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AND AVIVA

Who walks along the winter lakeshore without thinking as
sand blasted moments wiggle along sea gull drift boundaries
declared by snow squalls along Lake Michigan's open door,
as our clothes become dunes beside the motel bed, our skin
dissolving into light and shadow dances across green inland seas
capped white with streaming spumes leaping into the cold air,
delighting in sensation, leaning into the wind, warm in our
embraces echoing maroon leaves, ruby, ginger, flame
gold, lemon, sun-blasted colors beyond words on a cloudy day—

You and I drive from Minneapolis as we drove from Jerusalem
as if following a turnpike mapped in a book of light projecting
slide-image memories of the future onto stone cliffs above so many
landscapes, *Yam HaMelekh*, Mississippi River, Lakes Superior and Michigan,
the Jerusalem forests a beginning path, this new world disordered
delight securing our return to those memories when
we reach an old age well out of reach now. Now reaching out
to each other, one lover to another, in the dark of a car cruising
through Ontario, somewhere between Lakes Huron and Erie.

BEACH

A man stands holding a daughter's hand,
their feet at the edge of the sea as they look
out to waves of clouds. Another man near them
holds a granddaughter close to his chest, staring out
at the watery metronome beating lunar rhythms.

Last week an unusual solar storm raced out to dance
Borealis delights almost as far as North American tropics.
This hardly matters to a man reading a book in his plastic
beach chair on the Mediterranean. He sets down the
poems only to watch the sun set behind winter rain.

The daughter runs screaming with delight
from the foaming mouth of waves' meaning.
The staring grandfather turns and walks away from a
crashing language of time. Beach glass loses its sharp edges,
changes from trash to jewels among the broken shells.

Others play in the sun's rays that occasionally emanate
from behind the clouds to warm sand letters or to bake
words hard and crumbling before tides soak them again.
Letters, like sand wet with intention or thought,
press into a form of words, build a semblance—

castle or moat or bridge that the surf of your
reading washes into possibilities of formation.

DANCING WITH MERON

Tonight the sun lowers over the rounded double mounds of Meron
staining them orange with desire for the hungry mouths
of prophets yet unrevealed in the breath of time.
Yellow flags wave in front of the municipal building,
blue crowns caressing the air, *keterim* atop the word
Meshiach, Messiah. Round and round the men dance
each with an arm around the next, embracing,
sliding, shimmying, circling one another
jumping and singing up and down and round
pleasure joy dance movement rubbing together
exploding in rushes of movement, lifting one up,
then another until all are fulfilled,
their wish for the revelation of *HaRav*.

The Rebbe.

Women watch from across the street,
as the black-dressed men laugh and play
from fuzzy beards to gray beards
in each other's company their sweat incense
to the light staining Meron.
Watch the men frenetically proclaiming
joy in each other's arms. Hear silent musicians
play pure delight, the delicate dance
a denial of desire in this world. The men circle loyally
in each other's love. Mount Meron in their dreams.

DUNG BEETLE

Like so many American men
I eat too much fat.
My body has gone flabby with words—

I wrap around my skeleton,
weary muscles cling to desperately.
I am just a hard-shelled beetle

surrounding myself in dung.
As this tight little turd-ball
rolls down the gravel road,

a giant carp opens its gaping maw
just where I plunge into the water—
the fish, unafraid to eat shit,

savors the hard crunch of shell
and sweet juices released. I feel
thin the moment my world caves in.

NEKOPIRATI

FASTER THAN THE SPEED OF LIGHT

GENEVA (Reuters) An international team of scientists said on Thursday they had recorded sub-atomic particles traveling faster than light—a finding that could overturn one of Einstein's long-accepted fundamental laws of the universe. — “Particles found to break speed of light,” Robert Evans, 22 September 2011. (<http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/09/22/us-science-light-idUSTRE78L4FH20110922>)

A particle apparently arrived slices
of a millisecond earlier than expected.
Faster than light, it knocked on the door
relatively early on a Saturday night.

The hosts had not readied the party
or sent the invitations yet, as time compressed
events into a singularity—understanding
slipped away and arrived before it left.

The single green parrot flew above the road,
its raucous call cheering the sight of the race
with time and space as a lone soldier stood guard
over the abandoned barracks of this particular dream.

A sub-atomic speeding ticket noted the date and time
of all events but perhaps its clock shifted with condensation,
a dewy drop of time dripping down the broken windshield
while the galactic waltz shifted on its axis at something

much less than the beating butterfly wing.
The whole of history would stop if we observed Shabbat
or made peace or sang a simple harmonic note,
a hidden breath of a name written by the smallest bit

of nothing as it raced to beat itself to the drummer's distant
dance. It's another observation point, this faster-than-light
speed, a stretching and tightening of time and space
that allows the smallest slice of a millisecond rest

before the melody continues.

FOUND POEM¹

incidental cues commiserate
among divided opinions
difficult diverse settings
relax that vigilance
to feel comfortable
interpretive confusion
a feature of American society

step up to this recognition
it takes a certain sophistication
how to do it
engage the manifest task
the arrangement of curriculum
a major short-coming
of higher education

main-stream value some
familiarity with institutionally
important to sneak in
that struggle maybe have
all Americans exposed
a much more humane society
you've got your big house

on Long Island defensiveness
fundamentally worse than
prejudice that whole
psychological process defended
leadership opportunities
wouldn't be surprised
more exposed to this

material debates
not for a minute
easy before and after
follow-ups amazing things
integrated benefits
cognitive abilities
more humane

an appropriate liberal art
outcome
social abilities the nature
of friendships using
her measures the tension

¹ Phrases culled from a talk on social identity at a faculty retreat and a white board outside of an office in the vicinity.

in this room about identities
without skirting the possibilities

of changing don't vent
your frustrations
some basic human terms
some sense of what
you'd like to see
happen a good time
series design

according to the research
to indulge this inflation
this is an American struggle
a fundamental struggle
a vigilant person seizes upon
something
easier for subsequent generations
the mind just doesn't let go

at what point do I cease
that and say
I've really had enough
time sheets are due
by 10 am
on Monday

NEKOPIRATI

POETICS FOR GARY

my dear friend.
words shift out of the way
to reveal what is beneath them
not to escape you.
dance with them.
dance freely and naked.
breathe in the world you want—
lingering. light on broken waves.
flickering shadows—
sunrise or sunset look the same

write when words dance a pattern.
reveal beneath.
it is the glimpse of the naked lover
at the window.
through a sheer curtain.
but for a moment

NEKOPIRATI

HOMOPHONIC RESONANCE

(HOMO-SOCIABILITY AMONG THE HOMOPHOBES)

Fly to blue water smoke and coffee, the father smells.

Men live this life pretending not to be men but some
thing other that rages against the rising tide of separation
longing for connecting flights of fancy too much to handle
homophonic resonance to too two too much to two tutu dancers
dance dance dance across America the fear plunging into the hearts
of the lonely men as they cry in their coffee cigarette dangling
from the mouth of desire afraid to touch each other in practice
or in heart until except in violent games and asses patted
and hanging their would-be lover innocently along the
barbed wire fence of singularity and imagined two
cannot be divided or multiplied or extended to
what we feel is overwhelmingly too
homophonic sounding boys
love their own names
too much to say
them.

NEKOPIRATI

SATURDAY MORNING

Re-collecting bits and pieces—
trying to make a whole
collage of memory as though a scene
would reveal itself
some truth's worth—
swimming out into a river,
or in a shallow cove,
the rocks visible beneath.

Others swim in, done, tide between
high and low. Somehow,
my grandfather's house, my mother,
his daughter-in-law, digging up plants
uselessly— young iris, some rare
wild plant that will not grow in our climate,
a slew of others. She won't listen to me:
she no longer has any
place to plant these,
living alone in a nursing home;
they will shrivel and die
on the trip home from the Eastern shore
to the Midwest. As she soon shrivels and dies.

She wraps her plants in plastic,
places them in boxes,
drowns them
in brackish water from the river.
She insists that one of her sons
might want them.
I realize, she means me,
I won't dig these
transplants
into my garden.

Then the new owners of
my grandfather's house
arrive, and I apologize
as my mother seeks to take away
their refuse. They are gracious
and let me furl worn sails.
What sort of things are these,
I wonder,
what sort of tired bones?

SESTINA

(after Elizabeth Bishop)

In a lake cabin somebody wanders around meaning;
a grandmother's image (she's picking up wind-fall apples) disappears
as his daughter squeezes sauce from Jonathans they bought somewhere.
He throws birch bark in the stove and looks out at waves.
The almanac says a dark line will swim itself still. A loon
he watches through his tears turns her chest to the moon, all reflection.

Moon waves glitter, jewelled tear reflections,
"This cabin is comfortable," he thinks, meaning
that the almanac was false. Clearly only a loon
could bestill a grandmother's essence. He hears, as the bird disappears,
its wail. The stove pulls him to it with heat waves
that rise past his daughter's imagination. Somewhere

in the future which she does not apprehend, somewhere
beneath a surface of tears, like a glistening lake reflection,
far from this intense stove, there she will seek him. She waves
to him from across the lake. This cabin vision has no meaning
for his grandmother, whose long-since drowned memory disappeared
where the almanac she wrote foretold it. He alone hears the loon.

Her almanac flew, birdlike, while his loon
plunges beneath a daughter's memory. Somewhere,
they all join — the grandmother. The water bird disappears
from tears that no longer shine. It is another reflection
of the time change in this cabin. He has been meaning
to air it out, clean the stove, sweep. He stares at waves,

warmed by the stove's quick fire. He raises his hand, waves
good bye to the future (almanac), to the diving loon.
From the cabin he fails to produce any meaning
for his daughter, who draws a very still line somewhere
else. Moon tears drop on torn notebook pages, all reflections
of his grandmother in the mirror. In the stove, the pages disappear.

His grandmother cut spots from the wind-fall apples, making them disappear
into old pans the stove no longer needed. Bees rose in waves
from the old wounds' tears back on the compost pile. On reflection,
the almanac never predicted the stinging bee. The wavering loon
voice secures his daughter in him, somehow, somewhere.
It is, perhaps, the cabin which, in its making, lacks meaning.

Tears, the almanac sings, lit grandmother's stove.
The daughter inscribes herself in a secret cabin as meaning
waves at the loon's reflection then disappears somewhere.

(The white reflection from a morning loon dips, disappears
into the waves, and pops up somewhere else, making meaning.)

SHADOW AND REFLECTION

From the cave-cool shadow under a canopy
of pine, aspen, oak and birch, he watches.
Footprints splashed across muddy fields flow

toward her summer. He knows they cross to the house
of her birth just beyond the earth's limen—
a reflected memory he only imagines.

Earlier, the shadow of his hand fell across her chest
while pointing out two nuthatches scrolling
around passive pines, heads down.

Later, his body, a tracery of shadow erasing soft ground,
kept sun from emerging tufts of grass. Stretched thin,
this other him skimmed surfaces until the water's

edge. There, waves give up an image of the man.
He stoops, dissolving the reflection with his hand,
laughing. Just last week, he recalls, dirty ice

lapped all shores. He has not yet discovered
how to write her. She holds bits of gravel
in her palm—quartz and agate.

SHEKINAH III: MY BELOVED WHISPERS IN MY EAR

And these words, which I command thee with this day, shall be upon thy heart...And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thy hand, and they shall be for frontlets before thine eyes.

(Deut. VI:6, 8)

I

My beloved whispers in my ear; she reveals herself to me—
her Words, jewels upon my breast, upon my hand, upon my forehead.

When my beloved walks in the field, the heron flies up with cackling praise;
she inspires the crane to laugh as it rises into the sky; the swallows dance for her.
I have come and gone with uncertainty and doubt; but my beloved inspires constancy:
Though in times of drought the hill dries out, the hollows hide some mud, remembering.

My beloved brings rain into the high, parched fields that have forgotten her;
she walks among the swaths and sheds her tears for each cut stalk.
The hollows swell with water to quench the beasts and grow the iris;
my beloved reflects their grace as they mirror the sky among the grasses.

II

The storm was terrible: the thunder rumbled long in the night; the lightning terrified;
a wind blew through the window of the house and tapped upon the walls.

Yet, my beloved whispered in my ear and I wore her words like jewels.
In her arms I rested as the fields drank deeply, the dry holes filled with sweet water.
In the dark I am drawn to my beloved; she is even more glorious in the light:
She is a stand of gentian unexpectedly found near the edge of the willow.

An eagle flies above the goldenrod and pines; I know my beloved thinks of me.
The thought of my beloved eases my burden as I toil on the road to her house:
Her kisses, sweeter than blueberries freshly picked, inspire acorns to rise toward the sky;
her caresses provide strength to the birch, the aspen, the maple, the oak, but also to grasses.

III

I hold my love; she holds me. I have studied her in the willow, the iris, the thistle:
finches, warblers, and wrens feed and live in her shelter, so my love feeds and shelters me.

The oats have been cut, the hay rolled and stored for the winter.
My love comes to me and whispers in my ear; she reveals herself to me.
The geese gather and call, flying over the trees, landing in the pond:
my love sighs and the grasses bend; the aspens sigh and my love bends to me.

Her kisses build the temple; her love holds me and I heal:
My beloved is mine, I am hers. She points to the flowers off the path:
small white bells, tiny blue trumpets, vetches, paintbrush; I don't know all the names.
My beloved knows the Names of the Flowers; she whispers them to me: I embrace her.

—written between Shabbat Ekev and Re'eh, 25-27.Ab.5760

THUNDER / STORM

Midnight storm: Thunder grumbled and growled,
distant bears; gusts gallivanted with trees a-limbo;
hail and rain pounded the shelter, consciousness.
Three year-old innocence slept soundly,
thirty-three year old ingenious-awareness awake
to the awful possibility, the horribly cracked
loud thunder roar which rolls over tree tops,
rattles concrete, glass and steel,
skims lake surfaces, spreads to the coasts,
and so easily wraps the earth like a blanket
smothers a child.

and don't even light the stove
or any warning fire

I shiver

while I wait.

NEKOPIRATI

TRACES REMAIN

you
wrote last.
night.
Invisible you. said,
erased.
today I
scratched—
but the traces. re-
main
like graphite. rubbed.
on
blank paper re-
veals.
words written
long
ago.
a list. names.
phone
number. the missing
clue.
you.

NEKOPIRATI

TRANSPORT

i

I drove my daughter Rebecca to Lake Eleven this afternoon. Dust rose behind us. In a farmyard along the way a rusted cicada-hull of a discarded truck, glimpsed briefly. An impression of new green paint as woodbine spread over it—ghosts of passengers long gone, who could not bear to leave the trip behind even in their death—or stories told at night—perhaps the cicada wanting to crawl back into its old skin. Someday the truck will be no more than a hill of weeds. Buried deep within the mound, an old memory of a trip to Minneapolis down a two-lane blacktop, a glint of side-view mirror.

ii

A turbo-prop from Newark to Philadelphia, on the way to my grandmother's funeral last fall. Light from the west caught hold of the black propeller blades—now invisible in their hurry to get back to where they started from. The light let go, cracking-the-whip. I had a vision of a gold aura floating above the rounded mounds burnt with Autumn, the New Jersey trees remembering walks with lovers almost forgotten—now recalled with red passion, orange longing, yellow optimism.

iii

She was grandmother in spirit, my grandfather's second wife who came into my father's family in his teens. We laid her body next to her only husband. On the other side of him, that other grandmother who lent me blood and bone from a distance. I had never been there before, though now I'm as old as she ever was, as I stand before her granite marker. Brown grasses rustled above mica that glistened in the soil. A hill of weeds will grow there, too. We can't help it. Someone may build a marble temple on it, not thinking why, plant Virginia creeper to paint its pillars green and orange, and worship a glint of ghosts in the ground, that bit of sunset reflected from Lake Eleven in Rebecca's eyes this evening. Or no one may notice, as the cicada climbs back into its skin.

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