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LVNG 17

from ON DAR EL-HIKMA

The Occident lives in such a state of denial that if I took a poll of conventionally trained doctoral candidates, an untold number of them would have no argument with my listing of Boethius, Charlemagne, and the Renaissance as being the transit to modernity. Within this cohesion of thought the Islamic polymaths are but addenda at best, irrelevant footnotes to Titian and Leonardo. If the human race is to extend itself forward, it must include the organic nature of its total history. Fortunately, there exists more and more scholarship that is opening to this era of exclusion. Because the era of Dar el-Hikma remains entirely too vital to the Occident, yet to refuse acknowledgment of its presence garners nothing more than general embarrassment. Let us take the explosion of the Crab Nebula that went totally unreported within Europe but was duly noted by the Chinese and the Arabs. I once sat in an astronomical seminar of very learned souls who made the excuse that an obscuring cloud settled over Europe, preventing astronomical research. One must remember that the whole era of European modernity has been underscored by southern global contribution. Its medieval contribution foregrounded the modern world with all the principle disciplines. Take the great modernist poets, such as Pound, Eliot, Cummings, who were decided in their assumption of European superiority, in spite of Pound's African exploration via Frobenius. Even as the great archeologists of the era did great studies on Egyptian culture, they never once mentioned the racial construct that plagued places like the Congo, and Mississippi. In this spirit, it has remained institutionally convenient to generally omit Muslim scholarship and its power stretching back over thirteen centuries. For the Occidental mind to argue for contact with hyper-dimensional beings seems congested with endemic contradiction when an institution like Dar el-Hikma is deemed alien and remains willfully obscured by well-planned inattention.

To have to pen the above comment at such a late date in the history of the calendar seems to me absolutely bizarre. So how can the Eurocentric agenda continue to avoid the scope of human achievement?

Between the fall of Rome and the illustrious Roger Bacon the general mind has been given a suspect blankness to perceive. Such an effort is likely trying to tuck a camel into inconceivably reduced square footage, hoping that the contradiction is not noticed. Of course, Dar el-Hikma remains this camel spilling beyond containment. It remains a glaring intrusion cast as a shadow upon European presentation. Indeed, if it is an institution to be generally acknowledged, it cannot be scripted as an island unto itself bereft of surrounding context. It must be seen in confluence with a living psychological order, with a surrounding psychic dynamic. It was not an institution that evolved from craving quantity combined with the modern point of view that celebrates knowledge as warfare. It evolved from much deeper ore, from the understanding of knowledge as alchemy of the self, founded by people who a majority of Europeans have now designated Berbers; according to Jose Pimienta-Bey all the color distinctions between Moors and Berbers have been externally imposed. Pimienta-Bey refers to Moroccan professor Aziz Lotfi, who informed him that there is no Berber-speaking community in Morocco today that identifies itself by any name or term which is “even distinctly related, phonetically or morphologically, to the term Berber.” It is a “foreign designation for what was and remains a native people.” So what Professor Lotfi is in essence saying is that Granada after the invasion of Tariq in 710 is peopled by Africans. After this invasion a transitional period of a hundred years’ infighting transpired, but an organic, a higher enterprise was brokered and then evolved. Unlike the Visigoths, the Franks, the Vandals and the Suevi, a mind evolved along the lines of tolerance and learning. This freedom was not solely confined to the darker inhabitants but spread to the Jews, “who enjoyed the freedom of worship and the right to live by their own customs and laws.” Tolerance persisted during this period in spite of the sloth of the Umayyads and their overthrow by Almoravids and the latter’s usurpation by the Almohads, who “displayed a particular interest in philosophy.” Yet the institution of knowledge persisted.

Of course I've never idealized the Moors as being resolved of contradiction. Yet tolerance persisted within their realm unlike the documented brutality that reigned in Christian Europe that Barbara Tuchman points out as the latter's deficits, which she accurately describes in her award-winning book *A Distant Mirror*. Christians or Jews were never tried according to Muslim dictates. There seemed to be honor in the system. This was an atmosphere where the mind was allowed to ascend above petty differences. There was not a jurisprudence of wrath but a long-term attempt at on-going balance. Amalgamation existed as its central tenant. And here I do not want to enter into a maze of pointless details as to why this was the case. The result of this social conclave is proof enough in itself. Yet I cannot say that the era was unmarked or touched by explosive emotion or untouched by violence. Again, one must look at the whole, thereby understanding a society condoned by the praxis of its basic psychic health. So when you factor in law, hygiene, agricultural properties, as well as music, infrastructure and learning, a society emerges honed by a working balance. My primary concern remains its basic orientation, its orientation towards learning and the health of the mind sans chronic bifurcation and disorder.

What must be remembered is that this was a thriving society six to eight hundred years before the idea of "whiteness" was born. Brilliance was brilliance in its own right without Eurocentric bifurcation hovering in the background. For instance, there were no resistant appellations applied such as *Moorish* and *Berber*. These are appellations derived from within European boundary, of course, which did not yet exist. The modern distinction between *Moorish* and *Berber* has no meaning whatsoever. Under precepts of the modern colonial psyche, *Moorish* is a code noun for Kushitic and dark, while the term *Berber* assembles in the mind as a light-complected phenotype, seemingly operant on a higher scale. Yet, if one looks at the Black population of say, Los Angeles or Philadelphia, this very range of color remains fully expressed, sometimes in the same family.

Let me say that Islamic achievement was spawned by southern global ingenuity. Still under the pall of Greco-Roman scholarship this remains an alarming statement. An archeologist the stature of James Breasted expressed his true leaning when he announced in his popular book *Ancient Times* that the “Mongoloids of the east and the Negroes of the south . . . played no part in the rise of civilization.” Unfortunately this remains an underlying subtext that persists to the present day, a regressive in-fluorescence that riddles the planetary psyche to this day. This being a mental in-fluorescence concerned with protecting ongoing institutional omission, which continues to exclude the context of Dar el-Hikma and the thousand years of scholarship it symbolizes. This amounts to nothing other than an on-going embarrassment.

As Eurocentric rhetoric persists, learning on this planet remains bounded by the ancient Greeks on one end and Euro-American science on the other. This remains an insidious compilation that has resulted in chronic denial of scholarly insight other than that which has been officially sanctioned. As if all other endeavor amounted to ancillary status. What makes Schwaller de Lubicz so controversial to Greco-Roman scholarship is that the Blacks of Africa produced the originating body of knowledge on Earth. This being knowledge prior to Pythagoras, prior to the universe of Pericles. This must remain our basic orientation if knowledge is to rise higher than the provincial limits of mental restriction, not an unpalatable restriction that continues to associate Egyptian music with swaying females and bells while remaining generally mute concerning the authorship of the pyramidal dynasties.

This being education constrained to flawed perspective, to insidious procedure. We live in a world where the Euro-Americans are advertised as being the most progressive, as being the most intrepid explorers, as the finest practitioners of industry and trade. When one strolls down a random boulevard, one’s subconscious life is invaded by European coffee, European motorcars, European industry. This ignites a harassing swarm in

the mind. In contrast, the person of color is implied to be nothing more than debilitated property incapable of creating any meaningful personal or collective sustainment. It sends the message that one is incapable of rising to the basic requirements of creation, being incapable of fueling oneself with basic self-respect. One is then seen as the child, or, at best, a lowly advanced adult, in desperate need of Christian (i.e., European) ministrations.

These remain the tenets that now swarm the Earth, structuring life by means of their psychic poison, always fostering negation in the depth of one's depths. Over time, one's neurology becomes acclimatized to this poison, one's spirit is then altered by susurrant and crippling opacity. Over time, this opacity becomes chronic and passes over into the genes so that following generations are crippled at birth. I call this wizened neural capacity. So when I call for the blaze of open instruction it concerns connectivity not only for circulation in the mind but also for general neurological health.

When striding into the assumption of Occidental superiority and when I begin to spontaneously speak of Dar el-Hikma, it's as if my utterance had translated itself into an unforeseen menace. The present climate remains scrawled with Islamophobia, and because it is so constructed, I am seen to be suspect, associated with threat, being an unchronicled invader. This amounts to nothing more than insidious ungraciousness. Therefore, I feel as if conflated with a maimed alien attempting to introduce undesired information into a poisoned general mind. There is always this persistence of institutional rigidity as if I were attempting to guide its stubbornness beyond danger. What educational institutions fail to recognize is that knowledge is ceaseless and persists beyond current rhetoric that seeks its false containment structured according to papered degrees. My premise being the cosmic citizen needs to be cleansed of barren racial blockage. In order to gain this level of reality, the psychic ducts must be cleared and human achievement of world citizenry must

be acknowledged. Because of its institutional omission concerning the Global South, the Occident has assented to chronic myopia and can be poetically described as a health-less wolf functioning on three legs. It ambulates, it remains vicious, it skillfully conceals its pain.

At present, distraction remains the driving kinetic of the daily life. One is chronically shifted off balance and is instructed to instill this lack of balance by keeping busy, by remaining consumed by one's private affairs. Solitude is never favored, the long view is always eclipsed by remaining out of reach. Within this spirit, flora and fauna are reduced to abstracted data. So when human death occurs in Bhopal, or in the Congo, we always hear about the numbers of dead and the economic consequence to the West. With all this said, how can Dar el-Hikma exist as a presence in such a climate? How can it persist as a normative quotient in such a hostile environment?

In contradistinction I enunciate a wizardry that portends unsettlement for those who are mesmerized by common assumption. Thus, I inject unsettlement into a culture prone to commercialization of the lower body with all that its functions imply. The Occident being a culture hypnotized by institutional aphasia, so information that falls outside its purview is deemed experimental, and of little account. So to widen its psycho-neurology remains a threat and clarifies the terror roaming its subconscious psyche.

An institution such as Dar el-Hikma remains a suspect notion and advances a circumstance never quite adjusted to the looming glare of cinematic modernity. Therefore, when I speak in certain quarters I am seen as mining scars, as bringing up a kind of occulted venom.

And what is this venom, perhaps my adherence to its powerful agenda, my praise of its scholarship over and beyond post-colonial lensing?

My critics, who extol the Occident via the subtext of its self-projected superiority, must note that tolerance had been withdrawn from its cupboard of goods and presently possesses a niggling, insufficient

view of itself. Thus, I proceed by means of informal heresy. Not that I am proceeding down some clearly sanctioned path, making a case for an opaque institution synthesized by non-rigorous synecdoche. No, I've always respected the rigorous apprenticeship that was required by the scholars hailing from this era. Attempting to synthesize advanced learning a thousand years prior makes me feel as if I've become an alchemic contortionist, climbing, scaling a dimly marked rock face. I am simply adjusting to the climate of its hidden thinking. Its resonant achievement continues to possess retro-causal charisma, thereby surmounting in my mind the process of intentional damage wrought by Occidental omission. Of course, I am not going back to Cairo as personal escape to exotica but to reignite a crucial phase in world civilization.

I consider Dar el-Hikma to be part of Al-Andalus. It was not a separable part but existed within a field of resonance that extended at minimum from Cairo to Cordova. The latter being part of an empire that extended from Indonesia to Lisbon. As Pimienta-Bey points out, it was more immense than the holdings of Alexander the Great, "or Rome at its height." So Dar el-Hikma is not an anomalous figment to be savored but a node connected by a culture that stressed the higher expression of thought. In addition to the original Bayt el-Hikma founded in Baghdad circa 863 there were also schools that were contemporary with Dar el-Hikma in Cairo. We can mention the University of Cordova, "founded in the tenth century by . . . Caliph Abd al-Rahman III," as well as other "schools and universities" in towns "such as Seville, Malaga, Valencia, and Almeria." According to Ibn Idhari there were "twenty-seven 'free schools' of higher education in Cordova alone." During this period "they taught the use of ciphers," "made algebra an exact science . . . and laid the foundation of analytical geometry; they were indisputably the founders of plane and spherical trigonometry, which, properly speaking, did not exist among the Greeks." Scholars like al-Khwarizmi syncretized subjects such as astronomy, mathematics and astrology. This is a climate that

produced the “educational prescription of Ibn Hazm,” the educator active at the beginning of the eleventh century. “Hazm contended that a person’s formal education . . . should begin at five years old.” He advised study of the Qur’an as well as “addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, fractions and plane geometry; Euclid’s treatise on ‘celestial bodies’; and Ptolemy’s *Almagest*” in order to deduce duration and limitation. Study of “botany, zoology and medicine” was emphasized, along with history, “emphasizing the causes for ascension and decline in ancient society with the intention of avoiding repeated errors.” This being a curriculum propounded a thousand years ago, 300 years in advance of what today is known as the Renaissance. Disciplines “studied by Moorish students usually required an understanding of various other disciplines.” This was exercise of the psyche, non-compartmentalized, not bounded by exteriorized delimit. It was an exercise of the whole being, just the opposite of cultivation by fear.

Unlike the social climate found in Europe, Christians and Jews were allowed to “continue practicing their respective faiths.” Witness Maimonides and the Mozarabs. The Mozarabs continued their Christian practice while adopting the “social customs of the Moors and Arabs,” the key here being the word *tolerance*, a behavior sorely missing in our present circumstance. The hospitals, called *bimaristans*, were open to both Muslims and non-Muslims “twenty-four hours a day, regardless of the patient’s ability to pay.” This remains a utopia when compared to twenty-first century American standards. In consequence, there existed an underlying ease in the circumstance, where the mind was free to explore. Under the Caliphate of Cordova, Al-Andalus was a beacon of learning, not a frozen conglomerate. It was divided into five administrative areas roughly corresponding to Castile, Leon, Aragon, Catalonia, and Septimania. As a political domain or domains, it successively constituted a province of the Umayyad Caliphate, initiated by Caliph al-Walid from the year 711. Despite in-fighting and chronic squabbles with the Christians,

there existed a stability that spanned nearly four times that of the United States. If one looks at the creativity across its span, one is astonished by the constant circularity of invention.

Let me start with “water science.” The Moors built *acequias*, or irrigation channels, as well as underground water channels and *aljibes*, or large water storage tanks. They drained rivers and built *azuds*, or small dams. In Valencia, the “Turia River was dammed in several places.” The result: “a major rice producing area.” Add to this the *noiras* or water wheels succeeded in perfection by the *sagiyas* that surmounted the power of the *norias*. There were ship mills that “were placed in the middle of rivers, utilizing faster currents to maximum advantage, avoiding the slower summer current.” Three historic mill houses existed, “placed in the flow of the Guadalquivir and the ‘Cordova’ rivers.” This led to unprecedented fertility in lands such as Sargossa, Malaga, Murcia, Baghah, and Lorca. These were productive lands, which produced figs, plums, cherries, apples, rice, cotton and medicinal herbs.

Because the population was properly fed, it exploded in number. During the height of the Cordovan Caliphate there were over 12,000 villages near Cordova, and Spain had more than 30,000,000 inhabitants. Compare this to Britain, France, and Germany, which had 20,000,000 inhabitants between them. The resurrection of knowledge led to the general health of the populace. Dar el-Hikma remains symbolic of this resurrection. Though it rose in the east, it was part of this irradiation of knowledge. If it were simply an isolate anomaly, how has it managed to sustain its presence within the occulted flow of general recognition? It was not simply a negligible presence curiously poised within an attenuated confine. It remains a perdurable power. More than a superficial forum, it was an integral part of living continuum. Its “Ismali theologians . . . met on Monday and Thursday and agreed on the text of a book they called *Majalis al-Hikma*.” “A clean copy was brought to the chief dai, who, after checking it, presented it to the Caliph.” Such is not the action of a mad

haphazard climate but the exertion of discipline within a circumstance of order. Yet I am not ruling Dar el-Hikma as a quiescent setting drained of all emotion and conflict. Differences on some points flared, there was no lack of ardor within its confine. Some of the lectures were closed due to partial conflict and tension, yet the overall balance of the enterprise never wavered. The belletrist Ibn Abd Rabbihi spoke of knowledge as “the lantern of the body.” This is certainly not a psychic wildfire that issued from corrosion but a balanced emission of light. Dar el-Hikma symbolized an era when unprecedented flourishing took place. One can speak of the genius of al-Jazari, who designed water pumps as well as large and small water clocks, or of the great botanists Ibn Bassal and Ibn al-Awwam. The former introduced partitioning of the land that helped farmers increase “the fertility of their crops,” and the latter wrote on food preservation. As a result, farmers were able to grow and preserve wheat for a hundred years while allowing figs and apples to preserve the full power of their flavor after several years of storage.

What I relate is not an exotic dosage of selective anecdote but a fully amalgamated world that included both Granada and Cairo. In fact, Islam possessed more world acreage than did Rome. The mind was never seen as an extraneous appendage, completely expendable vis a vis exterior concerns. Unlike the circumstance of Socrates or Galileo, one was never embroiled in an institutional setting that forced one into a tortuous position for one’s insight. (When I say this I am not forgetting the tension that existed between Alhazan and al-Hakim concerning an impossible demand by the latter.) In the present day, the part has been crowned king over the whole. The mind is now rewarded for its expertise concerning smaller and smaller units, for its ability at analyzing parts. After 1750, daily thought has been beset by the ubiquity of capital with its harassing residue. Human electricity has been subsumed by the need to purchase and consume objects. For the African after 1750 the industrial circumstance is even more pointed because both genders were initially

reduced to being human consumables to be sold and purchased as part of the marketplace. This latter contradiction has settled into the Occidental mindset as pestiferous carking. For the past 200 years (with seminal exceptions) the majority of its scholars have condemned or omitted African insight as a reality not realistically possible. And, as stated earlier, because African scholarship in Cairo and Cordova remain so close to us in time, it remains integral to the rise of the Occident to keep its refulgence from view, inferring that its merit garners no higher status than self-inflicted darkness. The agreed-upon formula remains Greece, Rome, Boethius, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, world exploration, industrial innovation, and the founding of America. This is a formula that in the main excludes all persons of color. And if they must be included, they become irrelevant by removal to an ancient distance in time. All ancient effort becomes expendable in the ether. As for Granada and Dar el-Hikma, they are summarily omitted so that if general discussion broaches this era, many a learned creature furrows his or her brow with ciphers, drawing blanks as a matter of course. Qadi Abul Aziz Muhammad bin Noman, first supervisor at Dar el-Hikma, can at best foster no more than a footnote, and for legions of the learned the very spelling of his name provokes association with the alien.

The modern mind, blinded by the cartography of objects, stands in sharp contrast to the Egyptian revelation of the soul. This inner revelation being not unlike the effort spawned at Dar el-Hikma. So let us go back to Egypt and illumine its vibrational acreage. Life was not simply action provoked through extrinsic announcement or instruction compressed within a mechanical forge of time, the former being nothing other than imposed pressure, the latter being a climate that blunts neurological enlightenment. Instead, human maturation is disregarded, thus, one's deeper ores go untended. At Luxor in ancient Egypt, education was seen as "transformation of the learner who progressed through successive stages." Qualification was not bound by "grading" or "heredity." Instead, levels of

transparency were engaged where inward dross was alchemically cleared. And this was not the simple piling on of data, nor was it the blaze of ideology implanted in the living neural field with an immobilizing plaster that warped the mind into a dulled repetitive strabismus.

The mind, suffused by secular disengagement, distorts the pressure of constant tilting, always subject to menace and blurring. Such a mind fails in any attempt to focus at the level of what I'll call perpendicular stability. And of what am I speaking here? Perpendicular singularity? Overarching salvation?

No, nothing so singled by such a specific absolute. No, I am not imposing medicinal imposition on the mind by means of brutish didactics. Opening of the mind remains complexity by stages.

So, for me, Dar el-Hikma is not an assemblage of haphazard forces. It has not left a legacy that remains as a tortuous expression of itself. It was a circumstance organic with psychic health. Study was not an exercise structured according to delimited expertise. It was not a subordinate subset divorced from one's daily peregrinations. Instead, there the enterprise was one with the "essential unity of all things in the universe." This was not unlike the course of Egyptian study that was a "blend of theory and practice, a holistic education."

When I speak of Dar el-Hikma I am not speaking of only its physical rooting upon soil but of the invisible qualities it fostered. We know that it was closed in the year of 1010 and "interrupted for the third time at the end of the year 1015 due to conflict between the chief dai, Khuttakin al Dayf, and the Druze led by Hamza." For me, it remains organically linked to higher states of awareness. Larger understanding sees its presence as undimmed and spiritually connected to earlier centers of study at Baghdad, Fez, and Khuzestan in Persia.

Historically, neither Bayt el-Hikma in Baghdad, nor Dar el-Hikma in Cairo, nor Gundeshapur in Persia can be ascribed to European founding. Because of their closeness to Africa and its origins, the Occident

has been most adroit at shifting their exploits to the margins, covering their achievements by deception and omission. By omitting the legacy of the era it has lessened the richness of the human species, thereby providing an untenable account based on scholarly deception. It is like the image of Beethoven continuously cast into a European image in order to abduct his genius and present it other than what it was. Since Dar el-Hikma, Bayt el-Hikma, and Gundeshapur provide no possibility of such abduction, they have been cast aside and remain at best anomalous non-entities. We have been given a morally corrupt syllabus of knowledge. By willfully stunting such an indispensable connection to the past, humanity has been empowered by a disfigured animation, hiding and re-scripting its own make up. Thus, the Occident remains trapped in what I'll call a charismatic dictatorship. And this charisma always implements the Whites as the principle founders of modern learning by reiterating its standard narrative. For the past millennia the Whites have been seen as the principle stewards of world achievement. As for indigenous theory and practice, they have been seen as inconsequential, fleeting, negligible. This has remained the nexus of thought since the dawn of the modern colonial era.

The story is well known and is symbolized by the Berlin Conference of 1885. Organized by Otto von Bismarck, the first chancellor of Germany, it for all intents and purposes erased "African autonomy and self-governance." Known as the "scramble for Africa," Europe's intent was for timber, gold, land and free labor. "On the initiative of Portugal, von Bismarck . . . called on representatives of Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, the Netherlands, Russia, Sweden-Norway, the Ottoman Empire and the United States to take part" and work out their interests. This was and remains a general act of frenzy. I call it a partnership in savagery, voluntary evil, this being base agenda as the consequence of crime. What followed was the combustion of violence, the force of poisoned treaties. A most devastating chapter in the history of the human annals, yet, for all the mayhem wrought, for all the physical

suffering engendered en masse, it has been the psychological component that has remained most chronically acidic. A nadir of inclemency for the African mind, and it has been this nadir that has been emphasized via planetary propaganda. It has filtered into neuro-psychology to such a degree that Africans and peoples of color seem no more than jackals who scramble for scraps outside the laws of common parlance. And if we are considered to be part of *homo sapiens-sapiens*, it is at a level removed, linked to energy always considered primeval.

So it is within this shadow that Dar el-Hikma rotates. It is more than an anonymous enclave, a minimal precursor to Leonardo and the Italians of the fifteenth century. Again I go back to the spiritual connective between Dar el-Hikma and Luxor. The faculty at Luxor were named *Hersetha* or “teachers of mysteries” and were “divided into departments.” Of course, these departments consisted of astronomy, astrology, geography, philosophy and jurisprudence. “The process of education was not seen primarily as a process of acquiring knowledge but of the transformation of the learner who progressed through successive stages of rebirth to become more God-like. Disciplined study under the guidance of a master teacher was the single path to becoming a new person.” Study in this register is not unlike alchemical activity where neurological transparency is attained. This being insight not restricted to only visible observation but providing intimations of that which lies beyond accessible view. For example, let us again go back to the physician, Ibn al-Khatib, “who declared that ‘the Plague’ or ‘Black Death’ was caused by tiny unseen contagions. During the same era, Ibn Khatima . . . espoused the same contagion theory.” Ibn al-Khatib wrote “On the Plague,” and Ibn Khatima wrote “Description of and Remedy for the Plague.” As Pimienta-Bey so accurately points out, “medieval Europeans offered no scientific reasons for ‘infection.’ Let us again remember that the Catholic masses did not view bathing and personal hygiene as vitally important to good health and the prevention of disease.”

Healing force was thus generated through knowledge and insight. “Al-Andalus enjoyed international honors for her gifted instructors and the excellent physicians she produced.” The Moors did not possess a neurotically bound glossary, coveted and restricted to the few. “Europeans clearly had easy access to Moorish scholarship.” “Andalusian social realities of religious tolerance encourage European accessibility.” “Imamuddin tells us further that ‘Jewish physicians acquired the knowledge of Moorish science and grew famous everywhere.’ For me, this remains a positive symbol for enlargement of collective neurological capacity. This expansion of the neurological is akin to the non-measurable. From the poetic view, one could say that this neurological expansiveness is akin to rays pouring in from an invisible sun. This being a reality that exists beyond empirical scripting, this being the blaze of open instruction, where one is no longer reduced to manufactured traits, to the ego’s enclave of individual excellence.

This was not like the *École Normale Supérieure*, where the student emerges after testing splintered by nerves and exhaustion, but it was an atmosphere suffused with creative current ready for taking on fields of extended exploration. Anywhere you looked there existed this extension of exploration. Let us take Ibn Khatib, mentioned above. He was not only a physician but also a poet, writer, historian, philosopher, and politician whose biography was written in 1369 and is entitled *The Complete Source on the History of Granada*. It has yet to be translated into English.

Dar el-Hikma remains the symbol for prime expansion of the mind. Though based in Cairo and in physical operation for no more than a decade, its irradiation is timeless and reflects the values of Granada as symbol for the expanded state of collective neurology. Witness Granada and the participation of Hugh of Santalla, Plato of Tivoli, Robert of Chester, Abraham ben Ezra, inclusive of an array of phenotypic realities. This was not a myopic tribal pondering, nor was the mind squared by reducing it to provincial psychological masonry. Scholarly endeavor

was considered 'divine' en-action and was translated into Latin so as to organically irrigate the European mental province.

During this era, the medicine practiced was advanced vis a vis even current standards. Let us take Ibn Rushd (Averroes), whose "encyclopedic medical text, *Al-Kullyat fi al-Tib (Generalities of Medicine)* . . . described and illustrated with highly detailed drawings the function of the retina" and "also discussed various diseases and their symptoms" via "pharmacology, physiology, anatomy and personal hygiene." In 1225, the text was translated into Latin under the title of *Colliget* and was "required for a medical degree at Bologna." Ibn Rushd was equaled at this level of medical learning by Ibn Sina (Avicenna) and by Abu Bakr Ibn Bajjah (Avempace). In the Occident no such precedent occurred. Witness the gruesome treatment of a dying George Washington some seven centuries later via the destructive technique of bleeding. "Texts were written by Moorish physicians describing surgical technique and the instruments that were used; doctors specialized in pediatrics, obstetrics, ophthalmology, and in the treatment of hernias and tumors. Imamuddin tells us that Moorish scientists were even importing monkey skeletons from Africa for use in dissection when conditions prevented the use of cadavers." Say this learning would have had another ten centuries to develop. Where would we be as a species at the present time? It provokes intriguing speculation, given the fact that we are now engulfed by an imploded social mechanics. Perhaps if contemporary concerns were akin to the skill of Moorish discussion, another type of presence would persist and resemble their discussions that covered such areas as "grammar, lexicography, and poetry." In contradistinction, daily concern is now corroded with all manner of consumption, with overseas kill rates, with neurotic concern for personal security.

Because "the Eastern countries of Islam . . . remained a source of inspiration and . . . guidance . . . the Andalusian Moors sought to exceed the standards of their Eastern counterparts." The East of Dar el-

Hikma and the complex of Egypt, Persia, and Arabia “flaunted the fact that they were residents of the lands which had produced some of the important Andalusian skills and sciences.” Pimienta-Bey, quoting Paul Lacroix, understood that “the exact sciences passed” from “Asia Minor” and Egypt into the Moorish/Arab schools of “Spain at Cordova.” For me, Dar el-Hikma remains a susurrant irradiating source as a spiritual generating source, which suffused the entire empire. Anwar Chejne states that “pursuance and dissemination of knowledge were conceived to represent the highest attainment in this world and the hereafter. . . . It was tantamount to an article of faith.”

This was an atmosphere where the Divine was imminent as wisdom. It is known that Caliph Abd al-Rahman III spent almost one third of the state’s income on Education. While in Egypt, Caliph al-Hakim, a full century later, “had a personal library of almost a half million books,” an astonishing figure from any perspective or assessment. Add to this, Cordova around the year 1000 had 20,000 book stores. When compared to the European circumstance during this same period, the contrast is astonishing. Leonard Shlain, in his book *The Alphabet Versus the Goddess*, freely states that “Only the Church preserved the written word.” Kenneth Clark, European cultural critic, speculates that “for five hundred years, no king or nobleman could read.” While there were occasional exceptions in lay society, a chilling illiteracy descended over most of Europe, thereby unbalancing culture. Obviously Mr. Shlain and Mr. Clark made no appraisal of Granada or Dar el-Hikma or even considered in their findings the cultural wealth that issued from the Afro-Asiatic mind and its expression through institutions such as Dar el-Hikma.

There remains the social construct of color in post-colonial European scholarship. Of course there exists outstanding exceptions to this standard in the persons of Joseph McCabe, Joseph O’Callaghan and Basil Davidson, to name a few. Arabs and Africans, construed as having a synonymous blood mix, tend to rise no higher than “heathen” according to

European classification. As I continue to state, Granada and Dar el-Hikma remain too close in time for any seminal recognition of their achievement. As in chess, every move ignites new complexities of succession, so if praise were heaped on Walladah for her poetic innovation, or if Alhazen were properly glorified for his genius concerning optics, it would raise too many questions concerning the centuries-long mantra of their occlusion. A larger view of the human circumstance would have to be considered. How can a civilization continue to isolate achievement, as it has done with Roger Bacon, always failing to account for the Moorish insights that influenced his power? He comes to us disconnected from someone like Ibn Hazm, who called for study in the areas of botany, zoology, geology and medicine. Does this not recall the interdependence of disciplines practiced by Egyptians at Luxor and by beings such as Bacon's immediate mentor, Robert Grosseteste?

Always the Moors are scrambled inside the chronicles. When one considers the infrastructure of tenth-century Cordova and that of Paris and London some six centuries later, there is no comparison. Paris and London were described by McCabe as possessing "foul and contaminated drinking water, trickling," then laying "in stagnant pools on unpaved streets." As for Cordova, let me construct a small compendium: 80,455 shops, 60,300 mansions, 213,077 middle-class homes, 900 public baths. These are figures compiled from *The Medieval Arabic Records* by one al-Makkari. In Cordova the latrines ran water, the postal service flourished, the streets were gainfully lighted. When Moorish architecture soared the European castle was filled with human droppings. Moorish industry consisted of leather and metal and wool working as well as skills that were conversant with areas such as pottery and silk. To paraphrase Carlos Fuentes, the Moors were our last great possibility. In retrospect, the European Renaissance seems to have ushered in a lingering divisiveness that continues to ensnare us.

Let us point again to the *Generalities of Medicine* by Averroes,

to the *Primus Canonis* and *Quartis Canonis* by Avicenna, to the *Solitary Regime* by Avempace. These books represent standards in medicine that have guided us to the present world. Christians took note of all the Moorish advances and attempted to incorporate them into their general understanding. Translation centers flourished at Pamplona, Segovia, Toulouse, Narbonne, and Marseilles. Most notable among these efforts was the center at Toledo, where Alfonso the Wise conducted the most celebrated of the centers, where, in addition to Hippocrates, Galen and Ptolemy, scholars such as Ibn Khaldun and al-Khwarizmi were brought back from the Greek through the Arabic into the Latin. This was the salvation of Occidental culture, not its highly touted Renaissance, treated as suddenly springing up like a phoenix from the ashes.

We can speak of the surgical treatise *al-Tasrif* by Abulcasis, the chemistry of Jabir, the works of the famed physician Abu Bakr, all put into circulation, not unlike living plasma transfused into the dying body that was the Occident. Indeed, one can gorge the mind with examples of their sustaining brilliance. One can start with the Islamic paper makers, who “devised assembly-line methods of hand-copying manuscripts to turn out editions far larger than any available in Europe for centuries.” Then, there need be mention of the Banu Musa Brothers and their flaring mechanical genius, as well as the University of Al-Karaouine, “founded in 859 as the world’s oldest degree-granting university.” Indeed, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordova and many other centers reflected one another as regards scholarly achievement. The Qur’anic injunction that “the ink of a scholar is more holy than the blood of a martyr” “stressed the value of knowledge.” It was understood that learning was a river of consciousness and was inclusive. As stated earlier, Christians and Jews were not excluded from this river. This is how world knowledge first extended itself into the Occident, providing the modern world with its initial staging ground. With the expulsion of these deeper values, the Occident primed itself for a darkness, which I contend has lasted to this hour. Europe, according to Barbara

Tuchman, was a circularity of horror. Life was war, the preparation for war, the ramping down from war. There was never any respite provided for individual reflection. When the mind remains circumscribed by fear, with its energies striding back and forth within an ambit of intolerance, its irradiation regresses and resorts to Hobbes's much-quoted phrase about life being nothing more than nasty, brutish and short.

Because the greater part of a thousand years has been denied, it has left the human race woefully unprepared for the reality of deep time. It has been reduced to monikers, to short-circuited quick fixes, shut off in such a manner that it cannot acknowledge its living heritage. So how can it raise itself to the challenge of dark energy when it averts its eyes from the beams that continue to issue from the "Southern" world? Civilization is now a circumstance akin to a body feigning health yet sprawling with disease. With the oceans being slowly poisoned by sources such as Fukushima's radiation, with fish stocks more and more delimited by over-fishing and a premature death rate, the Islamic Golden Age seems to shine brighter and brighter.

LITHOCARDITES

“This stone is rare,” wrote J.B. Robinet,
naturalist, and saw it everywhere.

Pattered in his hand when he called it:
lithocardite, anthropocardite. Form fixed.

A heartstone is a hefty lump, lumped
like a lemon that has had to contend

(the reader emending lemon with strawberry,
as “more heartlike,” “less tart,” polishes

fruitlessly). Out ambling nearer several
centuries, a chaplain sights the stone

“stellated all over from basis to point,”
at which point on another, “thickly enthroned”

two straws branch and lapsily disclose
“a bluish matter within.” A third lithocardite

chipped; inside “a whitish sort of flint.”
If descriptions confuse, let me tell you:

lithocard is category, and each
rock the spitting image of my heart,

cœurs discretely molded,
according to ones who must know.

**

It had started softly, this “within,” and was
not white or blue. If like was ever seen,

in form I think but not the hue, you have.
Scooting on one foot, it tugged a shell along.

In time it quieted. Tasked to rock,
was rocked briefly vague with tidal pulls,

then on to rock as stone. Veritable blue
veins spill into the corkscrew socket.

Buried at home. Mineralized lobes
of shell cupping the body close.

**

J.B. saw the bivalve death doubled:
a two-shelled mussel with the arcs of

his muscular four-chambered heart.
“Blood to mud to sand to stone.”

Imagination clots around life loose.
Catch the smoky argillaceous cerebellum

coral; mammillares, globose, nipples;
oyster ears; a cataracted eyeball,

dot of snow; and “hatfuls of teeth”
unsewn by ploughmen, where no bones

were “supposed to belong” and no more
did. Elsewhere, private parts of a man,

a jaw, a foot, a hand. No body to recover
but is walking, keeps opine:

“Could Nature announce in clearer tone
from whence the first degree of man has come?”

**

Small in galleries of glass cabinets,
he knits his skin. Fleece by fleece.

Each wing and slug humming, quieter
for cold boxes. He saw what was pleasing;

the minute tags do harmless. A stone
knows not to be, better than a man does,

and does not mind man, the man who isn't.
So (stand of reason) he minds its make.

Flinty pique of ventricle, heart a stone's
throw cast off. Why not mingle;

I don't mind drawing like Robinet
from a robin. Percy Shelley's heart

on pyre did not burn and Mary kept it
wrapped in papers. This is what I'm told.

Impulse to the human: casts stone as
figure for heart figuring for feeling,

feeling well-meaning—call a stone stone,
and pattern for the pleasure of whetting

whetting whetting the world until sharp
enough it gives you what you asked for,

all told all you can ask, almost enough.

from COLONY

golden ratio

a generation's
gap parts male
bees from

male
bees;

they have
no fathers.

boy girl: girl: boy girl.
we proceed
against

odds.
we?

pardon,
theirs, what odds.

bees are not betting
creatures. &
even

a'th'top
o'our

(the) game,
we don't *play*.

we take; to us both
pops and drones.
while not

one:

one,

tally
fortunes; a

life lived well might just
resemble
a kept

score

con-

stantly
resettled.

a balanced hive minds.
to avoid
upsets,

eyes

on

present
stack-up: top?

let's comparison
between us
and them.

drone,
drone

(in a
word all's one):

differentiate
by office,
wingspan,

sting,
cloud

vantage,
higher ground?

inverse pretexts split
our ranks from
others':

one's
up,

two down,
of which gains

one just manages
to stay on
top; that

one
can

cancel
th' 'ther here.

one only wants to.
the other
won't know.

&

ex-

pires. one
forgets to
forget equations,
one stets, sticks;
one makes

stats

stick.

countdown,
begin, with

outcomes unknown save
from what's left
out. out

what

o

what what
o what what

deplenishing as-
surance. no:
do not

lose
track;

discretes
discompose

and shift as one score
unsettling
the dy-

nam-
ic

resolve.
how to? leave

egg alone: 's drone. makes
mate makes more.
one loses,

less
or

supersedure

from the
red-lettered

sonority re-
port i took
measures

passed
to

run in
place; to mount

safety by digit;
sheer factors;
keep the

red-
capped

tick-type
parasite

in abeyance; and
out mite mites
as is

mete—
such

measures
arise, friend.

the emergency:

they're onto

her, lack

laws:

jaw's

substance

petering.

a queen kept them in

line and now

they feel

her

flag

flag im-

perative:

to pick a larva

and feed her

extra.

to

pet

her through

wax threshold.

whose mother are you?

to rehearse.

then the

sealed

room

splits and
she's emerging,

jelly-thick, sister
drafted to make
ends meet—

*the
queen*

lives—now
a turn. now

a cross. to circle
the mother,
and cling.

to
stroke

the bulbed
belly. to

pierce it, and chew the
wings. the mound
accretes,

five
deep.

latticed
legs shift an

exitless net of
caresses
across

the
core

to warm
the unseen

body. it bawls with
heat and holes.
it cools;

they
dis-

perse. one
to bury,

one to nurse. an end
delivers
no end.

sweet
sting

swiftly
filed as

continuity
crowned her. her
whole life

they
have
prepared
it for her

preparing for them.
her whole life
it does

not
take;
no, i'll
cede the point—
it takes her whole life.

recognition

if there's a cuplike
nursery
floating

on
comb—

or a
goldenrod

balloon nicked and
frozen in
jagged

free
rush—

held by
soft wax to

the hive vertical;
if cup's rim's
patterned

a
bit

as if
achieved snip

by snip; if lip's im-
precise ab-
sent edge

ach-
ieves
halo;
if the cup

opens down; if no
body bides
in the

cup
now:
if she
emerges.

if she emerges
half again
lengthwise

as
a
worker
who nursed her,

who vouches: when dry
and well-lit,
body's

hair
takes
a gold
sparkle; and

body lusters. if she's
unblemished.
all so,

does
she

pipe? does
she embrace

opposition til
it does not
oppose?

does
she

stretch her
tongue to feed

from the lips of her
offspring; does
each need

re-
lieve

relief?
all's one, sweet,

so she is also.
she will live
fifty

lives
like
this life,
and could you
imagine another?

virgin queen

at
once
wet-winged
this queen combs

cloister to cloister
piping at
each dim

door.
from
inside
a crowning

consort sings, falling
for that call,
and is

culled:
a
sting slides
through and through

the screen with ease. now
nobody's
home to

see
her
go and
come back to

serial spotless
supple-walled
alcoves,

the
boxes

ever-
lasting. by

the thousands she packs
them full.

GOLDEN CANTICLE

psalm-nacre I used to voice in cascade, death bought
off by the sheen of it O Christ I wanted (You)
whose hand is a colder star
be true plow to my blood-field, tine-psalter
in wintersway, a passage hewn from the body's
lymph-wheat
faith's black caisson intersects a single note
neither beginning nor (is not enough) *in perfect fear*
O bled Christ-of-the-field succor this small song

BLUE PALMYRA

the dream hastens
to untouch

our waking scar

we were brethren
—a season
of labor followed

new names
chastened
the sine-orchard

where I burned
my only book

until it was silver

speckled
among the lashes

ARKADELPHIA

Cullman Co., Ala.

We must never worship
here

the seam picked
from the forest's blush

the hand
nocked, as arrow—

CENTER UNION

tremble kindly the veiled
succession
mercy's humming bone
the velvet mineral digests

the finite world
trenched in the fluorescents
strewn clear in the body
's complex elastic

such a beautiful face
—*incandescent*, aloes burning

over the baptistery
the swords cross & uncross,
we gyre through them
in our mammal-postures
inverted as blown eggs

wrapped in resinous
bandages, thus the collector
dons her narrow gloves
& *bleed the stars*, ye farmers
rustling in the middle distance

red pectoral bound
with the night's rhymed glands
generous
flock, a rival nerve
flickers in your gelled throat

ARVO PÄRT

wing-of-forest
protection grafts
into the city's
blithe liquefacton

shibboleth
of night's veil
at the day-portal

smitten-I, love's
cancer-spinney
imbricates,
an intelligence

suffer the image
(eye's
cistern-in-waiting)

silence casts
its blue shadow
against the body's
perfect rest

come ash come
air ghost-tenant

superseding
eminence, *crown*

OLD COUNTY LINE

Jefferson Co., Ala.

planed pine verifies
(testimony)
a wraith's psalm
my similar fault
credentials
the newly-familiar
splice, prosthetic axon
gleaming
(as with marriage)
pharyngeal
my dream lost
its merciform silence
I was never
youngest here, but
 O
we shall meet Him—
keen of plank
nitred in chalklight
against my deaf spine
lucid & sensual
nub of perish
to the forest flocks

WHITE TRILLIUM

i. m. Gustaf Sobin

as comet, clone the wheel's
impenetrable
sine; will's mercy-
blade. I
& reef—this commandment
spoken-
to, from depth
if not of *field*, then calling
out into night's
gentle mania, emblem-crux
devoid
of honey's
strict intemperance but
no less
silent cellos
braise this scarred & heavy
Ave,
this gelded plight—

An alternate version of this poem is forthcoming in *Appalachian Environment*
from West Virginia University Press.

from The Room: A Collection

The room is aware of the heartbeats stepping on the stones of the stairs. The mouth returns to the doorknob. Wounded by the door, the mouth refuses to sip ginger ale. At the end of the pasta

deconstruction, the mouth takes another bite of the red tomato. The room stares helplessly — the mastication ritual of the mouth. The room thinks of Rie Hosokai. Of her mouth before the creation of the inflatable pump. Her mouth is exercising air precaution. And for this, she is rewarded with the lust of design. The mouth feeds itself with deluded

red sauce and the spaghetti noodles descend the esophagus. Ropes dangling off the cliff, waiting to receive the pool of

the diaphragm. Chasm
and quiet dolor. The
room can't shake the
dust that blows
through its screen.
The rain falls down

to clean, to shake the atmosphere of the afternoon.

The room is willing to take Bus 60 into the sea. The sun is
willing. The fingers
trace the contours of
the skyline while the
pigeons peck on the
chest of the
financial district.
Hangnails leave a
trail of goosebumps
down the room's back.
The street cannot
reimburse itself with
traffic fare. A woman
bids another man

farewell at the bus depot. Hangnail is killing the room's sense of mute trepidation. The bus arrives in a blur. Four women debate the social orientation of the bus. What number amongst the civilization of buses. The woman descends into the tent called Black Pearl. The light of the sea shakes the current. Water breathes out silk and stops dreaming about being human.

In September, the room closes its door and opens its window to the coming of pastoral November. The bourgeois of June and July, the months of the middle class, rarely come to revolutionize the calendar, to make all the months of the

year socialist. The trust fund babies, the Benjamins, the upper class of January and February and perhaps March regain their regal, affluent stance on the amphitheater of the weeks. The thongs of days shout and beat their fists against their chest, demanding their work days to lengthen and shorten at different times. The upper middle class of April and May refrain from getting involved

with the sweat glands of their incoming neighbors. They walk along the shoreline of rain, daffodils, and cherry blossoms. They confide in themselves and feign compatibility with the upper class, whose wrath involved subzero terrains and

snow banks that wilt
away their blooming
morning glories,
roses, lilies, Spring
flowers. Sometimes
the upper middle
class hides their
animosity by

bringing soft, gentle breeze from the North. Sometimes bearing
quiet gifts of warmth
and silly lilies of
the valley. But
lately they, the
Benjamins, have been
known for their
sheepskin and wolf
mandibles. The birds
are most gullible.
They return from
their winter houses
in Florida. Their
wings chip off in
midflight. From a
distance they look
like bullets that
have lost

their explosive insights. Near the bottom of the totem pole, the
semi-mendicants, or
indigents of the

calendar year. Their lives are over even before they begin to enlist their children of their days for free lunches at St. Mary's. They fill their empty stomachs with candies from the witch. They grow weary from converting hot air into cold air. Their engines are overworked and they slave away for basically nothing. They sit on street corners wondering how do they break their cycle of enslavement. They chew on their fingers and pray despite the fact that their toenails are growing longer. The lowest class of the year shivers in the thin blanket of ice. Even Akhmatova threw her poems into her oven and had to

rewrite them from
memory. Sometimes
time is a fascist.
Sometimes a
francophile. A
communist.

The room is trying hard not to grow flowers from the cement of
its skirt. The tulips
bloom along the
concrete of its
foundation. At night
the room inhales the
scent of the
nightshade family and
develops bronchitis
the following
morning. The scents
descend the slippery
slope of the sidings.
Sometimes it's lung-
breaking inhaling the
afternoon.

A dress the size of a football field appears in a man's mouth as he dreams about swallowing an alligator. In the afternoon, the dress in its full regalia, crawls back into the river. It lies on the murky marsh waiting to open its hemmed jaw, waiting to stalk its prey. By one in the morning, the throat of the dress is filled with blood, limbs, and hair. The dress cannot be worn with milkweed pretending to be parasites.

Everywhere the room is bursting into tears. The door, having lost its heart to the

bookcase, is no longer facing the south window near the pantry. The door has been lifted up to the attic by the invisible hands of the landlord to make another quarter for the brothel girl. Underneath the structure of the attic, the door ceases menstruating.

The room mistakes the sound of the oncoming train for one note of a piano key dropping down the well. The room is baffling with the concept of sadness. The room has not experienced moodiness since last

July. Cannot take international phone calls. And cannot subscribe to Vanity nor to Wine Spectator. The melancholic milieu of the wine glass begins to penetrate the room's spirit. The Hendrick's gin in the second cabinet of the hutch is a vacant temptation for the room. A dark, queer impulse begins to fall on the room's temperament. The room feels trapped by the otiose of its mind and the way emotions, like the colostomy bag, fall out of the room's stomach. The source of the room's sadness remains unknown to everyone, including the ceiling fan, which hears and knows everything. The room has a personal

helicopter, which
does not fly anywhere
and parks
conspicuously like
clouds. The room is
determined to alter
its emotional state.
To become more
visually positive. To
feel less
disenchanted by the
vagaries of the
dreamer's footsteps.
The room's mood
swings begin late in
the afternoon, in
segments of time,
collated words,
before it shifts its
moods. The room's
emotions depends on
the words of
strangers and it is
largely conditioned
to take compliments
well: this room is
absolutely stunning!
I can't wait to have
a room just like
that!

for breakfast we face fires we lace our skates tire us to form our descent to bed
we ace a test in bricks for breakfast – hold up what’s over our heads – blood in our trains
infrastructure in our hearts – so many earthy spaceships in play – mud on their trucks

they spit out better bridges put pajamas on the stilts of over the freeway
my home in pajama steel – go to bed now you can all do it – a shred a day’s
the safe way to give or it reduces you like the split of some and no water

so far it breaks our span – so far to sleep that people there take turns raising their arms

[it’s a fireman’s grip]

[hope sonnet]

for Eric Hayot

if this were light it would refract – if this
were telling I'd be cold touching its nose
if it were daybreak I'd sit down in its
town square – if I knew the date of my birth
in dog years I'd watch theory get older
too slow for me once too fast other times
I'd draw me to a glinty model to start
the sea like a lawn mower – push mowers
use no gas – I eat some toast to use it
I eat some toast anyway – if I had
to choose where to begin out of stuckness
if I'd wait to begin against the grain
if waiting were light I would let it down
I'd kneel until we sweat behind our knees

[it's part of your appeal]

for Paul Saint-Amour

sometimes you're the fish – sometimes you're tessellating – sometimes you work at a disco
a ball in a light field is sometimes unround and the room's big and flat – its sides bounce
sometimes the most relaxed motion of sound is your breathing – you lie in still for it

people talked near you nights ago – sometimes you can position them on a surface
some imprecision carries harmony to the plane – sometimes you live in towers
and fish for a teacher – someone who's the right style of pressure to harness pause

or sometimes you're thicker than your voice – you thread in and out of all you have to say

[shy day]

I love one song that's a gymnasium
I love others because of here they are
make my name like a shirt that hangs on me
take my work walking – I forget each step
wait for new noise in refinished houses
holding a prop to translate me for dudes
some become loud – some have generous hands
some have now to give – I step over them
then the bus collapses against our air
I meet your space within an airy shirt
take our ball and go home – stop on the way
at a freethrow line – here I mean – reading
effort near the paint – trace your reading hands
slight muscle in between you and movement

then you sang me over the bridge I hadn't prepared for – composed us to narrows
your Battle Hymn of the Republic glued the car – I agreed with it put it toward
the live grid of grids we've had like crab traps – as far you see out Lake Pontchartrain

I see road and trust the lake is there for you – driving is the long century's balm
or planning to drive – we can agree on desires as tips toward the turn of our years
to get in the pool I need to agree with you before we leave and on the way

if I scale me against other bodies of water – there'd be no world where I could

THE FALL KILLS

Let's start over, he said, tapping nails on the table. Go out west and make a clean breast of things.

A clean break, she said, turning back to the counter.

Whatever.

The pads of her fingers on formica. The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel. The smell of engine grease, a slickness like rippling eels. What could she say? Her hair frizzed with static and she zapped everything she touched.

Jeremy looked out past the rim of his bowl at the rain and kicked his feet. Dad scribbled blue circles across pink lines on yellow paper. Mom opened a cupboard and closed it.

What's out west? she said. In the other room Jessica changed the channel and they heard the TV say the police shot the woman four times.

Jeremy watched the red edge of his bowl slip out of focus against the gray truck parked across the street slick with rain, what out west, what wasn't here, four times, the smell of grease, Jeremy watched the gray truck parked across the street slip out of focus against the red edge of his bowl, the memory of teeth cracked porcelain, the taste of blood tongue, thick tongue, the taste of pig tongue, pig blood. Jeremy watched the slip fog gaotack wall fuck nit. flt 7 sptik. jummy jmny jmimy jmny. sk'k. Everybody hands flat on flat surfaces, fingers flat, all their pink and white fingers flat but Jessica in the other room whose paint-sticky, sweaty red digits twitched balled in fists bunched in the wool of her sweater. And the rain fell and fell, spattering against the windows and the cars and the street like old fat. Jeremy watched the rain slip the scene

should be dramatic, humming with a portentous buzz. It smells like engine grease and old coffee. Everything is muted from the colors to. Stand the colors to. Can you mute a woman's backing her way out of life's assorted? Mute a man's sense of hope at the edge of risk, a gamble he's not sure he's got the balls to make, and his sense that she's lost faith? Can you mute her loss of faith? Or is it only momentary, just doldrums, seasonal

affective whatever, and don't we have to just get through, for the kids or whatever, for life, just deal with it or whatever.

Dad's name is Jay. Mom is Jan. They're the J. Coopers. The J. Crew. Smile. They go to Olive Garden on Sunday afternoons and make it back in time for The Simpsons. They have a tangible socioeconomic reality evoked by a combination of telling details and artfully crafted omissions. Dad drives a Saturn.

If we go to California, Jeremy asked, do I have to go to school?

Yes, Dad said.

Can I go to one of those Muslim schools?

What?

Where they teach the Bible.

Muslims don't read the Bible. They read the Koran.

Yeah the Koran.

No, you can't go to Muslim school.

Can I go watch TV then?

Mom opens the cupboard and turns on the TV. Dad pushes a button on the wall, the window flickers, static gray, resolving to a D___ D___ cartoon. Mom slides her eyes from their sockets cutting loose the projecting beam, firing TV at the walls, the ceiling, TV beams piercing the table. The focus. The cereal bowl. Light on skin on light. Mom and Dad waltz the kitchen, he's singing "Begin the Beguine," a memory ever green, and Jessica prances in, shooting into the ceiling, hotfooting a manic flippetyflop jumparoo. What are you gonna do about it, that's what I'd like to know.

Deeper into the mystery, I saw then why my employer, Cardera, liked to have things very clearly organized. If they were really going out west, it would start an almost uncontrollable avalanche of signification. Speed of space. skintification. Spk'uh. Can you imagine potato chip bags slick inside with the grease of salty fingers, mustard packets, an inch of stale Cherry Coke at the bottom of a lukewarm, crumpling wax paper

cup? Can you feel Mom itching her scalp, her eyes weary of the same broken road, the same humming engine, the same stabbing whine, the same glance at Jay to make sure he's awake, make sure he's awake, make sure make sure make sure. We touch too much maybe

you should try a new shampoo let's
start over.

A girl, a lion, a woodsman, a scarecrow, and a dog walk into a bar.
A house falls on an old woman.

Mom buys a pack of Winston Lights on the sly and smokes one out behind the hotel. Purple slabs of granite heave at the horizon, a wall of rock in which somewhere is the gate the candy-apple-red semis keep rolling through, somewhere the way through, the western path. Dad changes channels upstairs while Jeremy looks out the window and writes in his Dinosaur Journal. Jessica—who knows? The sense of danger and new has faded into scummy unconcern, the apathy of open spaces. Clouds point this way and that, no clear omen. Dad changes channels from a pouty, blonde, half-naked nymphette singing for cheeseburgers to one of those extra sports channels, where Portuguese and Senegalese chase each other down a field, a ball, three balls, points, somebody fouls. Sticks? Is it some kind of field hockey? Dad finds himself wondering if they have electricity in Portugal, or cable TV, what they do in Portugal for fun. How do you be Portuguese? How do you have fun?

Dad finds himself half-wishing Jessica would find a meth-addict to run off with. He wouldn't even have to be clean as long as he had a car. She was too much these days, the girl: her pubescent indeterminacy, her sex-tainted tantrums, her hot-pink claws. Maybe he could sell her for gas money.

Dad, Jeremy said.

Yeah.

Is it true our civilization doesn't deserve to survive?

You got me, kiddo. Ask Mom.

She said ask you.

Well, shoot. Why you ask me that?

Warren wants to know.

Warren who?

Warren Buffet.

Warren Buffet the millionaire?

No, not Warren Buffet millionaire. Warren Buffet dilophosaurus.

Oh. Is that one of the little ones?

With the double crest on his head.

Is he the one that spits poison?

You believe everything you see on TV?

I thought he was the one that spits poison.

Dad, don't be naïve.

Fine. No. Our civilization doesn't deserve to survive. Happy?

I don't care. Warren wanted to know.

Is Warren happy?

Oh, Dad, dinosaurs aren't happy or sad. Their brains are too small for emotion. You of all people should know that. Reptile cortex: kill and fuck. That's all there is.

Jesus where'd you hear that language?

I don't know.

Well don't let your mother catch you saying 'kill and fuck.' Jesus.

Maybe I heard it from her.

Well, don't let her catch you anyway, or you'll learn real quick about reptile cortexes.

Cortexes.

Whatever. Read your book.

I never thought time was something we could feel. Be that as it may, I found the two of them lying there dead like that, strings cut. What happened? Ran out of juice, I suppose. On the TV is a show about a dog that pees on some old man, thus externalizing our desire, the

golden ammoniac splash. The look of horror. Mom's Winston burns with a crackle, a single star orange in the dusk now Prussian blue.

A line of tanks thunder along the highway, west to east, deer carcasses slung to hang against the turrets, slack, furred loins, the fall kills. The lead tank commander stands jutting from the cupola wearing a gas mask, antlers mounted on his kevlar, the staff of Moses in his hands.

Wait, he said. I forgot to show you this. He took from his pocket a pewter pig and handed it to me. My first feeling was confusion—wasn't it supposed to be a slice of pig, a crackling slab of pork, our feast, the first kill of the fall, our celebration—but it was a small pewter figure of a pig, a small figure of a big pig. I looked at it by the light of the fire, examining the fine work, the delicate bristles, the tiny jutting snout and the eyes little more than pricks, and confusion gave way to admiration, amazement, some slight joy.

Nice, I said.

You like it? he asked.

I do, I said. It's nice. You can see little splotches of mud on its legs, the work is so fine. His little cloven hooves. And look at the tiny curly tail.

Snouts snuffling in the gullets of corpses.

I know, he said. I thought you'd like it. I didn't mean to interrupt.

No, it's fine. It's nice. Where'd you get it?

He made a sheepish face and looked away into the woods. Was this the detail you're waiting for? Woods, trees, pine branches hanging. Campfire. A bottle of \$20 whiskey and a six-pack.

Eat the dead.

I stole it from Cardera, he said.

Are you serious?

Eat the dead.

Yeah, he nodded. I went into his office earlier this week to ask him some fucking thing about payroll and he wasn't in there and so I

waited a minute to see if he'd come back and I was looking at that shelf of figures he has, you know what I mean, that shelf with all his little fucking knickknacks. And I felt out of the pit of my stomach a dark and petty spirit rising inexorable as the ocean, a plum-colored wave of perversity, and I saw the pig and took it. I wanted to take them all, take all his little figurines and break them into bite-size pieces and eat them, then shit them all over his carpet. I didn't have time, so I just took the one.

He say anything?

He say anything, anything I make him, make him say anything. Integral to the trajectory, asymptote to the curve, the road at the edge of consciousness spinning pixellated silver discs under black rubber engines screaming the edge of day across space—stab yourself into the plains, lash yourself to the coffin, tie yourself down and ride—headlight, toothpick, enamel. As follows: milkshake unction, sun like a bloodied eye, the clouds in the sky drift silver across the windshield, drift charcoal grit across the velvet black sky, firelight reflecting intimations. The secrets of fire in the dark—wild pig roasting on a spit—lost it, whatever it was, the cro-magnon man. Gone like yesterday's Greyhound. After these messages from our sponsor.

No, he hasn't. I'm pretty sure he knows it's missing, but I think he's too scared of us all to say anything until he knows who did it. It's like if he admits we can steal stuff from him then he's vulnerable, you know? But he's locking his door now.

I wonder what's he's gonna do.

The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel. Dad scribbled blue circles across pink lines on yellow paper. Jeremy watched the slip fog gaotack wall fuck nit. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Cereal bowl. Fine. Happy? Jesus. Jesus. Cortices. Mom opens a cupboard, closes it. Dad scribbles blue ellipses across pink lines on yellow paper. The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel. Tanks rolling east. Mommie? God's grace. The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel. Dad scribbled blue circles across pink lines on

yellow paper. Jeremy watched the slip fog gaotack wall fuck nit. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Dad's name is Jay. Mom is Jan. Dad drives a Saturn. Jeremy asked. Dad, Jeremy said. Ask Mom. Mom opens a cupboard, closes it. God's grace. The stage, sang Jeremy, pulling a mock baritone. Was dark, sang Dad. Was dark, sang Dad. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Mom is Jan. Jeremy asked. Dad, Jeremy said. Ask Mom. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Mom is Jan. Jeremy asked. Dad, Jeremy said. Ask Mom. Was dark, sang Dad. Was dark, sang Dad.

Slap. Fit cairn. If I'm not the Koran can I at least go watch TV? Antlers mount the TV. The kitchen reeks of engine grease—under Jay's fingernails the grease of a thousand blown gaskets—in the corner, in a towel in a red plastic recycling bin, the heart of some great machine lies bleeding. Mom opens a cupboard, closes it. Dad scribbles blue ellipses across pink lines on yellow paper. The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel.

I don't know. He might say something at the meeting next week. Anyway, man, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt.

No problem, I said. Where were we?

Denver maybe or Montana. They'd gone out west but not all the way.

Yeah, well, you go all the way and you're in the sea. Anyway, okay. I lost my train. People talking voices. Tanks rolling east. Where's Jan? She's out there smoking a Winston Light, I remember, the ember an orange star in a field of Prussian blue, she's thinking what it means to go out west. Her dad left them when she was only young, her and her mom and her little sister and brother, she was nine and he left, out west, he left two days before Christmas. Warped, tear-sodden pages of the book of memory—that Christmas morning mom didn't get out of bed.

Mommie?

Go away.

Mommie, it's Christmas.

Go away, go all of you.

Can we open our presents?

Do whatever you want. Burn the house down.

Jan put on the TV and played Mommie, telling the little ones which gifts they could open and in what order. This is the psychologically telling memory, the pivot of her later life, the organizing principle, consciousness reduced to biography. We are memory or we are nothing.

Dad was a Brother in the church, The First Church of Hope of Jesus Christ, and they quit going to the church after dad left but Jan kept asking if she could go, nagging and cajoling, until finally Mom called one of her friends from the church (we're *so* sorry to hear about what happened Linda, we really are, and if there's ever *anything* we can do) and had the woman take her. Jan looked for her father among the Brothers, the other men who dressed in ties and short-sleeved shirts and helped with administration, patriarchs of the folding chairs. She asked them if they knew where her dad was. None of them knew and they were all kind but distant, wary of the confused and desperate girl looking for the hole in her life. That lasted about seven weeks, until spring, when one Sunday she had a stomach ache so she didn't go and next week Mom forgot to call and then one Sunday morning in May she found herself watching cartoons realizing she didn't go to church anymore. She had a picture of her dad and the other Brothers all standing in their short-sleeve shirts grinning into the camera and it still had the power to open a void in her chest as big as the whole known world. Sometimes her only hope was that she hadn't seen everything.

She walked down the street of this one-pump town on the edge of the plains, on the edge of the mountains, because she'd seen when they drove along looking for a hotel a First Church of Hope off a side-street, and she knew even then she'd sneak away. Biding her time. The streets off the main drag quiet and dim, homes lit with the flicker of electric fire, gently morbid streets she walked down snapping her fingers and mumbling Cole Porter. The parking lot of the church was empty but for

one car, a yellow Hyundai hatchback. The church itself was a big gray A-frame, smooth as a monolith, windowless prefab. The front door was locked so she went around the side. A door had been left propped open by a smooth lump of iron stuck between the edge and the jamb. She put the iron in her pocket and went into the darkened chapel.

Small yellow lights illuminated the unadorned crucifix at the altar on the stage at the front of the chapel. It glowed against the shadows. She felt a shock of apprehension, realizing how long it had been since she'd been in a church, how far she'd gone from God and how much she missed it. The cross, so simple and good, so bright in the darkness, seemed to be the very shape of her life, a road forking, paths chosen, suffering borne for others' sake. Her eyes grew accustomed to the dimness and began to see the lines of folding chairs and the posters hung on the walls.

Would it be different out west, she wondered. Would Jay be different? Would her hands no longer feel tied into the same acts, the same days, the same knuckles sliding on stainless steel? Would the meaning of suffering in Jeremy and Jessica, the suffering for them, the ungrateful little suffer them, would that meaning return to hold her up like it had before it had gone? She didn't think so, yet here was hope. Some hope. Some hope for something. Some hope for anything.

I came out onto the stage and saw her there. I hadn't expected her yet at the same time I wasn't surprised. We have a sense of things sometimes. She had short black hair and a sad, complicated face. She had on earrings, the dear, but no makeup, blue jeans, tennis shoes, and a puffy black jacket. She was young but hard-put by life. She carried her purse in her hand, maroon pleather with crème trim and fake gold snaps. Some humans so damned you want to weep. I didn't say anything, not wanting to startle her, so I stood in the shadows until both of us were used to the darkness.

Yes, I thought, there's the hope and resignation, there's pain and— for a moment—the transcendence of earthly torment. There's comfort in

the sense of an ordered cosmos and dignity in the meaning of our lives. There she is struggling with doubt, thinking herself all the deeper and richer for it, then affirming her faith and feeling it rush into her veins, sudden strength, yes, this life, yes, this world, yes, by God.

Hello, I said quietly, in my gentlest timbre.

She turned but did not startle. Hello?

Hi. I waved my hand.

Oh, hi. I'm sorry, I didn't realize anyone—I just—I was a—I just wanted to come in for a minute.

That's fine, I said, the Lord's house is always open. I'm glad you came. I bowed my head a moment, then stepped down off the stage. She looked at her feet, then at me, then back at her feet. Tears welled in her eyes. Are you troubled, sister?

She choked up, waving her hand at me. I took it and pulled her gently near, put my arm around her.

It's alright, sister. God's grace.

Eat the dead.

Then she was weeping on my shoulder, sobbing out all her pain and worry in jagged moans. God's grace I muttered, God's grace. She wept and then she was better. She pulled away and wiped her face, apologizing, explaining how she'd been so worried lately, telling me the whole sordid story: Jay lost his job, Jessica discovering boys and getting into trouble, Jeremy wouldn't talk at school anymore and the job she'd left, why, oh it was stupid, so they could go out west where Jay's brother lived and worked for a construction company and he could get a job there, lower level management, and it would pay alright and be a new chance, a new chapter, a new life, except everything she knew told her it would be the same, the same cliché, the whole sordid story.

I took her chin in my hand and kissed her. She seemed surprised at first then yielding, her lips like sweet eels, slick as rippling eels. Our tongues darting against each other, against teeth. I could taste her despair

and the Winston she'd smoked, I breathed her breath, her blood pumped against mine. Then I let her go and she looked at me, her eyes red-rimmed and confused.

There's something I want to show you, I said, and I took her to the side of the altar where I opened a fire door. Beyond the door was a set of stairs that led down, down deep, at the bottom of which reflected the yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel below. There's some people I want you to meet, I said, and they want to meet you.

Down there? she asked, trusting but timid.

Yes, I said. Just go down and follow the tunnel. I'll be along in a minute.

Okay, she said, giving a brave smile. I patted her on the shoulder and then pointed down the stairs. She looked down, then up at me, then back down. I nodded at her and she nodded back and she took her first step, then the second. When she was about halfway down the stairs she looked up at me and I waved to her, then slammed and locked the door. The poor thing—the lights go off when the door closes—how would she ever find her way in the dark? Of course, the tunnel only went one place.

I stepped up to the crucifix on the altar and looked out at the chapel's lines of folding chairs. I turned the lights off. I could hear the angels singing, ever so softly. I bowed my head a moment, turned and left. The stage was dark and the chapel silent.

That stag washed dark and this cheap hell skyless.

Treat stuck wounds down his a cappella poultice.

Tak stug wam dak enten chapeau silas.

The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel. Dad scribbled blue circles across pink lines on yellow paper. Jeremy watched the slip fog gaotack wall fuck nit. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Dad's name is Jay. Mom is Jan. Dad drives a Saturn. Jeremy asked. Yes, Dad said. Mom opens the cupboard and turns on the TV. Cereal bowl. There's a house falling on an old woman. Dad, Jeremy said. Yeah. Ask Mom. Well, shoot. Who's

Warren? Warren Buffet. Warren Buffet dilophosaurus. Fine. Happy? Jesus. Cortices. Whatever. Mom opens a cupboard, closes it. Dad scribbles blue ellipses across pink lines on yellow paper. The yellow-lit ceiling of the tunnel. People talking. Tanks rolling east. Mommie? God's grace. The stage, sang Jeremy, pulling a mock baritone. Was dark, sang Dad. The fall kills. The fire crackles. Pig tongue. Whatever. Yes, Jessica said.

The stage, sang Jeremy, pulling a mock baritone.

Was dark, sang Dad.

Jessica came in with her lovely soprano—And the chapel.

Jeremy kicked the back of her seat. Do you sing silent? he asked.

If you're silent you're not singing, dummy.

I think I'm suffering dysentery, Jeremy said.

Probably that bag of gummy worms you ate.

Up here high in the mountains the road curved over space over space. Jessica looked out over the shoulder where the granite fell away, the vast spectacle of sky and rock. Let's start over.

Slip divide the sky.

One time we went hunting in these very woods, my dad my uncle and me. Slack, furred loins lying along the bed of the truck, lightless black eyes I'd

like to believe there's a principle at work here, some demon playing games. I think I'm suffering dysentery.

Mom down in the pitchblack tunnel beneath the church makes her way on her hands and knees toward the crack of light under the door which finally opens. Blinded, she turns away and so doesn't at first see the hands lifting her up and carrying her into the room, hands under her arms, fingers wide and powerful, fingernails edged in petroleum grime. She looks up at faces shadowed in white velour hoods. The room murmurs, a sibilant mutter in the round, led by one wearing a bronze reliquary bearing two teeth of St. Catherine of Alexandria, one reading the Psalter of Snakes and Bones. They strap Mom down to the broken

spiked wheel, murmuring all the time, Mom shaking her head, febrile tongues, all beyond our control. They stretch her arms, the puffy sleeves, and one monk holds the stake against one palm and another readies the hammer. The iron drops and through the flesh the stake grates against the tiny bones in her hand. Mom screams, her throat cracking. The men pound the stake into the rim of the broken spiked wheel, nailing her to it, while another man lashes her down, rope taut around the puffy sleeve. They're at work on her other arm at the same time, tying it down, driving the stake in. Jan's face white with pain, her screams fade into whimpers. Men grab her bluejeaned calves and tie them together above the ankles to the bottom of the wheel, then one takes an especially long rusted stake and jabs the point into the sock over her ankle and another brings down the mallet-head with a thud and drives iron through bone.

After they get her staked down they lash the wheel back together where it's broken and roll it up to the altar, turning it so she hangs head down. She's passed out from the pain or she's awake again or both. Her legs straight up and her black puffy arms spread wide she mimics the symbol of peace. With the susurrant murmuring still steady the one in Prussian blue velour comes up and lifts the axe back over his shoulder, his feet planted apart, his shoulder set, and brings it down and swinging in where her jaw breaks clean against her pale neck, cleaving with a wet crack.

A younger one in white takes her head up by the hair off the stage and the stump of her neck bleeds out onto the floor, an orange ember on a field of Prussian blue, teeth on porcelain, all the monks' hands lie flat, all their fingers flat, but not Jessica's balled sticky in her mother's hair as she holds up the head to the worshipful ones and begins to sing in her lovely soprano:

*Let the love that was once a fire remain an ember,
Let it sleep like the dead desire I only remember
When they begin the beguine.*

And still the rain fell, the monks all singing now, the red rim of the cereal bowl against the gray truck, Cardera's pig roasting on a spit over the fire, the symbol of the pig roasting on the symbol of roasting and I slap my hands together and slide my palms, the hiss of rain, slide them then stop and snap your fingers the click and spatter of rain on the windows, snap and stop and slap your palms against your knees, the rain's louder, more real, purple clouds sweeping across the gray mountain sky, the mountains white against the red lake, the blue lines spiraling across pink borders and yellow rooms, stop slapping and stamp your feet, the roar of thunder, stomping heels into the ground and then stop again, slap again, slapping on knees and snapping fingers and sliding palms, the hiss of rain, and then stop. The fire crackles. I pour another finger of whiskey into the brushed steel thermos lid cup.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to see all this first? The first time anywhere?

Except the Indians.

But there was a first Indian, too, remember that.

Except the Neanderthals.

There was a first Neanderthal.

Except the first monkeyman.

But don't you think, I said, he would have shown amazement at an existence—are the levels right here? One two three. Gtao. Spack. One two three four. Can you hear me? I don't know if you can hear me. But I'm saying, an existence he hadn't imagined? Whole new species? New mountains? Simple amazement at pure novelty.

Like new technologies?

No, I said, that's not what I mean.

Why not? he asked.

He's always like this.

I looked through the bars of the gate, peered out upon the squalor in which my apeman captor lived. He looked at me with dully lidded eyes.

You think you've got it all figured out, he grunted.

You know, I said, you're just as much a prisoner as me.

I knew you'd say that, he said, scratching his armpit. He pulled a banana off the table and sniffed it.

Well what are you gonna do about it, that's what I'd like to know. I don't have to do anything, he said. I'm happy out here. You happy in there?

Of course I'm not fucking happy in here.

Well then who has to do anything? He peeled the banana with his feet and ate a piece. Not me. I'm happy.

I just want something new, Jay said. I think it'd be good for us. Let's start over, he said, tapping nails on the table. Go out west and make a clean breast of things.

A clean break, she said, turning back to the counter, replacing the handset.

Whatever.

Four shots. Pig tongue. She zapped everything she touched.

They'd never make it through the mountains without her. Mom was the only one who knew where the gate was, the only one who knew the way through, the only one who knew how to find the parallel the candy-apple-red semis rolled down, the line of red against the gray field, so Dad jerked the wheel. Shall we?

Yes, Jessica said. Please.

Do what you want, Jeremy said. Burn the house down.

Whatever. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Dad's name is Jay. Mom is Jan. Jeremy asked. Yes, Dad said. Dad, Jeremy said. Ask Mom. Warren Buffet dilophosaurus. Whatever. Whatever. Jeremy watched the rain slip. Mom is Jan. Jeremy asked. Dad, Jeremy said. Ask Mom. Was dark, sang Dad. Was dark, sang Dad.

So Dad gunned it and jerked the wheel left and then right and the car shot off the shoulder, careening through the air into *the end of the*

world. . . . Even now, before

Jeremy watched the red edge slip out of focus against the gray slick with rain, what out west, what wasn't here, Jeremy watched the gray wall slip out of focus against the red edge memory of Winston Lights taste of pig blood Jeremy watched the slip focus everybody's hands flat and the rain fell but Jessica's hands twitched balled in fists jammed in the wool of her sweater, her mother's hair, Jeremy watched the gray slip red let's

start over

from REPETITIONS

5.

Some time later, I was paddling in my kayak on the Hudson and the same words were ever on my mind: “Words spoken once are gradually forgotten... archaic blood that never dries.” There is a natural phenomenon which is well known to anyone who spends time on water and encounters waves, but which may be unknown to others and which for this reason I will now explain. When one is in a boat and at rest, a wave coming from behind will lift up the boat and set it down, without carrying the boat forward. But if one is already moving at the same speed and in the same direction as the wave, one will be picked up by the wave and carried forward with it. This does not happen when one is at rest because in that case one’s encounter with a wave lasts only a moment, as the wave passes the spot where one is resting. But if one keeps up with a wave for a sufficient length of time, one begins sliding down its slope, because of the pull of gravity; once this downward slide begins, it does not end until one reaches the bottom of the slope; and because the wave continues traveling all this time, the bottom of the slope will be much farther from the point at which one started the slide than simply the length of the slope from top to bottom. As one slides down, one no longer needs to paddle to keep up with the wave, since the pull of gravity now ensures that one will continue to travel at the same speed as the wave. For this reason, it is possible to get a lot of power out of a wave, provided one is aligned with it and moving at the same speed as it is moving when it arrives from behind. On a windy day, I was out on the river. Waves came up behind me, and because I was able to accelerate and to stay with them for a sufficient length of time, these waves picked me up and carried me forward, much farther and faster than I could have paddled on my own. I took great delight in surfing the waves in this way and marveled at the difference between the relationship that one has with a wave when one is at rest and

the relationship that one has with a wave when one is in motion and aligned with the wave. For in the first case, the wave merely lifts one up and sets one down; but in the second case, the wave sweeps one up and carries one away. I was riding the waves and thinking these things, when the voice that had spoken into my left ear before spoke to me once more, saying: "Do not these waves coming behind you resemble nothing so much as words spoken twice? Speak words once and that first speaking is a wave that propagates in all directions. Speak the same words again and you align yourself with that wave and match its speed. The first speaking arrives from behind and carries you forward, far beyond the words that you have just spoken. The second speaking simply allows you to stay with that wave long enough to catch it. And what has just been said about the speaking of words, is it not also true of all actions when they are repeated?" Then the voice fell silent, leaving me alone with the river. I was paddling under the George Washington Bridge when I heard these things.

6.

Another time, a friend who was pregnant visited me at the boathouse on the Hudson where I kept my kayak. She lay down on the deck, looked at the sky, and watched the seagulls flying high above. Afterward, I remembered the moment and made a poem out of it, which I entitled: "Seagull."

A pregnant girl is lying on the ground
She is lying back and looking at the clouds
Laugh, seagull, laugh
At this complicated state of good fortune

The seagulls' cries reminded me of laughter; that is why I say in the

poem: “Laugh, seagull, laugh.” As for the last line of the poem, I took it from the end of “Robinson Crusoe,” where he says: “Anyone would think that in this state of complicated good fortune, I was past running any more hazards; and so indeed I had been, if other circumstances had concurred, but I was inured to a wandering life,” and so on.

7.

Soon after this, I was walking down Broadway and thinking about the two waves of sound that had reached my ears—one through the bones in my head and one through the air around my head—when I first spoke the words mentioned above. Falling into a kind of reverie, I began to imagine the journey of these words through my bones and the journey of these words through the air becoming slower and slower and growing farther and farther apart from each other. In my imagination, the interval between them grew longer and longer, until it seemed to me that these words had reached me first through my bones when I was born, and that they would reach me again through the air when I died, and that my whole life would take place in the span of time between these two events, resounding with the memory of the former and the anticipation of the latter. Then the interval between my hearings of these words turned another way, and they seemed to me to be the walls of a church, so that the span of time between them was the interior of that church, within which a man could walk back and forth. And then their aspect changed once more, and they seemed to be no longer the walls of a church, but the sides of a grave. In my imagination, I looked down into this grave and saw that it had no bottom, opening up into a darkness whose density was too great for my eyes to penetrate, and I became afraid that the shades of the dead might come surging out of that darkness and into the light of day. While thinking these things, I saw someone walking up Broadway and it seemed to me to be a friend

of mine. Before I could tell for sure, she called my name: "Ilya!" We stopped and exchanged greetings, engaging each other in conversation. Then she took my arm and we continued walking down Broadway together. Later, I composed a poem about it, which began: "We have been walking in the street."

We have been walking in the street
As if the street were a church
Arm-in-arm in these out-of-doors
Profanity finds no quarter here

8.

Some time later, I was walking down Broadway again and it happened that, as I was passing by the George Washington Bridge bus station, I repeated the words that had been in my mind for quite some time, saying out loud: "Words spoken once are gradually forgotten and gone for good, but words spoken twice leave a wound out of which comes archaic blood that never dries." As I repeated these words, a wound opened up in the air on Broadway. I ran my finger along this wound as I walked. Who was bleeding? I could see nothing of that body. Yet I could tell that a sacrifice had been made. And because this fact made such a strong impression on me, I could not contain it in my thoughts, saying out loud: "By the blood coming out of this wound, although we will not know who is bleeding, yet we will understand that a sacrifice has been made."

9.

Some time later, it happened that I fell asleep in the middle of the afternoon. When I woke up, my heart was full of fear. I lay in bed and

waited for the fear to pass, but the thought of death would not leave me. I knew that death was coming toward me from all directions, and I no longer wanted to see the light of day. Finally, I got up and went outside. Later, I made this poem about it:

Walking in the streets, day-wandering,
One takes one's bones out of bondage.
Day-wandering and night-wandering,
One crosses that threshold and enters that church again.
Lying flat on one's back, stripped of everything,
One rises to that sickness which comes from God.
Still unknown, still unknowable,
One becomes the bones that one is.

In this poem, I reverse the order of the events recounted above, saying first: "Walking in the streets"; and second, "Lying flat on one's back." If anyone should ask why I reversed the order, I would not be able to explain my decision, except to say that order in a poem is not the same thing as order in prose, and also to say that anyone who wishes to understand why I reversed the order should read this poem out loud. In any case, I say in the poem not "I," but "one," so that the actions mentioned in the poem must be ascribed not to me, but to an unspecified person, who might or might not be me.

10.

Then it happened that with another friend, who has not yet been mentioned in this narrative, I attended a service at a church not far from the building where I live. The building where this friend lived at that time was on the same street as my own building, and this church was also on the same street, exactly halfway between her building and

mine. Upon entering the church, we were told that it was a festive day for the congregation, dedicated to the installation of a new pastor. Many officers of the church spoke to the congregation. Finally, a woman approached a lectern that was on the right side of the stage and addressed the congregation, saying: “Thoughts become words, words become actions, actions become habits, habits become character, and character becomes destiny—so be careful what you think!” After this woman finished speaking, another woman approached a lectern that was on the left side of the stage and addressed the congregation, saying: “We act like we created everything. We act like we had something to do with it. But we created nothing! We had nothing to do with it!” Then it seemed to me that their words were in contradiction with one another. For the first woman had said that our actions, our words, and even our thoughts eventually shape our destiny; but according to the conception of the second woman, everything is out of our hands and we have no say in anything at all. Whom to believe? “Is this church so big that it can contain two truths that are in contradiction with one another?” I wondered. Since I wanted to listen to the rest of the service, I put this question aside until I should find some place to be alone and think about it. I was in a joyful mood when the service ended, and so was my friend, and each of us was glad that the other was in a joyful mood also.

11.

In the evening of that same day, I was walking down Broadway and recalling what the two women had said, when I conceived of a glorious reconciliation between their statements. The first woman had said that thoughts lead to words, words to actions, actions to habits, habits to character, and character to destiny, and she had done so in order to demonstrate that by controlling our thoughts we can control even our destiny somewhat. The second woman had said that we create nothing,

and she had done so in order to demonstrate the insignificance of our power. But if our power does extend over our thoughts and even our destinies somewhat, as the first woman had demonstrated, then what is it exactly that we cannot control? What we cannot control is the tendency of our thoughts, when they are repeated, to become words; the tendency of our words, when they are repeated, to become actions; the tendency of our actions, when they are repeated, to become habits; the tendency of our habits, when they last, to become our character; and the tendency of our character, when it endures, to become our destiny. Nor are there any differences between these tendencies that I have just mentioned, because they are all one tendency, and this tendency is life and death to us. It is a tendency that we did not create. It is a tendency that we cannot destroy. This tendency is us, and we are this tendency. I rejoiced at having found this happy resolution between the statements of the two women, saying in my heart: "Neither of these statements was complete by itself, but together they have led me to the threshold of the mystery of repetition." And reasoning with myself in this way, I began to think more intently about the transformation of thoughts into words, actions, habits, character, and destiny, marveling at the fact that repetition alone suffices to accomplish these transformations. Is there anything at all that can remain the same in the face of repetition? I asked myself. Is there anything at all that can withstand its influence?

12.

It is said that the dead can see the past and the future, but not the present. And they owe this vision and this blindness to the same cause. For the dead, who have been dead for so much longer than the living have been alive, have seen those things repeated innumerable times which the living have witnessed only once or twice. And that which still stops the gaze of the living, and which the living regard as the present,

has become so familiar to the dead that they no longer see it. Instead, they look right through it. And looking through it, they see that which the living do not: that which arrives more slowly, that which is subject to repetitions that are too far apart to be seen during our life, that which rises out of the density of our past like a wave and breaks like a destiny on the shores of our future. In the same way, one who visits a city for the first time in his life notices things that have long become invisible to one who has lived in this city his whole life. And one who has lived in the city his whole life will peer at the city, as he walks through it, and behold that which the visitor cannot conceive of. And what can they say to each other?

13.

Then it happened that for a long time I came to the Hudson River every day when the sun was setting and spent my evenings there. During this time, I made a discovery that seemed to me so strange that I will relate it here. On any evening that I spent on the river, if I sent my thoughts back to the evening of the day before, which I had also spent on the river, the evening of the day before would present itself to my mind as though it had taken place not one day ago, but sometimes a year ago, and sometimes ten years ago, and sometimes a hundred years ago. And sometimes the evening of the day before would present itself to my mind as though it had taken place a year ago, ten years ago, and a hundred years ago, all at once, so that I would not rightly know where I stood with respect to the past. I marveled at this confusion in my mind, but a thought rose up in me and said: "The length of a day is measured by the ticking of the clock. But what is it measured by here on the river? I hear no ticking clocks here." Then I recalled the old paradox concerning the question: "How long is the coast of Britain?" As he explained who first posed that question, the length of the coast of Britain depends

on the scale at which it is measured; and the shorter the yardstick, the longer will be the outcome. In a similar way, I wondered whether it was possible to ask this question not just about the coast of Britain, but about other things, and in particular I wondered whether it was possible to ask: "How long is a day of life?" and what answers could be found for such a question.

14.

Not long after, I had a dream in which I was walking down Broadway, when I saw the three friends of whom I have already spoken in this narrative: the one who was pregnant and visited me on the river, the one with whom I went to church, and the one with whom I walked down the street as if the street were a church. Although these friends had never met, in my dream I saw them walking up Broadway together and coming toward me. Seeing them in this way, I said to myself: "What is this now?" Then I woke up and said: "My dear ladies."

15.

Another time, I was walking down Broadway, when I said this poem:

I know a woman,
Never her fixity alters.
Her face when I come close
Increases not, decreases not
When I move away:
She is a true compass.
I know a woman,
Never her fixity alters.

I said this poem and it reached my ears in two waves of sound, which propagated more quickly through the density of the bones in my head and more slowly through the emptiness of the air around my head. And it seemed to me that these two waves of sound resembled those waves of sound which are produced by two guitar strings that are slightly out of tune with each other. For just as two guitar strings that are slightly out of tune with each other produce a pulsating effect when they are plucked together, becoming louder when their ringing is in phase and softer when it is out of phase, I felt a pulsating effect in myself when I said this poem and began to shake with trembling. Then I grew afraid and believed that I would be shaken to death in this way. And I trembled with fear of death. And because I could turn nowhere else for solace and there was no other recourse available to me, I walked down Broadway until I became drunk with Broadway.

16.

During that time in my life when I reached the threshold of the mystery of repetition, I trembled in my heart. For I beheld that an idea turned over in the mind once reveals nothing about what it will become when it is turned over in the mind ten thousand times. And I beheld also that an idea's concatenation with other ideas reveals nothing about how it will intertwine with other habits if it should happen to be repeated enough times to become a habit. And I beheld finally that the first impression made by an idea on a person's mind reveals nothing about the destiny to which it will bind him if it should go through enough repetitions to become his destiny. All my life I had longed for the unknown, and this longing had led me to look for the unknown in novelty and change. But now I beheld the unknown of repetition and I stood in awe before it. Then I walked down Broadway trembling, and if anyone should have asked me why I trembled, I would have said: "I tremble because

I am afraid to undertake any action, since by doing so I will embark on the road of repeating it, and I know not where that road will lead.” And another time I said in my heart: “I am crossing the threshold of the mystery of repetition, and I must draw a line between the past and the future in my life. For before I was surrounded by the darkness of novelty and change, and in that darkness I walked and lived. But now I am surrounded by the darkness of repetition, and I shall walk in that darkness, and I shall live in that darkness.”

17.

Soon after this, I was walking down Broadway, when I saw an old man who was also walking down Broadway, somewhat ahead of me. From the way his back was bent and from the slowness of his steps, I believed that he was laboring under the burden of a long life. As I overtook this man, I observed his face, and its appearance confirmed my impression, for it expressed fatigue. Then I said in my heart: “As a young man goes into battle, so an old man goes into repetition.”

18.

Then it happened that, while walking down Broadway, which swerves somewhat from the regular grid of avenues and streets, I walked all the way downtown. As to the manner of my walking, I walked like those whose aim in walking is to see what they can see. Walking in this way, I saw and heard many things, for Broadway is tumultuous and joyous. But as I had already dedicated myself to the study of repetition, I posed two questions to myself, saying: “Broadway was here yesterday, but which of the things that I see and hear today would I have seen and heard if I had walked down Broadway yesterday?” And also: “Broadway will be here tomorrow, but which of the things that I see and hear today will I

see and hear if I walk down Broadway tomorrow?” Then a voice spoke in my ear, saying: “What do you see?” Then I looked down Broadway and considered it again. And having considered it in this way, I said in my heart: “I see and hear many things.”

19.

Not long after this, I began to address repetition as if it were a person, saying: “Inspire me, repetition!” And in addressing repetition in this way as if it were a person, I conceived of that person holding his lips against my lips and breathing air out of his lungs into my lungs. So that even as he breathed air out, I breathed air in, and there was no air inside me that had not been inside this person before. And it could rightly be said that my breath was a repetition of his breath. And I also turned around and considered my past. And it seemed to me that every part of me was the end result of some experience of repetition in my past; and that those repetitions themselves were the end results of some more remote experiences of repetition; so that there was no part of me that was not the fruit of repetition. And if anyone should be puzzled by this and ask me: “Repetition of what?” I should not know how to answer. For outside of repetition I saw nothing. And if something looked different from repetition at first, then after I considered it more closely I saw that it too was the fruit of repetition. Then I said: “I am only that which you, repetition, have made me.” And in saying this, I again addressed repetition as if it were a person.

20.

From my earliest years, I had been a friend of the saying: “Know yourself.” In truth, I regarded this saying not just as a friend, but as a brother. Nor was that friendship interrupted when I stepped across

the threshold of the mystery of repetition. But I hid myself to my old friend, saying: "What must I do now? For I have crossed the threshold of the mystery of repetition." Then I wept bitterly, for I was afraid that I could no longer love my old friend in my new condition. And when I looked up from my weeping and looked at him, I no longer recognized him.

21.

Around this time, that friend of mine who had visited me on the river when she was pregnant, as I have already recounted in another place, gave birth to a boy and became a mother. Soon after, I felt a desire to see what this new life looked like and visited her in her house. The baby was sleeping in his crib. After he woke up, he began to move and to look around in the manner of a baby, which so little resembles the manner of an adult that one may well ask: how is it possible that one should become the other? For as anyone may see, the movements of a baby are no more anticipated by those which precede them than a coin toss is anticipated by earlier coin tosses; and they no more anticipate those which follow them than a coin toss anticipates subsequent coin tosses. Standing over the baby's crib, I said in my heart: "How can it be otherwise with one who has but lately embarked on the journey of repetition? For before water cuts a deep channel in stone, it cuts a shallow channel, but before that it spills over the face of the stone without discrimination. And is he already a man, who is so new to repetition? For what can his eyes see before repetition has touched them?" Then a voice spoke into my ear, saying: "In repetition he will find his freedom." Then I looked at the baby and touched him, saying in my heart: "And are you already a man, who are so little touched by repetition? Yet having found that freedom, you will find yourself trapped in that freedom. For from that freedom which is reached on

the journey of repetition, none can escape.” Then a voice spoke into my ear once more, saying: “In repetition he will find his bondage.” Then I considered what the voice had said and said in my heart: “He is untouched by repetition, and he has neither freedom nor bondage.” Soon after, the baby fell asleep again, and his mother put him down in his crib without waking him. Remembering this later, I made a poem, which in its entirety consists of a single sentence:

Life welcomes sleep, though sleep is the brother of death.

Who considers this poem carefully will see that its first word is “life” and its last word is “death,” so that the words in between may be seen as tracing out a passage from one to the other. This is to indicate that although life and death are as far apart as they can possibly be in this poem, they are still tied to one another through sleep in the way in which this is shown in the poem.

22.

Some time later, I was paddling on the river, when I put down my paddle and became absorbed in contemplation. Then I let the current carry me and watched the movement of the water. For the light was reflected brilliantly by the waves, and the water around me was trembling with the brilliance of a multitude of waves. Then I said in my heart: “Repetition is the true lily among thorns.”

23.

Another time, having gone quite far up the river, I was paddling back down already in the dark. Paddling in this way along the shore, almost close enough to it to touch it with my paddle, I began to think of

those sirens who had beguiled Odysseus as he sailed past them. For it seemed to me that their singing must have been one of the faintest sounds in the world and quite impossible to hear unless he who wished to be a hearer of it restrained himself in every way. Only then would their songs, otherwise inaudible, become audible; only then, if the body of him who wished to be a hearer of them were made blind and stupefied. And it seemed apparent to me that it was for this reason, rather than to assure the safety of himself and his ship, that Odysseus had convinced his sailors that they should tie him to the mast. For had he not been restrained in this way, the singing of the sirens, far from luring him toward the rocks, would have never been heard. Then I said in my heart: "Is that which I am trying to hear any less faint?" And because on that night there was a new moon and the tide was ebbing, I put down my paddle and let the current carry me. For there is a natural phenomenon which is well known to anyone who spends time on water and encounters tides, but which may be unknown to others and which for this reason I will now explain. Because tides on the water come from the pull of the moon and the pull of the sun, of which the latter is about half as strong as the former, when the moon and the sun are aligned with one another and pulling in the same direction, as happens when the moon is new and when the moon is full, their combined pull is about half again as strong as it is when they are pulling in different directions and opposing one another, as happens when the moon is in its first and third quarters. For this reason, the tide ebbs and flows more quickly when the moon is full or when it is new, as was the case in this instance, than at any other time. And even when I put down my paddle, the ebbing tide continued to carry me downstream.

24.

Another time, while sitting by the river at night and drinking wine,

I became drunk and attempted to see the face of repetition. For I had already started addressing repetition as if it were a person. And addressing it as a person in this way, I felt a natural desire also to see this person's face. Then I said to myself: "Head full of wine, what have you been thinking?"

25.

Then it happened that I was walking down Broadway with a friend who has already been mentioned in this narrative. This was the same friend with whom I had earlier walked down Broadway as if Broadway were a church. Walking with her again, I put my finger on her pulse and felt her heart beating. And every beat of her heart seemed to say: "Again! Again! Again!" Then I said in my heart: "Is this the song of repetition?" But as I listened for a longer time, I heard that her heart was also singing other words, as if behind the words which I have just mentioned, and more faintly than them. These other words were: "Oh my dear, I am growing older." Hearing these words, I felt an oppressive sadness and wept bitterly in my heart. Then I said: "Is this the song of repetition?"

IMMANENCE OF STAR

from a cavernous recess
an absent

ancient
's silhouette

pigment
emanates

breath blown

through wingbone
negative

hand stencil
on a wall

Intimate
with emptiness

touched
rock exhumed

the extant
ex-

hale of radii

star-quiet
song

of anima
touched wall

**THREE LYRICS COMPOSED OF WORDS FROM
SENECA'S EPISTLE, "ON THE GOD WITHIN US"**

A grove
of ancient trees

shutting out
the sky

A veil of pleached and
intertwining

branches, then
the loftiness

and marvel

A cave
made by the deep
crumbling
of rock holds up
a mountain on
its arch a place

not built with hands
but hollowed out into

such spaciousness

We worship
sources of

the mighty
rivers
altars hiddn
springs of hot
divine the rays

indeed the earth

WHEN AWAKENED AT NIGHT BY THE QUIET

When awakened at night by the quiet
alive, the silence is loud and future
can almost be heard or felt as starlight
travels from star that will never be seen
can be felt in the still darkness of night
as if occurring simultaneously
in the space distant from here
and a space connected—imagination is
the dark ligature of universe felt
in darkness the power of light in darkness
the sound of star that will never be heard
awakens in silence the possible
futures contained in the uttered prayer

WHAT YOU'VE UNEARTHED FROM THE PAST

after Gustaf Sobin

What you've unearthed from the past
'the artifact'

is with you presently
and anciently

as nature loves to hide
on the binding r-
i
-m between the obverse
and the reverse sides.

Excessively significant,
the face of your

identity
's identical

character reflects—
like opaque mirrors—an aspect

of yourself—coins
a miracle—betokens a

reflection in
the earth. By digging

down you bear
or mirror the signature

—consideration's weight
-lessness—born

before your
name.

GLISTEN

Gold points the hammer
ember to bark fresh. Flesh,
his eyelids, portals. Bright as
cutting melody. Loose-jointed
birds swoop as if to make a
name for themselves. Where
is your dinner jacket? Keep
your trap shut. (of flames) leap.
(of smoke) rise. While east
on stitches you smack your lips.
Make a sucking sound to absorb
or afford sunshine and spread
it on thick. The frost crackles
in the walls. Infectious matters,
comely. Your gaunt, lank dog
constantly in the fight. I lean
over and shorten the tow line.

LIKE THAT, SUCH A MAN, A MAN LIKE THAT

Stake everything intricately like organs
inside one body. Contents, he kicked her.
A great deal not all at once. Slight a noise
tested along ten miles of wire wound inside.
This phantom ghostflower stirs. Also, its fruit.
I take giant steps. Timber towards a barrier,
invisible except the voice.

HUM CUM GANDER MAMA

Mama my gown, Mama my magnetic
charisma charms not a room but a will.
It's like I was buried. In the dark, naked.
Push back my eyelids, Mama, to see a shiver
spindle up a spine as if protection of a surface
can't yield a way back. This mirror Mama,
it's murky and wet and some might say it's the
surface of a lake.

BAD SPIRITS COME BACK TO LIVE IN THEIR FORMER HOUSE

If you give somebody your daughter,
the son of a thief is no different.
Let him open his eyes. Quickly, only
then set forth like a stone. A tendency
towards the prefix for the dead. It
will not be so usual, ill-fated. Who is
dead? Who is dead? I shall only
reiterate the outline here. Put down
my things right where you are. Their
decision was easy.

Along the road, all kinds of flowers bloom.
When the meat is done, sing to me
in a loud voice. Much blood is coming.
The bridge, a particle to appeal.
I do not know his time of death.

SIMILAR WASP

The never-wets are pushed
under and emerge. Again
they look like small blue fire.
Like torment gone asunder and back.

Me? I do things badly. From time
to time, a slowing down
in the little openings.
I do bad things. Nothing
is the incomprehension in the
other's face.

DEATH UNDOES US LESS

In bloom, the elk are calving.
Beneath blankets, a jack out of place.
The neighbor was shot and died
with his eyes open. Burden down on
them caskets child. Produce a second

summer grown in clusters. Outside
a kiss-me-quick and muster what
produces a second summer?

A lot of things can still happen.
A man steps over the split-rail fence.
Channel-diggers seek their food
at the bottom. A lot of things can
happen. A swamp can mire down.

ISLANDS

1.

I tried to climb inside the library of
 pressed dimensions, the lilac
 succumbed to a second movement
 within the plot of the novel that the pineapple queen
 was deemed too beautiful to read.

I picked a blighted violet outside the house
 of my husband's mistress. It succumbed
 to the page as to its own consumption.
 Delicate, but without having left
 the ghost of itself.

2.

The pineapple queen knows she is absurd.
 We must not say so. *This is my opus*, she lifts
 a leg from the bathtub of
 pineapples as if she does not feel them
 biting her. The fruit is sweet
 and a good mistress leaves nothing behind
 but the ghost of her perfume:
 "I do not know what it is but it smells blue
 and it does not linger."

A good mistress leaves no notes and returns

3.

everything promptly. She leaves
as-is. Let's assume an island is barely held
intact, nothing fixes it to itself, not forever.
"How was I to know it would not be
forever?" writes someone
not in the margins, but in a notebook,
then fixed the torn page with masking tape inside
of *Northanger Abbey*. I lift it
carefully out, like an organ,
a lung,

4.

let's assume. They make such strange
company, but every library is the library
of the dead, and immortality
is a kind of flattening, a space
to which one adjusts. It was not a catalog,
but a map, not a person I came to
know, but whom I wanted to be.
Many gazed upon the pineapple queen
and said, "What is it to be here?"
They ate of the fruit and were not healed.



THE FARM

To be sung by three dark-haired sisters (chosen at random among the girls of the town) dressed as blackbirds

the ordinary and not the obscure
the ordinary and not the obscure
the ordinary and not the obscure

[] we fell asleep to the click of beads
sister,
 please. [] We, most incomplete []
] pleiades.

In the warmer there was always bread.
That winter father kept a journal a winter journal
for the long winter he wrote in that journal and mother
destroyed it, mother with the long silver hair she burned your journal
brother tore it in his hands

To be sung by their father, with corncob pipe

This is not a sentence.
This is not a pipe.
This is not penance.
This is not my life.

These are not my daughters.
Nor do I have sons.
To have soap we must slaughter
our most precious ones.

history.

I am a simple man, simple man, I have no
history, o lost

To be sung by one dark-haired sister, crowned with chokecherries:

They called me Bell. They do not know whom I resemble.
Loved in fact because I am neither alive nor dead, I made myself
scarce as gooseberries scarcer than wild strawberries. I was sweet on the tongue,

ice harvesters and those of sturdy frame.

sister who fit knives in windowsills, watched for mirrors in the field. Absolved of black hair
absolved of soft arm flesh, absolved of

To be sung by the author, dressed as a doe

I am of those who have removed themselves from the farm, intentional
and inconsolable. A stone boat on which those blackbirds on the shore
disappear, black feathers scattered in a dirty lake.

I was taught to give, not to take. Do not take from your uncle who offers
to buy you things he never sees you. Later he would send me a check from
nowhere so I could fly back to the farm. My mother

had never been in an airplane before. I have salvaged nothing.

THE SEA

INRI

Surprising carnations rain from the book
 Surprising carnations over the sea. Over the sea
 above the unused cloud a clarity is day. They rain
 a surprising carnation. There was a love that ruins
 there was a clarity of day, one, that rains now above the sea

Sun shadows, incarnations fish. A line of sewn incarnations falls and plumbs
 down fishes up more incarnations. Incarnations fish incarnations. A day rains
 clearly, a love doesn't reach talking. Love,
 yes love, rains from the sky overshadowing
 the terra, carnations cover the shadow of the fish in the sea.

Clear days fall. Estranged carnations stuck to days
 ' clarity, of loves that don't reach talking.

The sea, the sea best says. It is staid the sea, so
 It is said of carnations that

they rain from the book and from the clear days stuck to
 They, it is said of inconclusive loves, of days clear
 and inconclusive that rain species for the genre of the
 fish in the sea.

The entire buried days are hearted, they are heard strange
 sunstroked mornings, hard inconclusive loves, leave-taken
 torsos self-intern at sea. The sea interning hard
 loves, the torsion self-reiterates, the entirely blurred
 days are hard, morning self-strokes, raking leaves
 of love of talking, haunting, rein-carnations, read, they are head
 strange carnations ruining, pegged to days, stuck from days of
 days of sun, of love torsos, of leave taken and of no. It is
 said of carnations that they rain for fish inside the ocean.

The blue and brilliant ocean. There are heard the masses
 of the fish devouring endurance tucked and pegged the stuck wads of no, of
 news' words and days that no, of old loves that now no
 nothing.

It is said of crowds of fish that leap, that keep a murder
 of crows circling dust above them, clouds of fish they leap
 to no

The sky doesn't weep, sweep dendrite, camphor, nerve
 cell doesn't dare. Doesn't dove
 tail doesn't dive, doesn't lie. Doesn't cardamom,
 doesn't yes doesn't no. The sky is racist, no, paul is.
 The book is. I attached to the cord amen, but so too
 did paul seed. The sky is heard. They say that rain is over

-shadowing carnations that adhere to shattered pieces of
 oration the sky over the sea.

It is heard the sky. It is hard
of dearing. Carnations glued to shards of sky
over the sea
shards of the book are over
the sea.

I heard a book a sea hallucinate, I heard suns plosive
 plums love with fruit like falls, I heard the fish give
 mass devour the rose fleshes of carnations without
 protections.

I heard millions and millions of fishes that are tombs
 with shards of book inside, with hundreds of ions
 velvet atoms that don't reach being touched, nor
 being tucked or talked to, to and with centennials of
 flowers oo rose flesh and sky shards in the eyes O hundreds
 of loves that fixed printing on solaris days.

On sun

-stroked days. They rained carnations from the sky over
 The Pacific.

Emil weeps. Emily weeps. Emily heard the loud land mass of
 Emil weeping. Fish elevate via air self- discipline the mouths of one leave-taken

torso

from a roaming love, form one unheard kow-tow, from a form of prayer un-
 aired, from a psalm trunk, from a roaming love not
 set to airplane mode. Emily is on the beach. If she loves Emil it go

unsaid

I love Emil, too. Viviana is today Chile.

The long fish of Chile elevates by airs
 devouring carnation of the sun defunct.

devouring sun carnation
 devouring the carnations of the sun of its defuncts
 of this pose that one defunct.

Printed plains ran for the fishes : days
 now will never be, eyes stick in to one
 ultimate sky, ultimate stay ultimate look
 loves without talking. Loves unsaid uns
 pooled. It is said
 of printed plains made of braces no
 they won't reach self- embrace, of hands they will not rise unto
 touch himself. It is said of rare fruits the fish devour
 lover that the silvered tombs of fish the fish devour, are devoured. I heard
 printed plains raining over marred sea.
 River, you are married. Printed books, days, dreams buried in
 eddies silver-plated by worse, waves, I heard the moths'
 silver-leafed by the fish devoured leave-taken torsos.
 Desiring coupling camping desiring head -grammar theory. I
 heard immense plains of love saying now no, I heard angels portioned by degrees of love
 saying now no
 Angles' love saying now no and justified. Tri
 part-tight angle, angels tried, tried a compensation

 Universes, cosmos, unfinished winds raining on
 miles of race carnations, miles of meat
 -colored roses fall over the carnivorous sea of
 pale pool of Chile. Yes this is a commentary. I heard plains of love never spoken
 infinite books of love never said buried
 forever in the carnivoro us tombs of fishes.

There is the sea, it is said that there is
 in the sea carnivorous tombs of fish. There is the flesh
 color of almonds and the ocean. The sea weeps. Emil weeps.

There are these infinite books fall from almond trees, from stars like
 camphor and fruits talk and they fall. Surprising carnations
 fall rain in the day sky like the stars, like fruits
 they fall on grass. There are universes, they start, stare, and don't end
 up in the stomach of fish, stars, fields of
 almond trees. Emil hurts long fields of almond trees
 by hearing them, hears their red blood fall oar the ocean. Infinite days
 clear rains red spumes over and ends of dark ocean.

Men rain and fall in strange poses, comma,
 strange fruits fan from strange hearts ' harvest.

Emil hears a lover rains shadowy flesh of men,
 shadow in carnations' fruit parts humans harvested estranging
 from fields. Emil is now Chile. So too's Emily. Also
 Viviana. She hears hum fruits
 human love like gold alone blow waters
 under water's so cold bloom
 blown rain rolls gold talking suns' tumbling rest
 -lessly in the waters
 -lessly on to their potential end
 they don't march
 any -lessly on
 in April

I heard whirls of fish suspend in the sky. I heard
 hallucinated breakers float. From down here they resemble
 period. But they are breaking from the ocean floating
 not clouds. From down here they resemble
 in the sky. Emil hears ascend unending oceans
 'nothing and she two ascend hearing cardamom of
 fish like clouds. She hears too much and nothing.
 The carnations' color blood. Of the thrown
 thorn red waves blood color of the sea they float in
 or on the sky the supports. The color red blood remembers Eve
 -ning. The carnivorous tombs of fish float
 the ocean.

All the bodies lance the sea of Chile bloat their
 arms and legs bloated, broken little torsos. They have self
 -turned to shy and pieces. Sky and shard broken float they float.
 The waves asphyxiated. Their goats got. They lost air. They asphyxiated there.

They're

thirsty. Resuscitated waves turn, they turn, fishes' shoulders
 turn and float in wind like clouds. Clouds look like
 clouds. The Rorschach bloat looks like clouds. The trauma looks
 at you like clouds do. Marguerites and marred distance of
 torsos, and arms and legs, torsion again like
 distorted clouds blooded, like books of blood color of Eve
 -ning. Bad trauma, first could. The could look like
 evening. It is said of evening have and whirl
 pools of fish float in sky like the book
 whirls of fish flocking in the oceansky like thesea.

Shadow harvests rained from the ceiling. Incredibly mature
fruits fell over the fields carved of ocean.

Emil hears fall mute silhouettes, or I should highlight

listens, minutes that

didn't end small, crosses that carry like clouds over

Pacific waves. She hears (and I should outline

hears torsos, rave mists

coming self-pleasure over waves, strange clouds wear flesh

soft flash that poses over *sky cared for* the *cleared sea*.

They rain carnations with angels, without mouth, with partitions
that couldn't self-hear, because angles, without math, width and length
know reflection with shades without sound interest themselves
they kiss. Sometimes I hard wish God would just come down and kiss
Himself. They rain, they fall, they self-crumble somber harass
of somber harvest trees' self- consumption in fire over waves

that burn down

wilt down

cloaca and scream and curl and self-

costume over all the happening

waving custom

Fields caved and, carved sainted earths rain from the book in
revise order with backs broken, sainted earths reform the sky
with broken backs, with piece of necks that now are
not, with unanticipated clouds forever formed from
spring. They were thrown. They ran. Now they
rain. Shadows'

harvests of the men fall food for fishes.
Emil hears rain sainted earths, she hears her son career
like clods over now the top the cross cleared of the Pacific
Onions growing up up on the sidewalk.

Crosses made from fish for Christs. The arc of the
 sky of Chile falls over the tombs' blood
 of Christ for the fishes. I have here your mother. I have here your
 son. Shadows fall over the sea. Strange carnations
 overlaid men fall over the crosses of the fish onto the sea.
 Emil want stop curl up with fish wants to curl up with fish wants to stop
 with fish
 wants to weep with wants to sleep with wants to sweep with wants to hear
 that day
 Clearly, that love clean leave-taken, torsoed and trunc
 -ated Emil is
 today Chile. She curls up with fish below her palms are the
 psalms of the sky

They fall surprising Christs in strange poses over
 strange places the crosses of the sea. They place the crosses in the strange places
 surprising
 carnations rain
 from the sky : it rains me, an ultimate hymn, or a passion, an ultimate day below
 the cantos
 of the ceiling, infinite ceilings. From the ceiling rains the infinite ceilings that I
 translate
 sky sometimes and book other times a thing that doesn't collate, doesn't end, and
 this a moral
 to-come. An orality to come an unfixing of the dead the body the sea the body
 of arms against rules, against straight blades, sky in rare poses poses over the sea.
 Infinite skies fall, infinite skies of legs broken, infinite field

of arms

littered in margins do we mean the guns or do we mean the limbs of loved

ones?

You've come, you are hard, of heads tortured against the backs
f books, in clouds of arms and skyroots up
-rooted broken. They develop dew and drop, they doo-wop

I have here your mother. I have here your boy.

I have here your son. Emil hears arcs of eyebrows rising,

hears open eyes here without end fall from the sky's
skeptical brows. She hears nails sail to self -bury in the cross of the
ocean caresses. All the sea of Chile is the cross. Infinite
caressing flatlands of the sea the sky the cant the psalm the cross of the
fingers the sea, makes the sea calm, you're hard, you're calm, of the alimentary

that, that falls

like plains, like panes on the stomach's crow of the cows' male version go make

visions go

inside the fish is bread. Emil listens to
infinite shoals rising, and some voices in the prayer-carrying
air is an aria, infinite fish that ascend singing with
the voice taken from the sky.
the taken voice of the sky

I guess at the translation I don't know. The fish ascend to heaven I guess.

Surprising car

nations buy a big god damn car. Rained along surprising days, with images of

crashes

into almond trees, with loves violently leave-
taken and the field is broken. The field of almond trees is taken. Strange

carnations

break apart to rain atop the sea sainted, rained over the sea sainted over the fish

sainted.

Sainted is the sea; sainted the plains of human fruits
that fall, the fish are sainted. I heard infinite days fall,
autumn, autumnning, tumbling, tomb-falling, may and june felled,
sing of spring, sign of spring, instructed male cinder
-ring. I heard infinite days falling, bodies were falling
mute to hurt with heavens, the fields were interviewed, they saw nothing, they
were hit in the eyes, and the gov. covered the eyes of the
dog, covered the eyes of the yard, you are hard, covered the eyes of all measure
-ring things. With trees like caresses choru sing the sung waters. What was

Kuro

the shape

saw a dream -ing about? About evening. All around the evening. Annuary in

Emil curls up with the sea sainted. Emil says that there is on
those waters sainted her son.

I have here the sea burns its face. Emil hears books' ardor between the flames of the sea, lack that doesn't selfconsume, ardor between the spuming sea pits, of its arms, swells like Laura Mulberry haptic lace of fingers. Laura Mulvey talking to another really tonguing into a woman i love. But there is no one left alive i love. This is not caricature, this is a sea otter. Sons of painted mulberries die ardor, too. Without longing, folly, without falling, laughing hesitates between the flaming warres. The flames wave beige and boring. Like a human mouth or tongue seals an envelope. They rain, They weeps, sons of love that now never, not &/either of, air in meadows, they fall in accordion flames, accordion books, End listens. Emil listens to the skies' entire fall like the wrong page I am often on an oft-meadow co-unending. Strange days sur south self-pricing carnations saints fall trend sing over burning corals' ardent harmony in the sea. Emil is today Chile. She hears emerge cantos from among the waters' calls, listens to the sky sainted ardent chorus harm of money. You talk of falls ' language is a plaguemoney or an antidote the love is not alternative to language, love as an alternative to language but, says the ardent boy, define "love." You have already failéd of love, ailed of love, define "envelope." You have already incendiary breach, incendiary breach aches. Ekes out song by way of hearing INRI, noise streams she turns there ice floes eke out song patterns oft song flows ardent over sub rosa Prada meadows of the incendi airy Pacific.

She listens to the INRI of the skies' ardor. Oceans and social mores, social mares. Chile listens to the INRI of the skies ardor.

Surprising carnations prose blood rose raining from
rare Numbers fell ill over the sea surprising mares
of the sea social colors incense aroma ventures waves rise
with incarnated fish on the hard firm-
amen t amen.

She hears the cant of the fish ascending to the sky. She ardor
acquiesces period, the sea of Chile ardor. Calls like incest tint
arbor, with rose grass & w/ epoch, w/ inscription w/ yr bent
-over ass, ass over heels, i love you neighbor's girl
-friend of mine and rose & blood the burned meadows without
longing end of the Pacific.

I'm thinking of Bruno, like you think

Bruno thinks of you, and that constitutes Haunting, I capitalize
this world like Germans do, because trauma, and I reject Man
as universal moniker of Humankind, so I just said man and
men like all men are Bruno for you, keeping the secret of how
cold is the ocean. Cut is the dead flower, roseate is
the dead crystalline rose. I rose, this morning, and I forgo
my own dreams. Don't believe in that. I believe in trying to
imagine you and failing to. And failing to feel you, but growing cold
patches in my warm wells, the both newly acquired, because you extend my
knowledge, but more than that my feeling. I remember my own
trauma, and I was lucky to discover you Zurita then. I've written of it
in other books. But exhaustively, and platoons are tired, so I'm
trying something new. Is it La Vita Nuova? No, but if you
take the No from Nuova, you get grape, in English, if you
grope for Spanish in Italianicity. What do I wish to dis-
-cover here, not you, I worry this is your last book, a sort of joke laughing
makes hesitate. The sort of joke-making that hesitates the laughing. Zurita,
you called it, after considering naming this *Mein Kampf* because

(you reasoned) then everything outside its pages is the Holocaust, and inside the book is safe from God. But that isn't logic itself, that's private. And that, that isn't your logic either. For when you write

Bruno's dream

name in your dream notebook, Chile's pilled grass has the cotton screaming hesitations. Because the sky to you's a page, what escapes the book, what escape is there from the book's predilection for, simulation?

You said it

yourself, Zurita, now that through pure seeing and site -specificity of verse, through pure guts and, barked will, you have mimed this horror in word, can I have my son back? Zurita asks you this, Zurita. It is brave of you, and it is brave of you. Daniel Borzutzky, who is a wonderful translator, translates this book as *Song for his disappeared love* but I do not see it. Because *su* designates possession but leaves gender unspecific, and this lack of gender specificity implies a lack of ownership over one's gender, which effects a whole genre of unknowing of dispossession. I wonder even whose book is that. Can I have my son back, father?

Zurita writes this line, as if transcribing the voice

or canto of a father or a mother

dispossessed of her son, but Zurita is the one who wrote it, so Zurita is the one who asks it of himself. Zurita: now that through pure verse and guts you've captured this horror in words, can I have my son back? The answer is the book, but it prefigures the book in the sense that it precedes the book and yet it speaks of the book having been already written. Think of it or imagine it in this fashion: as if the epigraph of the poem "Song for his disappeared love" precedes the

poem

and says "now that you've written the poem 'Song for his disappeared love'" as if

the poem

had been written already. Poem precedes the poem. Book precedes the book. Epigraph marks beginning as the epitaph marks the end and both are one here. Bruno was my friend.

Excerpted from *Mine Camphor*, an English dilation of Raúl Zurita's *Zurita*.

WARP

n. 2

**A. A SMALL, LOW POINT OR TONGUE OF LAND,
PROJECTING INTO THE WATER; A LONG NAR-
ROW REEF, SHOAL, OR SANDBANK EXTENDING
FROM THE SHORE.**

Sediment Matrix

You feed on madness and it feeds on you.
Emotions running all over the map
Refracted as dawn, surge condensed of dew.

First off, man harried and filled, feet slap
Driven storm within left right mind fleet foot
Dauntless first off waking far off cane beats tracks

It ends here at the sea. Sawtooth lee shore hook
Agitated with the swash and buck battery
Of the waves. And we're back at the start. Took

Up the challenge of the blustering braggart hurricane, maddening.
A race from the moment it clambered up over the sil
Of the horizon. Some headstart. Feet took up the splattering

Rhythm of the churn other: You feed still.
Madness. It feeds. Builds overwash overshield
Eyeris I let pass Backwash

Trytostep

Righteous
RightorLeft Give it the head
might just
Lose a step
You feed
And it
Left Something sinister

A Programmer's Guide to Ruin

I. Require: The Blu Hill Notes v3.5

Function call to brother-tuck (c)
Two cycles on the stump and already
You forget why you do this.
Don't get hemmed up
Out here.
Brother-tuck (struggle)
Run.
Value: rain dance
Welcome

II. Require: Lady Raven

N/A
Raving over the table at Shostakovich,
Your invitation still thrums Piano
Trio no. 2 in E lesser
Through the caryatid halls
Beneath your notice

III. Require: Tak's stack

We checked
Down to to the BIOS
Hardware and Soft
Ours. We made it.
Define (IFA)
1st chronicle,
Predates dataclysm
As poetry does ink yet
Basks in it
Like the reed you hum
Under.

IV. Require: Proof of Citizenship

Am Sorry. Without assent
Or Esente Aye
You inherit just half
We must ask you to leave
These halls before our dead

Resume their masque.
Nothing will save you,
Pessin we dey feel sorry for,
Pass on good comment to Father Maximum.
You hate Naija
For not being Wakanda?
How can?

V. Require: Lebbeus Woods

Pack your load.
When the city wakes,
M.Alice (pronounced Amaryllis) or Menace will see you
Home safe
Past whatever landmarks might soothe
As you emerge in sea.

WEFT n.₁E 'Lude3

Gleek

П.₁ A PROJECTILE SUBLINGUAL GLAND SECRETION IN THE FORM OF A SINGLE STREAM, USUALLY STIMULATED BY A SOUR TASTE OR BY YAWNING, SOMETIMES INVOLUNTARY, OFTEN CONTROLLED AND USED AS A SLY WAY OF SPITTING ON SOMEONE.

П.₂ A GIBE, JEST, GIRD.

П.₃ A THREE PLAYER GAME POPULAR IN ENGLAND IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES. THE NAME MUST BE RELATED TO THE GERMAN GLEICH (EQUAL); A GLEEK IN THIS GAME IS A SET OF THREE EQUAL CARDS, AND FOUR OF A KIND IS CALLED A MOURNIVAL.

V.₁ THE ACT OF PROJECTING SUBLINGUAL GLAND SECRETION.

V.₂ TRANS. TO TRICK, CIRCUMVENT.

V.₃ INTR. TO MAKE A JEST OR GIBE (AT A PERSON).

Type: Trick-taking

Away with words

That is

Spray it don't say it

Don't worry It'll translate

A clear high fidelity stream

Lands where it will

You'll need tongue to flex

A mouth with a roof

A ready hand

A submandibular gland that can't take the pressure

The secret

Aces arc high

