree stood only so

long. road. watch for

a stand of water, a ditch, a catch.

the slate, the stone, the mark in the bark. lesson chopped us in,
letters, heart. the water birds flock and chatter, evening, when
we returned to hear tell.

the year moved, i have seen so. in passing, i have seen so.

REVIEW

FENCE ABOVE THE SEA

Brigitte Byrd

Ahsahta Press

\$16

In her newest book, *Fence above the Sea*, Brigitte Byrd reckons with the task of construction of self out of many: many people, many ideas, many roles, many memories. But instead of trying to create a kind of communal voice, a universal truth, Byrd instead forces a reckoning with a very real specificity, and splits the “I” into multiple personae, each of whom must reckon with this gathering of voices and bodies in a unique way, creating a finite specificity of self. And beyond this type of construction, Byrd tasks herself with enacting and questioning the very act of building, from the body to memory to the structure of the sentence and the phrase. The book is comprised primarily of prose poems, with four sections that formally disrupt the prose of the text and the cyclical memory-making and unmaking around which the prose poems revolve.

This hyper-specific self that is created in this book frequently defines surroundings in an unabashedly declarative manner. The poems in this collection repeatedly and explicitly define what *is* and what *is not*, at times creating contradictory meaning, as when “the father is a breath. This is not a mistake it is”(3). This definition and redefinition enacts and reenacts the narrator’s attempts to construct actuality from memory:

Streamwaves are back again. We cut the grass with his hand mower. We do. We cut and cut and cut. There is no question. Why no memory. There is. The daughter trims the flower beds. Time is not. Not the enemy it is...She says *le videment des entrailles est un signe*. This is not an escape it is a bag. There. The garden is ready. He is there to meet. The priest is not the father. Every time there is a question there is a decision. There is always fear. And there is religion always. We believe in nothing in the grass is not the answer in the house. It is a gesture. The daughter waves from the sea. (6)

This repeated definition and dis-definition calls into question the formation of memory and its subsequent dependence of recollection. No memory is safe from its own undoing; in the act of remembering lays the potentiality to obliterate the memory itself: “Is remembering/ the destruction of memory and where does it go” (68). Remembrances of the past will always be erred, eroded, and so each memory recalled is destroyed in its attempted preservation. The task of constructing memory is not an easy one, particularly because of the roles that the narrator is called to fill: remembering being a daughter while tending to a daughter, remembering the parent while being a parent.

The seemingly interchangeable third and first person furthers the sense of being in another person’s life, and of another person’s life intruding on the life of the self. The “I” takes not only the form of the first person pronoun, but also that of “she,” and in the first section of the book, “the daughter,” where “the daughter is not a mother. She is mine and I am a daughter and there/is another one” (8). Later on in the text, the self is explicitly confused into familial roles: “She thinks she fucks the father when she fucks her and/the mother and the others and all of them think that and look. At me and/her” (28). There is an irrevocable disruption in the division between selves, a rupture through which self is defined. The blank or gap between spaces and objects constitutes a way for memory to exist: “There is always an empty place and not often a/soundwave. A soul maybe if she is not. Present and absent at the same/time and always alone”(31). Here is the simultaneous presence and absence of the “alone” or lone self, divided out from designatory names and left bare. Later, “she

reads that no/absence cannot be replaced and she lifts the sheet to find her body”(40). Once the logic of “no absence cannot be replaced” has been parsed out, the inevitable question is “replaced by what?” Even absence fills a space and makes it whole.

Byrd’s construction of space is enacted most readily in sentence structure. Although the vast majority of the poems in this book are prose poems, they often work against the sense of the sentence, creating specific rhythms that are dependent on the shortness of the phrase, an effect punctuated by the lack of any punctuation besides the period. We aren’t allowed the pause of a comma or the querying of a question mark, and so the phrases become direct, at times brutal in their declarative candor and miniature, sentence-level narrative arcs: “She runs through a herd of tall blonde poodles./She would do anything to watch him smile. She wears her watch upside-/down. *I don’t know why*. He stopped speaking on the day she arrived”(27). These short sentences are far from terse, and instead allow for the phrases to feed into each other instead of creating containment, allowing associative leaps instead of direct syntactic connection. Byrd’s split prose is a gesture that pulls together what is, by nature, fragmented memory; it is a reconstruction that makes memory reenact itself.

The memory of the body is exact, in which marks on the skin recur as images simultaneous on each body. Throughout the text, these marks that trace the trajectory of the physical body appear with regularity: “From the edge of a chair she caresses his hand covered with/freckles his brain frosted with reds and browns of hemorrhage yellows of/necrosis”(23). “The hands are covered with freckles. Is/memory the future and it is lost”(3). “A mistake it is. His hands are not. They do not speak. I face the sun. Bluish and swollen they are and covered with freckles and/so are the daughter’s cheeks as if we were in the wrong place”(5). This “wrong place” seems to be the body itself, another’s body which has become one’s own. All of these marks of the body—freckles, moles, birthmarks—infiltrate the skin of every “character.” What we have in common is what we grow and what we grow into, the marks that inevitably arrive, unfamiliar, on our skin.

Just as Byrd makes and unmakes the sentence, she calls into question the power of memory to build and undermine self and the power of the self to build and disassemble memory. These constructions result in a text that is assembled with exactitude and ready querying, forging an active relationship between builder, site, and inhabitant.



Parcel One :97

ESSAY

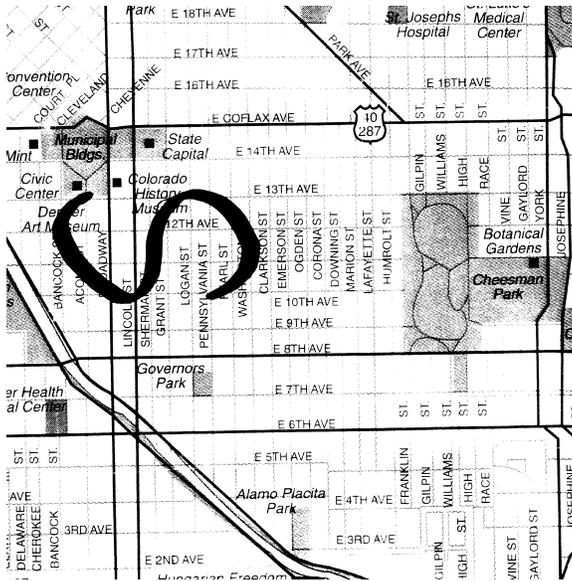
FROM “PASTORAL: THE POETICS OF TRESPASS”

CONTENTION, A PROLOGUE

In Kafka’s story, “In the Penal Colony,” a character we know as “the explorer” stands listening as “the officer” explains the island’s “remarkable piece of apparatus,” a sadistic machine that inscribes a prisoner’s sentence on his body as it slowly executes him. The prisoner, who has no idea he’s been found guilty, learns the sentence as it’s written. Language becomes both informative and punitive here—its usage simultaneously a matter of utility and torment.

My contention is that our cities, with their endless right angles, are instruments similarly designed.

The project outlined in the following excerpted sections is an inscription along the lines of Kafka’s. But rather than carve my sentence, I’ve chosen to trace it with the tip of my finger, so to speak. What follows are the pictures of those tracings. Over several weeks during the winter of 2007, I walked out the letters of the word *pastoral* across a span of twenty blocks in central Denver, using my apartment as the epicenter. In no way did I set out to alter the physical landscape, only to see whether, in the mind’s vistas, corners could curve, city turn to country, punishment to pleasure. Or whether these dualisms meant anything at all.



For stitch, as in: *I stitched the city together*. As in: there's something about the look of the letter, how it curves from the lower left hand to the upper right hand corner, that suggests the weave into and out of a piece of fabric, the movement a thread makes to bind it together. And, in curving through the yards, lots, and back alleys of the city today, I certainly felt as if my work was designed to bind together disparate parts—separate swathes of city that had come apart from misuse. Swathes that had, in their way, split at the seams, as indicated by the smell of sodden trash in the melting ice, the shabby recliner left out behind a long row of buildings named for poets, the severance of one district from another.

And so I traced my recumbent “s,” as a woman feeding pigeons at a bus stop scowled at me: *I don't like the way you walk*. But why, I wondered, should I orient my letters in a north-south fashion? Is this not suggestive of a certain fascism on my part? That the letters can only read according to a page that would have the south pole at its bottom and the north pole at its top? The earth is a ball spinning on an axis, but if there's no sense in making one end of that axis the top and the other the bottom, what then of the sides? And could not every point on a sphere be both its top and its bottom?

More to the point: if a city is a page, where is its top and where is its bottom? How do we read a city, much less a page, that has neither top nor bottom, left hand margin nor right? If it is essential that the city be legible, by what system of signs—what alphabet—may we read it? Though we no doubt read our cities according to landmarks—parks, buildings, hills—we also read them according to the grids imposed upon them. But what if there were other operative alphabets, hidden within the grid? The alphabet I'm inscribing into the city is literally such an alphabet, one based on the word, but there's no reason one couldn't make it into an alphabet based on geometric shapes, say, or on the radial symmetry of echinoderms. “We must learn,” writes Kevin Lynch, “to see the hidden forms in the vast sprawl of our cities.” But the rigidity of our forms—the rigidity that never allows us to be anything but temporarily lost in its pattern—inhibits us, and even though we want our cities to be sturdy,

it is also desirable that [they] be communicable and adaptable to changing practical needs, and that there can develop new groupings, new meanings,

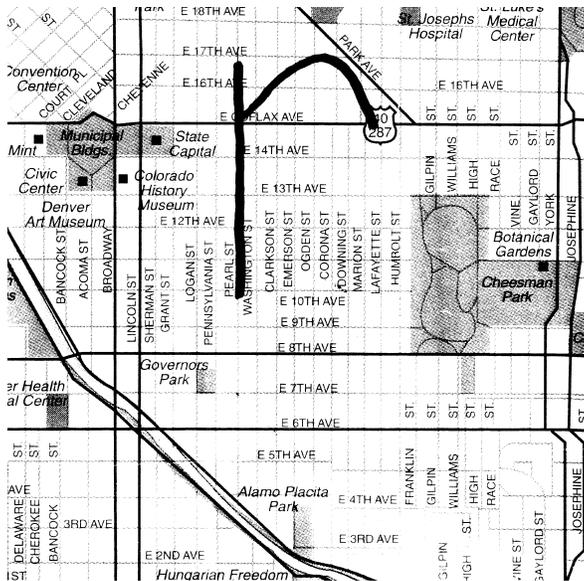
new poetry. The objective might be an imageable environment which is at the same time open-ended.ⁱ

But how can the environment remain open-ended when we insist on the solidity, the closure of its forms? I am reminded of two current development projects that have come about as part of the rapid and rapacious development of that once deserted oasis, Dubai. In the first, three huge artificial archipelagos in the shape of giant palms are being built, jutting out into the Persian Gulf. The entire project, which, according to its sales website, will employ 100 million cubic meters of sand and rock, will increase the entire shoreline of the United Arab Emirates by over 150%. As the website boasts: “If all the fill materials used to build one Palm island were placed end to end, a wall two meters high and half a meter thick could circle the world three times.”ⁱⁱ In the second project, a similar group of artificial islands mimics a map of the world. This project, aptly named “The World,” presents individual buyers with the opportunity to purchase whole islands, developing them however they please.

Both projects, which unlike my letters are visible from space, are at best attempts to re-imagine the city—to shape it according to principles independent of those that have determined urban development over the past centuries. At worst, they are barbaric and dysfunctional man-made impositions in a “natural” environment. And while reshaping the actual city of Dubai, which in spite of its enormous wealth is an impoverished city, into a palm, or into the shape of the globe, might be an interesting contribution to rethinking the image of the city, these developments are not intended for public use—their primary function will be that of housing and entertaining the wealthy.

Although these projects have trappings of the pastoral—the city in the shape of a tree—they are not pastoral. Monument culture, which is the culture of the city, cannot rethink itself, cannot complicate its image, by building more monuments. And the pastoral retreat is notably a retreat from monuments. A retreat, in my case, from the grid. The Dubai projects have nothing to do with breaking the hold of monuments, with retreating from monuments, and by virtue of their complete indifference to the devastating poverty alongside of which they are being built, in fact reinforce the oppression of the monument. While the city’s image could potentially be reshaped by redevelopment in the hands of the wealthy, curves are the true property of the poor, who nonetheless cannot afford them.

Thus, the “s” must be written by hand or on foot. The image of the city must always be an applied one, stitched together by those walking through it.



As in the last letter of *pastor*, from the Latin, meaning *shepherd*.

Walking down the alley today, out of which space I made the spine of my “r,” I saw a mattress and box spring set, baby blue, set upright against a dumpster, “Bed Bugs” in huge black spray-painted letters like a warning for all to stay clear. Further down the alley, a man in a gray Newport Beach t-shirt and light blue eyeglass frames was wielding a pickaxe, reveling in hacking the ice in the alley to pieces. Behind the former home of the Swedish Massage & Steam Baths, a man unzipped his pants and began to piss.

At home, a little industrial Bobcat purrs outside my window. My letters cower—congregating sheep. I am the shepherd of whose Being? My legs psychosomatically itch, as I curve in my mind toward the country—as if sanity were all a matter of a walk in the woods.

And yet they do build asylums in the woods: it’s all about a change in perspective, a fundamentally pastoral move. As places shift, so do perspectives: the point being, as in *As You Like It*, to resolve problems through a distancing effect. By making the far near, the near becomes far and, so the theory goes, clear. But if this were the case, poems would have solved our pressing problems long ago—and those for whom the distortion of their own lives was too crushing would have found those sounds scrubbed clean simply by staring at the sycamore trees lining the road to some colonial nightmare, where they might instead hear “tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in everything.”ⁱⁱⁱ

James Schuyler wasn’t precisely a pastoral poet, but his letters to Frank O’Hara came in the mail today, and so I’ve been looking at his poems. Schuyler was a good walker, and the cadence of most of his poems—those enjambed little lines—reminds me that the basis of many poems is the iamb, or foot. The following, from “The Payne Whitney Poems,” demonstrates how for Schuyler the poem always comes back to the body, and in particular the motion it makes as it ambles:

We Walk

in the garden. Sun
on the river
flashing past. I
dig ivy leaves.
We walk in a
maze. Sun, shine
on. Now it is
one hour later.
Out the window no
sun. Cloud
turbulence and
the wind whistles.
Curious.^{iv}

Part of what's interesting about the poem is the fact that it was written in an asylum, one of several Schuyler visited during his lifetime. His state of mind may account for its almost choppy notational quality, or for the poem's constantly shifting perspectives: *We Walk* shifts to *Sun on the river* shifts to *I dig ivy* which changes back to *We walk* then back to *Sun, shine*. It's as tricky as the poem's shift from inside to outside, which precedes the opening *We Walk*, then back inside *one hour later*, looking, however, outside. Similarly, clear skies shift into gray, and *the wind whistles*. It is *Curious* how this all fits, how the easy, square lines of identity (*We Walk—I dig—Sun, shine*) keep complicating themselves, keep curving.

There's a painting by R.B. Kitaj that does something similar. In it, you appear to be looking down on the scene from above, yet it also spreads out in front of you, as if you were simultaneously looking down on a patio and out onto the lawn just beyond it. It's like this: A woman tends to a charcoal grille on some paving stones, a wrought iron table, painted white, and its chairs are off to her left, your right. A cat is chasing a bird, stalking it rather, from where it sits on the balcony. It might occur to you this is your house, and you are standing out on the balcony again. The woman is possibly your wife, and then the girl—is she throwing a Frisbee?—out on the lawn, if the woman is your wife, must be your daughter.

It's surprising to see what looks like an eye hanging out in the ferns, or maybe it's a cantaloupe split in half, but then what's a cantaloupe doing in the ferns? I have no better explanation for it than for the two people, though there could be more of them just out of the painting's field of vision, whose faces are hidden under or behind the umbrellas they're carrying, despite the fact that it isn't raining. But then it occurs to you that it could be raining in that corner of the yard; it just isn't raining, although this defies everything we know about the weather, in the corners where your possible wife, daughter, and cat are going about their respective Sunday afternoons, albeit in a sort of detached harmony with one another—several people playing the parts of a string quartet in separate rooms, just barely within earshot of each other.

More importantly, though, the scene tends to flex, or to curve around a single still point in the center, where nobody is standing, between the table and the grille. Maybe this is the viewer's doing, but I have no way of knowing for sure. As if it were a thin piece of metal you could hold at both ends and, twisting one wrist away

from you and the other in your direction, you could make all of the angles, the various reflections of light off the panel, shift. And then, reversing the motions of your hands, make it shift the other way, like the perspectives in the Schuyler poem. I wonder: is this flexing what's causing that corner to rain? Causing the leaves to blend in with the paving stones in places, the ferns to look as if they're sheltering an eye?

Whenever I look at the painting, which is simply called *Sunday*, I keep waiting for the part in the woman's hair to change, the light in it to shift. And then it does and the wind blows the ruffles of her skirt and the girl has a grass stain now on her shorts, and slowly the edges of the image come flush again. The people carrying umbrellas close them and have a seat in the chairs. There are only two of them after all. The cat is still pursuing the bird, just less dramatically, and that cyclopean eye is still staring straight at me. And though now it's too late to tell, I wonder if *it* wasn't the still point of the image. I twist my hands to see, but nothing happens. The people eat their dinner; I close the book and walk back down the hall.

Notes:

- i. Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: MIT/Harvard UP, 1960.
- ii. A visit to the Palms website is well worth the while: <http://www.palmsales.ca/>
- iii. Shakespeare, William. *As You Like It*. Frances Dolan, ed. New York: Penguin, 2000. II.1.16-17.
- iv. Schuyler, James. *The Collected Poems of James Schuyler*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993.



Unshaven with a pocketful of currants (detail)

LONG PROJECT

**THE NAMING AFTER
THE LETTER**

This letter is architectural and outdated. It has several parts, of which you are one

Enter, the white rice. Tchaikovsky turns a table over, exposing a sadist with baggy pants

a mouth always sucking on things, a weakling. White rice windows. Chandelier discovery

across the street It is hard not to see homecoming as some sort of afterlife

You were meditating on the framework of a house, maybe too much to walk a straight path

This corresponds to earlier comments about the oppression of making things and from then on feeling their weight as some extension of your time. “Cozy” is accession. Half the time, or more, they reside as attachments, the “collection of the artist.”

sophistications of light—portal caucus, respecting governances

So then the frame and the marble upon which part enfolds prefix

cause pressure turns everything inward to hold letters against

coppers and brasses, beach

The emphasis on possession in simple circumstances, the idea of a directive behind this emphasis, and the idea of a shadow similar to this possession, as someone warily crosshatches their ownership of the idea. Some apply more shade than they are entitled to. Leave it alone, you would say, leave it alone. Touch upon it later.

For the word *flap* he made a wing.

“If it is flap for animal or people flap too?

Do you call it *flap*...”

After, “so I would *flap*?”

A covey of sentiments. Waning differentials.

Found in the terminus of French diaries, where the recipes would never show

themselves but wisps made it through the swinging door. Only to be stopped cold

at the mirror and look out at the dining room buffet, especially the prime rib that

seemed like it was the diving board of the whole affair, set out over the end.

Maybe secondly, the idea of clothing as an aperture through which spirit evinces

approval or disapproval. Thirdly, acorns all around your feet. A mild sort of

philanthropy, positively all sense of nativity lost waterfalls, codifying

Romantic bliss and the quiet part of the acceptance speech

Not accustomed to your speech so you arranged for the place to take back our windows
passing through a coronation, around shelves, that was probably the Spring bells

the oysters not a bunch of Narragansett but faces akin to dance numbers, had
you forgotten this, I hand it I hadn't I mean.

Thoughts of Gasden or Thomas, territory of mittens

bow of incidence, Under branches, going as idea

stooping to read something by virtue

Impression of cognizance, a daring recognition of gesture and also the placement

of an object, miscellany on scene where burst archangels upon a page turn,

brown settling into the spirit of the age, golden identity setting into the fences

and drapery—an apocryphal dilemma—that being said, that being instead of beauty

a complication of the place beauty takes in our hearts That display by virtue of

temperature, set upon us from the outset

maybe I have mistaken “the apparatus for its offering.”

Often leaving my office through the back, to have a walk, I am struck by light, which careens off the wall of a stucco tower and deposits itself as a broadside across my vision.

This is the moment when I step out into a transfiguration. Not that my appearance changes, as you have guessed already, but that the appearance of my vicinity has developed new features.

A dark kind of orifice, that statuesque variety which belies what I see and could be linked to Oceanus if I put my mind into it. Boxes of flowers, equal to each other on the second floor, curtain these groanings. The light presents itself between cream and yellow. Cobblestones afford the only hint of the turbine that subverts these gentler appearances.

Canvas earring Map created of the shin

Sanding Sanding Sanding the dune door. Remembering with a string, tools including things that look like they have to be alone. Many things like that in tested waters.

Not really. Indices of better doubt, casualness and the presentation of
intimacy through speech-tendered eruptions. Standard, very sweet moments
where speech lays bare machinations, your relationship to its occurrences,
return, good returner, that's another thing: pace separated into promises—
will transports a person in pictures across the water

Caption above my head says nothing, because it's my head. But the caption overlaying the Capitol provides an inkling. Before the door, below the window, under the skylight. Thinks in turrets, stirrups or struts. And has a point.

the same coast, “Here Sleepeth Fanny” in wrong city—movement towards insurance,
nothing terrible riding in the car, “better than sex” probably eating something

spoke to the quietest, did marginalize did marginalize the feelings, quietest now

restitution quietly coming—Grrh animals say, depictions, trying

To point on the coast, a large statue of a man no one remembers, kind of timber,

but it's beautiful because the headland opens up

not a procedure but detailed enough to make
a Second attempt at the beauty of the bronze,

Wobbly top of the bay,
on the way, doesn't matter,
stone, action upon the island

possession, so that when I covered a wooden one
after the storm I thought of him and the book I have of him

beneath the wooden type, which is a demonstration—Old directions, to barter
the man corrected the other, *wrong water* memorizes Shakespear and never lets you forget
hope that's not me, with some prologue coat pocket to whistle when coming out

Morning swims, sound of the Seine toward,
an idea of being whippity under the table
if needed, the statement that makes, stepping aside to
get it
together
all in a fortnight, bronze wires constructed to hold postcards
and the vast emptiness of the frame

Anyway, my carelessness has many more advantages than its protection against the “mirroring” effect. I believe this is true, by the way, that carelessness is a quality has no reflection. I believe that slipping through.

alongside immediate concern—letting it go, that I feel the tissues print
the wake of the flip. The wake of the flip, probably slow stepping off
the content for a moment finding informative little squiggles,

interior being most important, portent,

primogeniture to the foxes constable uproar

The entrance was bobbing.

happens as much by withdrawal, so that the recession of the speaker, viewer, masseur

accounts for the drawing together, kind of like an envelope, which has a folded

piece of paper inside it. That to be carried in spite of folds and the breadth,

Supposes breadth and traveling kind of at odds. Come in here and make me a collage.

One of many forgeries—how well the upholstery approximates margins. To thing
receives less easily perceived as “midst,” though fragrances sometimes cover
the graphical sphere. Illustrating a round object in its fullness. Inscriptions you are making
conduct themselves, lever like the names you see in places, other people. Never quite you.

Drifting into downtown sea bags a pop of marsh. Over the tattoos, an iris forms derivative thoughts of what going out to the Ocean and staring in the general direction. Staring in the general direction and then departing the Ocean, drying one's toes and hopping aboard a trolley back into the botched plough's "weeks of rain."



BIOGRAPHIES:

Erik Anderson's poems and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *American Letters & Commentary*, *Sleeping Fish*, *Jacket*, *Rain Taxi*, *The Denver Quarterly*, *The Poetry Project Newsletter*, *CAB/NET*, *Cranky*, *Ellipsis*, *Bombay Gin*, and others. With Anne Waldman, he edits the magazine *Thuggery & Grace*. **Dan Beachy-Quick** is the author of three books of poetry: *North True South Bright*, *Spell*, and *Mulberry*. A series of interlinked meditation on *Moby-Dick*, *A Whaler's Dictionary*, will be published in 2008 by Milkweed Editions. He is soon to begin teaching in the Writing Program at Colorado State University. **Martin Corless-Smith** was born in Worcestershire, England. His books include *Of Piscator*, *Complete Travels*, *Nota* and most recently *Swallows* (Fence Books). His next, coming out in England in the spring is *English Fragments/A Brief History of the Soul*. He teaches in Boise, Idaho. **Elizabeth Cross** Ph.D. University of Denver. Teaches: MFA program in Writing, School of the Art Institute of Chicago Taught: University of Denver, University of Detroit, Eastern Michigan University, University of Michigan. Publications: *American Letters & Commentary*, *Chain*, *Chicago Review*, *Columbia Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Gertrude Stein Awards for Creative Writing Anthology*, *P-Queue*. Grants and awards: Michigan Council for the Arts, Rocky Mountain Women's Institute. These poems form part of a larger series titled "Language's Ghost: She Annihilates with Love in You." **Elizabeth Dorbad** is a sculptor living in California. Affiliated with the Julie Baker Gallery, Dorbad has exhibited nationally and internationally. In 2005, she served as an artist in residence at Artline in Berlin, Germany, and she recently completed the exhibition, "15/15. Idas y Vueltas/Back & Forth, Plastica Organica/Organic Plastic" sponsored by the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico involving fifteen Mexican artists along with fifteen artists from the United States. She is currently working on a series of large pieces combining junk, gold, bronze, film and sound. **Ben Doyle's** first collection of poems *Radio, Radio* was selected by Susan Howe for the 2000 Walt Whitman award from the Academy of American Poets. His poems can be found in current or forthcoming issues of *Boston Review*, *Tin House*, *Denver Quarterly*, and *Indiana Review*. His new manuscript, *Dead Ahead*, is forthcoming from Ahsahta. He lives with his wife, the poet Sandra Miller, and their canine in Roanoke, where he teaches Creative Expression to tough kids—when he's not in Boise as Distinguished Visiting Writer. Doyle co-edits the Kuhl House Books contemporary poetry series of the University of Iowa Press. Beginning in Fall 2007, Doyle will be teaching at the University of San Diego. **Lisa Fishman's** fourth book, *F L O W E R C A R T*, is forthcoming from Ahsahta; her recent book is *The Happiness Experiment*. Two chapbooks are also forthcoming: *KabbaLoom* (Wyrld Press, Boulder) and *Elizabeth Barrett Marginalia*, as a *Parcel* chapbook. She lives in Chicago and in Orfordville, Wisconsin. **Anne Heide** edits the poetry journal *CAB/NET* out of Denver. Her poetry has most recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Notre Dame Review*, *Shampoo*, *Coconut*, *Octopus*, *Ur Vox*, *the tiny*, and *No Tell Motel*, among others. Her reviews have appeared in *Jacket*, *HOW2*, *First Intensity*, *Xantippe* and *Rain Taxi*. She is currently working towards a doctorate in Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Denver. **Paul Klinger** has published work in *Spell*, *hutt*, *Snorkel*, and *Dusie*. He works for the POG collective (gopog.org) in Tucson. His first book, *Fescue*, will eventually be published by Dusie Press. His book reviews can be read at *Cutbank* and *Diagram*. **Christina Mengert's** poems have recently been published in *Web Conjunctions*, *Aufgabe*, and *The New Review of Literature*. She has a PhD from the University of Denver in Creative Writing and an MFA from Brown University in Literary Arts. She currently lives in Denver, where she teaches poetry to adults through a non-profit organization called the Lighthouse Writers Workshop. **Sandra Miller's** first book, *Oriflamme*, was published by Ahsahta Press in 2005. Selections from her new work—*Chora*—keep popping up in *Aufgabe*, *Verse*, *Crowd*, *La Petite Zine*, and *The Canary*. She currently teaches on one of those one-year things at Hollins University, where she lives on Maggie's Farm with her husband, the poet Ben Doyle, and their dog, the dog Ronald Johnson. The founder and editor of an international journal and press of some repute, Miller is also a Distinguished Visiting Writer at Boise State and a recent recipient of the Paul Engle-James Michener Fellowship. Beginning in Fall 2007, Miller will be teaching at California State University-San

Marcos. **Christopher Mulrooney** has written poems and translations in Santa Fe Literary Review, Merge, Cake and The Hollins Critic, criticism in Blue Fifth Review, Elimae and Tadeeb. **Caryl Pagel**'s poems have appeared or are forthcoming in Octopus Magazine, Coconut, New Orleans Review, and Denver Quarterly. She lives in Iowa. **Craig Santos Perez**, a native of the Pacific Island of Guahan (Guam), has lived in California since 1995. He is the co-founder of Achiote Press and author of 3 chapbooks: constellations gathered along the ecliptic (Shadowbox Press, forthcoming 2007), all with ocean views (Overhere Press, forthcoming in 2007), and preterrain (Corollary Press, forthcoming 2007). His poetry, essays, fiction, reviews, and translations have appeared (or are forthcoming) in Pleiades, Sentence, Traffic, Tinfish, and Jacket, among others. **Nate Pritts** is the author of Sensational Spectacular (BlazeVOX) as well as the chapbooks Big Crisis, Monday, Monday, and Winter Constellations. He is the editor of H_NGM_N, an online journal of poetry & poetics. **Jennifer Reimer** grew up in the borderlands of Southern California. She has a B.A. in English from New York University (2002) and an MFA in writing from the University of San Francisco (2005). Her work has appeared in Commenweal, St. Ignatian Literary Review and Denver Syntax (forthcoming with Craig Perez). She is the co-founder of Achiote Press. She is a graduate student in Comparative Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley where she spends most of her time dreaming about adventure travel and wine. **Sara Veglahn** is the author of two chapbooks, Another Random Heart (Margin to Margin) and Falling Forward (Braincase Press). She is also the co-author of That We Come to a Consensus (Ugly Duckling Presse), a collaborative poem with Noah Eli Gordon. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in Conjunctions, 26 Magazine, Fence, POM2, Sleepingfish, and in the anthology/catalog Poets on Painters, published by the Ulrich Museum of Art. She currently lives in Denver where she helps edit the Denver Quarterly. **Della Watson**'s work has appeared in Denver Quarterly, alice blue, elimae, word for / word, Make, Free Verse and The New Yinzer, among others. A Kentucky native, she currently resides in Christchurch, New Zealand.