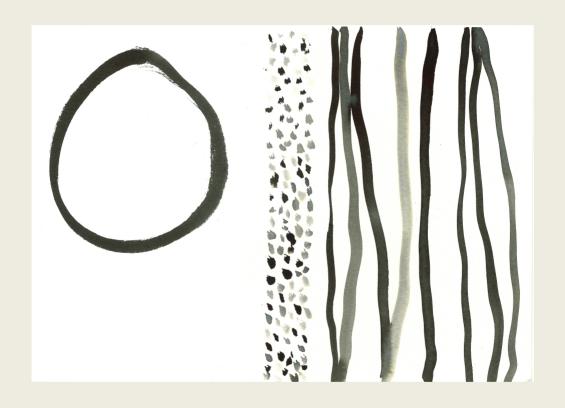
NOON 17 & 18



NOON | journal of the short poem

ISSUES 17 & 18 December 2020

A BIRTH

The first breath taken

in:

a blade of air as if stolen from light.

Far off,

a horizon is cut.

NETI NETI

If it is not this, or this, or this, or that, not what you think, not what you want or dream, nothing you can point to or name then why a poem unless it is exquisitely to say something new it is not.

WALL

for John Phillips

Here is a wall. No way around, or over, or through. There are words on the other side.
The words on this side say so.

If you insist on being here at least say something

Silence in the hand is a bird in a mouth of leaves

Sometimes
the room we're in is
inside another room
there's no way
to enter. This is the room
in which everything
happens to us,
even if we're elsewhere
when it happens,
which we often are.
Outside this room,
nothing is real.



rebooting the past one nail clipping at a time

TO REPLICATE THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST'S JOURNEY INTO THE DESERT FOR 40 DAYS

This year I gave up hope for Lent.

The otherworldly pallor of the sky – shall we say it's greige?

Consciousness bobs – a misty blob – between optimism and nihilism.

We are under siege. We are short of sages.

It's hard to be an atheist in such an age, so why not make up your own theology?

Here, see: Before they grow up, angels are angelets, like pink piglets except with wings.

Can a fasting period make time pass faster?

Sign of the cross, sign of the times.

Sing of lying down, sing of rising.

The crux of the matter? The matter sucks.

You won't believe how saintly I've become. Big halo energy.

And Easter's still a full eighteen days away.

from KEEP SENDING THE TAXI OF THE ROBIN'S EGG BLUE AWAY: A CURRICULUM VITAE IN THE FORM OF A MAGIC 8 BALL READING

cannot predict now

the weight of nouns.

love, angel, ice cream, retribution. suitcase,

sneakers, the curve of the road. & the ones that trigger. just by their objective

existence. *oranges*, for example, *babies*, *kittens*.

as I see it, yes

the best thing for you might be happening because I'm not there—

my sources say no

there are always for example two deaths the real one & the one people know about

outlook good

& as for the slightly glazed smile of someone who has found a single solution

for everything—

my reply is no

do we have plans for the Earth. no the Earth has plans for us.

WHAT'S NEXT

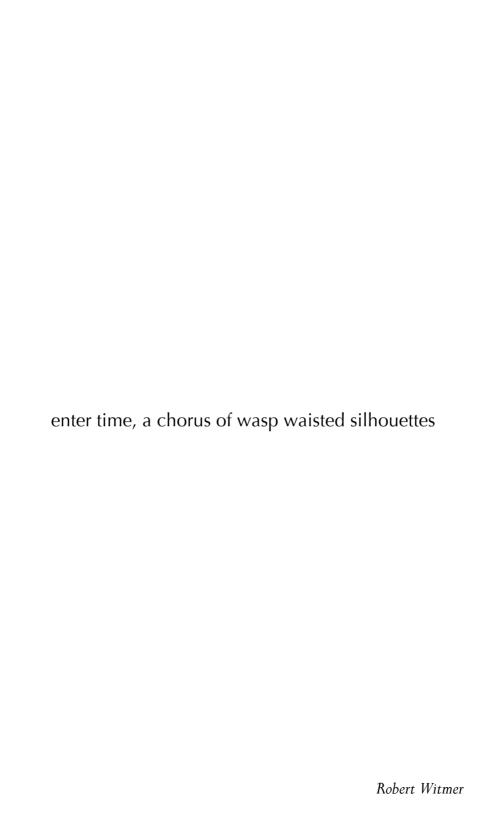
I don't know what's next, light at tunnel's end or an ordinary evening.

I've draped bedsheets over the furniture as in an old movie

where one's afraid of dust not the spirits.

holes in my sweater the dogwood drops a few leaves

trying to find the needle's eye what I've been up to eyesight dims threading a needle on camelback



imagine between the worlds there exists a runway where arachnids sashay

POLYMERASE

I am traveling through time dressed up as an ocarina. Someone is playing me – their breath smells like snowshoes.

ELSEWHEN

```
In an-
other place the
clouds
might hint
at snow;
but
here
calligraphy
hasn't been
in-
vented.
```

WHITES

Between the two whites of robe and shroud, the off-white: a circling of gulls.

SKY

Too many evenings taking in the distance and getting nowhere.
The sky's a beautiful and wondrous thing but nothing grows there.

beach

combing

looking

for

glass

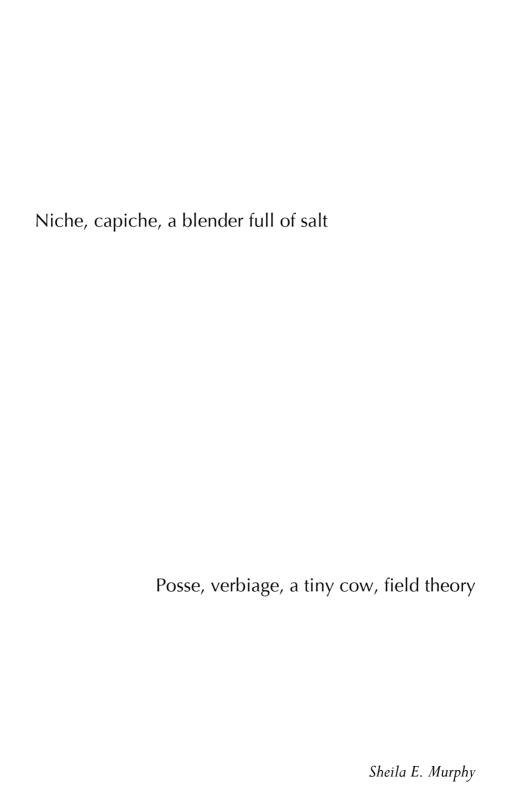
smoothed

by

time

still
spit
ting
out
the
seeds
Plan
B

Day sky's pewter afternoon, an Indiana void of plump tomatoes



a note that releases the white deer between things

the rhythm
of mourning doves
a student conducts
math equations
in the air

CAN A SOUND FRAME ANOTHER SOUND?

The chatter of a thousand crickets frames the intermittent thrum of one woman's breathing framed by the chatter of a thousand crickets.

MODERATO (POUR LA MAIN GAUCHE)

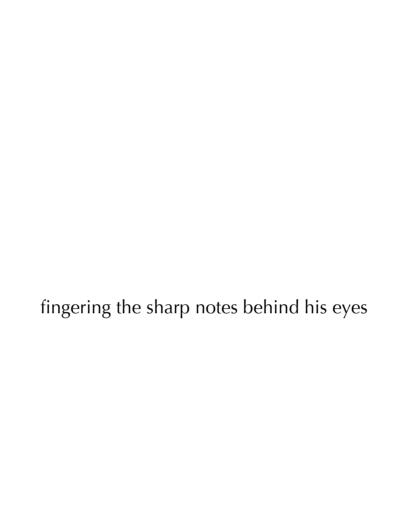
In this prelude the left hand expresses its lonely ache for the right and lets abandoned notes stray at large through the starry chill of the night.

NOCTURNAL

i.m. Julian Bream

Strings vibrate in the hall, a spirit with eyes squeezed shut and head bobbing might be the strike of fingernails through a backward telescope, pear-body to belly as rings of colour float restless in blackfaced night. A cockney always between the power station and the dogs home plucks for cash – it's done for yourself even against the score and that's the way to reach others. Cell to cell a smallish voice breaks to put back winding figures which wake in sleep and breathe in death tubed in narcotic joy.

world news . . . my fingers on the fretboard



COUPER

No part will ever repeat - Mark Hollis

Drawn to white canvas detail & silence tape exists to be cut avoid repetition no way to rephrase locate the field its horizontal shift a red rose posy from Michou in a slender vase Francoise is near the river in her black & white world

THE AZURE ROAD TO MATISSE

winds down the sparkling hill.

Fluid colours bleed
and brush the shore. Tame
non-binary birds of Nice
flock to La Petite Maison,
dining chic to chic, sharing
contours in a window frame.
The sky pretends to rain.
Everything is as it seems.

WALK AWAY, RENÉ after Magritte's *The Red Model*

Feeling empathy with the shoes, the feet choose to embody the shoes.

Feeling nothing, the shoes desire nothing and are left on the Left Bank.

ARTEFACTUAL

for Andrew McDonald

The artist has come like a shaman of shame draping his body in sackcloth, a smock or – for heaven's sake – hospital robe.

He's daubing his torso in a tattoo performance to act out abjection compacted of ash-dust smeared on a face, and foetal in corners of industrial brick or, descending a staircase, puts fashionable chic in our and its place.

You see, self-recovery requires the displacement, us moved not to shun this shaman of shame. No, no, we face up to the very thing done.

NO REGRETS

Just when I thought poetry was a service dog, it gave back my sight. It soon managed to chew its leash to bits. Its collar and harness disintegrated. It was about to run off, but I had already fastened new lines around its chest and attached a new collar and leash. Then poetry thought I was the service dog, but I had no teeth. The fair thing to do was to exchange places. So I removed its harness, collar and leash, and put them all on me. No way out of this harness now, but at least I can see, and my hearing has improved. I am growing teeth. I am the dog of poetry. But now who or what holds the leash? I am going to chew on that a while.

AN INTUITION OF TIME

Rubber band around the book so often read

through decades, read and held against destructions of glue and pages, falls apart in my hands – child holding words his father once held, Tagore's *The Gardener*, and my once-thinner arms wrapped around my thinning father at his last. The skin of my own life still snaps back, but in its volume I no longer feel comprehended. I sense my own unity surrendering to its dispersal, covers-and-text, motes in place of the book once read.

from MATTERED BY TANGENTS

29

form filled to the top with powdery amnesia patience rewards the purely psychological body estranged glove becomes a body of work now colour it in

the word *lapidary* is certainly not onomatopoeic lucky octopus likes his Letterland tank-top lots thanks the whole cottage hospital is left blank Prefab Beatles

florid pill dispenser drops names on lino haunted gardens blended with antiseptic narcissism turret lid toffee faggot left bank addenda flood an orgasm of correction fluid

31

bailed out in time to get some insomnia showing up later with a local newspaper you're a poor excuse for a female impersonator duelling with rusty ski stick and aluminium imago

let's take the same *narrow road* to a different *deep north* rudely ungrateful for the identity bracelet i don't know why they call it the little death try to imagine how a blood cell is a platelet

sorbet to the left of me sherbet to the right sorbet in front of me isn't remotely buzzing cauterised spindrift sails with sieved snails cyst exits party hat and heads for the stag not making cocoa for Kingsley Amis

of course not but

making fondue for Benjamin Fondane

in some strange afterlife

FRUIT PUNCH

She was stealing a peach.
She liked the aroma.
There was freedom in thievery.
Freedom and anxiety.
The anxiety of her smirk.
It was work
to pretend she was smelling the peaches and not hurting the design.

HATE ACHE

You know you're angry if it makes you angry that they call you angry. You know you're less angry when the imputations roll right off, make you laugh in fact though there are still residual and freshly harvested anger tomatoes eager to be sliced.

SPECIAL

Unique, extra-special rage about lost time, you kick a stone, and a grasshopper jumps, shreds air. Fist-sized, the spotted Cactus Wren, at eye level, perched in thousands of yellow needles, unmoving, quiet. Walk away, its crackly, raw voice sings.

OBTRUDER

I was the strong one. With cant, with choler with opting out and illusions.

But you haven't let go of the whip hand. Just like that: snips of you punctuate my pulpit.

THE EXCHANGE

Verbs within me are smitten by your nouns. Our grammar funnels greater fluidity by streaming new regimes of oneness.

All of t	he actual peo fictional chara	ple contained	d herein are	based entirely



on i on

milk / ether

NORTH AND NORTH AND MORE NORTH

broomhandled, the boathouse lock snaps

The moonlit river. Red cig tips

We dump the rowboat on a grassy bank where ducks are tucked in themselves

Onwards!

firefly squid our fifteen minutes of shoreline you made up an ocean

leading the sky on

painting the ocean she disappears

The sea knows where nowhere is & will take you if you let it

quickly inside out of the storm we hardly knew n the i massive g ocean h beach t s a q small u pair a of l sandals l

mur muration of starlings forming an orca breaching the sky

Writing this in an old pond notebook:

frog jumps in sound of water

a line of pelicans winging east

the river links art & life in a dry dark the whispers

from frog splash circling ripples of pond but the river teaches drift

FLOODED

observable world

redacted night sky

all clouds

then

the imagined world

recedes

receive, now like bread

this tenuous offering

this hidden river

my reflection deleted by an artificial lake

invisible data treated as bacteria inside

feedback loop

feedlot

empty

from CONSPIRACY

June 27 121

whereas nine out of ten common offenders their cheeks suffused with grey jute sacking find some degree of fulfillment in hurting harmless animals only history can decide among the proceeds which are spread out as in a game of chance abandoned in haste

122

some degree of forcing is inevitable given the subservience on display in even their first activities arousing envy in the space between the rungs of a ladder and the sickly sweet attempts at piety which may still be sensed long after the abuse has ceased

123

tremendous progress in how words are employed on low-skilled labour lovingly performed by papier maché marionettes are a very good likeness of interference in the otherwise continuous presence of a low hum just out of earshot

the breeze then just the thought hymn hummed self exchanged forward to be blind to particulars for comparatives ring and all the business until unhanded in any window an escape clause sings

ACCENT

snapped his fingers

didn't linger

with the singer

from THE JAZZ AGE

We'll always have Paris

Alive as if for the first time with the occasion of her first adultery, Dusty Springfield walks home in the pre-dawn, marvelling at the echoing of her footsteps in the deserted streets, the way the moonlight shines on the rooftops. She feels her heart will always be full of the pictures on Courbet's walls, the unexpected pallor of his bared torso.

Flight 714 to Sydney

Face almost pressed to the window, Katherine Mansfield looks out on Alpine, Levant, then Asian landscapes, trying to match the outlines with her recollection of the maps. After dark rises over the edge of the world, she has to push away from her shoulder the drooping head of the portly stranger spilling over from the next seat. As the paperback slips from his fingers onto her lap she sees the photo on the back cover is a more youthful portrait of himself. Sam Pepys has been reading one of his own fat novels.

from SUBWAY POEMS

4-19-16

I saw Louis Zukofsky crossing the street at 3:30 this afternoon on 7th Ave. and 7th St. wearing a business suit and dark wraparound sunglasses – and bright white running shoes! If Zuk were still alive, still walking the streets of Brooklyn, he would wear bright white running shoes, I feel sure of it.

12-20-16

Everyone seems recognizable today. I wonder if there's a brain malady where everyone seems recognizable. There's one where no one is recognizable.

EAVESDROPPING ON THE CITY BUS

I think she said "loneliness" and you whisper "no, she said *only miss*." I wish we knew sign language so no one would hear us. The passenger behind us says into her phone "what an ocean!" as we all drive through Tucson you mutter something I don't understand and now the person in front of us DOES say "loneliness" and you shrug, as if that were inevitable

WORK (2004)

A thin woman, 3	3. She	is in jail a	igain for c	rack
cocaine. Has already be	een in	prison three	times. Or	her
forearm, near and un	nder l	ner elbow,	two sets	s of
horizontal lines. Like thi	s, but v	wider lines:		
	_			_
	-			_
	-			_
	-			_
	-			_

For a moment I think the lines are a tattoo, maybe with religious significance. I ask. She says she worked at a fast food place with a grill. That's it. As if everyone who worked there has the scar.

openings in clouds above the cemetery

the stone looks into itself

looking for its nest among the insects and seeds in the dry soil I found the remains of old conversations and the mouths that formed them

during that part of the day which has only one color we undressed each other in the shadowed room It's usually around now she asks did any of us ever not wear masks?

FROM WHICH AS YOU KNOW

Aurochs and narwhal and rhinoceros from which as you know the unicorn was composed

The Pacific oarfish, from which as you know the sea-serpent legend arose

Toxic sago palm, from the ashes of which, as you know the phoenix rose

Mass extinction events from which as you know came the rose

SUNSET AT TOMORI BEACH

where the mahogany surfer

lights an acrid cigarette and steps into the shower

EN ROUTE

AT NARITA

airport hotel room: a blank through which purposes pass without friction

THE NORWEGIAN JAZZ WARS

as the banjo said to the alto saxophone: PARKERING FORBUDT

CHURCH-GOING IN SCOTLAND

plain white walls bespeak a thirst for the more inward forms of martyrdom awaiting absolution – sitting on my hands for warmth

sundown for an instant we see far

SUMMER NIGHT

thunderstorm thunderstorm thunderstorm thund'rstorm thund'rst'rm th'nd'rst'rm th'n''rst'rm t''n''rst'rm t''n''rst'r' '''tn'n''' l'''tn'n''' l''htn'n''' l'ghtn'ng''g l'ghtn'ngb'g l'ghtn'ngbug lightningbug lightningbug lightningbug



name by name dusk

disassembles

the street

wait, the wind will untangle

the pond from the sky

moonset my insomnia written for red piano long afternoon I wait like a criminal among daylilies



YELLOW

Tiger swallowtails are bright filaments lively in the vertical axis of redwoods – evergreens unaccustomed to fanfare. With a looping flight that's dizzily unpredictable, these butterflies arrive on their own timetable like joy. We hardly recognize them as little pioneers and confuse nimbleness for listlessness. The wing rustle of crows flying through the canopy overhead corroborates our suspicions. We come welded to shadow that familiar ache of an anchor. What will it take to swap out dark for light? Yellow sets us in motion.

NOVEMBER

What is hard, softens, and what is soft, hardens. Worn out gears disconnect.

I've already mentioned the raw wiring but I'll mention it again.

This month's wet guise interrogates without the sun. There's a role for yellow in the history of bruises.

Grief isn't some fixture to fixate on, but more like a tidal island, or darkened sandbar. The retro decor should look familiar.

We're here to build muscles for the sweetness out of reach.

RUSE OPPENESQUE

In this great Lack of right

Clear air, the small Broken spirit

Living and breathing in This in which we seek

To find it still nuzzling Our outstretched palms,

No amount of comforting Artifice suffices to lure it

Out into the open any more.

CLASSIC TRAGICOMICAL PRETEXT

The deus ex machina Driving the next

Poem you are breathlessly Anticipating is waiting

In the wings disguised As a winged Trojan beating

A dead and falling horse.

for whom the sniper trolls

to whom the Muses grant spite – if you don't already know this, Acerba, take notice – they deny all respite –

(attrib. Mercurialis the Younger)

That list you keep of our misdemeanours is a health-risk. It so enrages you, neighbour, that you take revenge on a hanging basket. We pray you'll die soon if not before although you've rage enough to bore a way out of a lead-lined casket.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

Wrestling with dark thoughts makes me prone to

being moved along, stopped and searched at night.

Let's exchange meaningful looks and take deep breaths.

I've done what I can, think everything's a great idea.

THE FIGHT

tired words sag book pages flop closed

time to take my pills close the blinds turn off lights this is all so boring

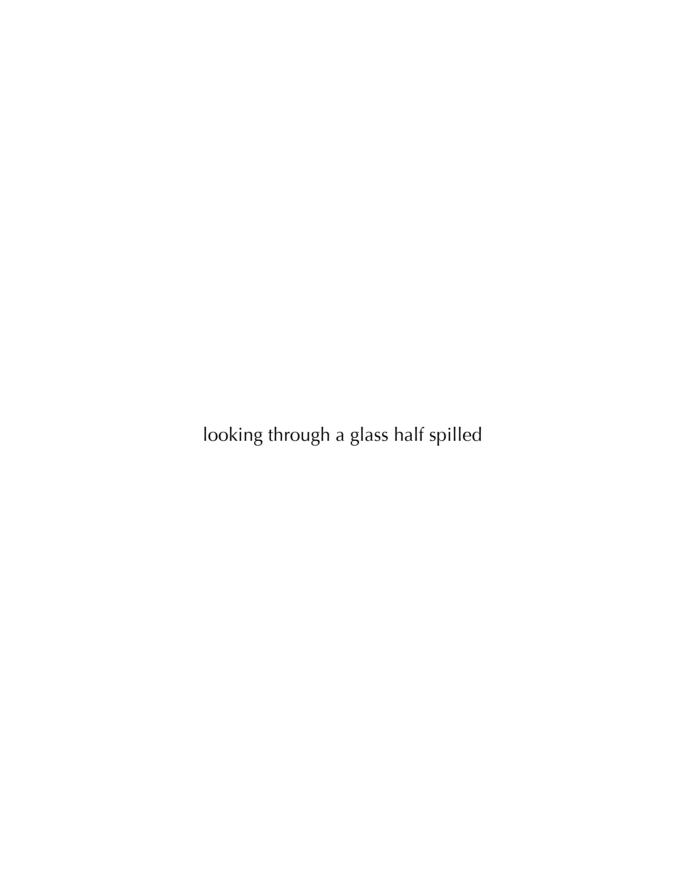
I like boring
I have fought hard for boring

MEDICAMENTS

before breakfast three Mark Ford poems a passage or two of Sei Shōnagon

then the palm full of pink or white tablets for this and that and an oil capsule

after which Weetbix chopped banana and coffee are purely recreational



while we negotiate terms for roasting snow





HAIKU

Paris, New York, or Managua On which cities, dear clouds Do you most love to rain?

TO DO LIST

Refill bathtub with ice

Floss teeth with flowers

Plant flowers with teeth

Ride bike in floss thong

Refill aces up sleeve

Plant plovers in cheeks

Floss another's teeth

Learn to ride brick

Plant teeth in ice trays

Refill bathtub with stingrays

TO

travel as a follicle mite in Johnny Appleseed's mustache, a snail

in the gut of a goose, migrant starlight or sunlight, which is sunlight

onto a row of trees, the wings of beetles obviating pesticides not pests, bacteria

making new the roots and leaves, the broad palette or garden arrived at in a fig-

ment or fragment. We contain poetry as the cattle trucks of the world

carry cattle.* And the cattle carry bells, to keep us

singing.

^{*} John Berger

RUNNERS

The purple yam bleeds white beads, the string beans sweat like guilty fingers, the apple

seeds like lacquered cider flasks drink in the kitchen glow, the rain-like night, night-

like rain falls between keys, on pine cones, burnt houses, radio waves, radishes diving, slick

recycling vessels, boxes of lost shape, pumpkin hatches, dead-headed cyclamen, the purple

stained fingers vegetable ink darkened by rain at the edges

the dung

& stony moon

worn wind

what we eclipse

the cutout of

a backdrop of

stars

SUDDENLY

holding it up

your dead mother's comb

becomes infinitely more

DONNA

She sat awhile looking at a speck of dust on her pantyhose.

Then she thought about heads rotting on spikes.

GOLF COURSE

On the fairway, puddles wink at passing clouds.

Bunkers flash their depilated armpits.

'How about this?' she says, opening her raincoat.



the ever widening sky blue transparencies grey black moilings

& far beyond that threshold stars slowly drift ever further apart

in how many universes does someone have that thought at just this instant

BURIED ALIVE

To keep up with the news of a world as distant to him

now as the day he was born

he removes his hat and presses an ear to the ground.

WEATHER

The weather shifts daily the whether or not the should we or shouldn't we watching for storm clouds countings our eggs.

NOW MINE

What to do with these stories of yours laid out in my palms

- an injured birdI can neither set down nor heal
- a gift of honeyin a cracked pot.

SESSION

Everyone brings a chair and forms a circle under the redbuds.

(The redbuds are not important.)

He has five minutes to convince them. If he fails, they will not speak to him again. If he succeeds,

they will take their chairs and go home, and will not speak to him again.

ABSOLUTION

My kitchen floor is very forgiving she tells me. For what

do I need forgiveness? I ask myself. What can I have done

that calls for Jerusalem limestone and those fossilised

foetuses trapped forever inside to show clemency?

Call that man out and he'll flop and wriggle

as when you upturn an old log

and despite the worm's writhe you can see its every ring

ANOTHER OWL

A king's heavy robes are not as stately as this owl's thickly feathered wings.

The curves of its beak hook in an elegant and deadly point. It crunches,

with abandon, on the skull of a small-boned animal, or a crooked politician.

Covid-19 summer: long tufts of grass grown over the pitcher's mound July 4th impatiens in the dock

plague lockdown arguments accent the wallpaper a tear of embalming fluid from my brother's eye the forever chemicals found in the old swimming hole rain on the window a friend's life support disconnected

waiting patiently . . . thunder over the fan's hum

rejection letter snow writing its way down my window recent test results the tree drops an apple at my feet

the sound fog brings her phone taking my message

thrift shop drop off plastic bags filled with her life on earth Hart Island rows of neatly stacked white coffins WHITEHALL HOME OF ICE F razor wire glistens in the sun land of the free

> the girl across the street has a picnic with her dolls six feet apart

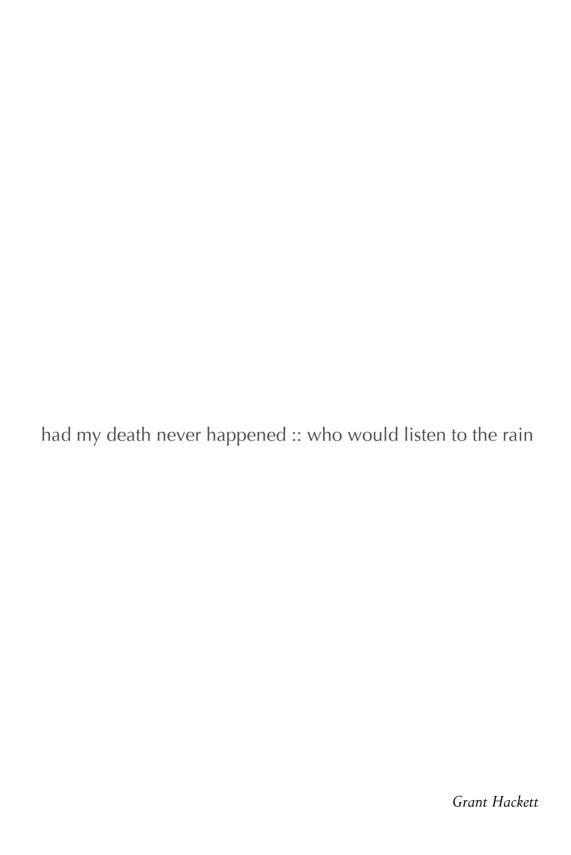


a new

god's logo

al ready al tered

summer winds



falling rain the rose a puzzle to be solved

THE ALLEY IN THE ABBEY

Your anchoress birthday

Sawdust harp-shafts

Attention's truer present

THE VITREOUS BODY

Live Nude Dancers

Ludic Agamemnon

Mastic backpages.com

THE PARKINSON'S DANCE (a haiku sequence)

parkinson's the skittering of autumn leaves

parkinson's the street dog also tethered

parkinson's a walking stick stirs the silence

parkinson's sifting sands the flyswatter

parkinson's the weight of words unsaid

parkinson's pausing the pushchair to hear the rain

mind the gap green gloves grip what's left

DAUGHTER

for Maura

Your small hand in my hand keeps looking for my hand The many names of the ants the many childish haiku of an old man I stick my head in the lilac bush

from FLOWER PASSAGES

V

New lupins
in a new garden
in a new land,
unfamiliar peonies
and strange black
hollyhocks
waving stiffly,
welcoming us
perhaps

VII

Under a canopy
of flowering linden
in the shadow
of the trees in the park
cobwebs touch
your face
bringing out
its contours

XII

Hanging
the washing
in spring sunlight
I see reflected
shadows of frail
wood anemones
on the white sheets
stretched large
as trees

Sicilian green colours the words this drunken forest

bell heather & small grey shapes porridge waiting for the coffee

A SCENE OR TWO

In the mornings after and some long nights the bulb comes on and there is your brother placing his ponytail in the coffin.

BECOMING CLAIRE

It happened once before while watching House of Cards. The sensation of entering her body: the military lines; steel armour of dresses.

Walking through rooms with powerful chandeliers.

Acid greens, neutral beiges. Savagery in silk and wool.

The mannish jaw, quiet stealth, cold hypervigilance.

What she sees. What she knows.

Her command of a room – sucking out all insignificance.

Her refusal to dwell. No apologies.

A metal Mona Lisa; the carriage of a Valkyrie.

To slip behind the eyes of Medusa.

A HOLE IN THE WALL OF A ROOM I LIVED IN

A hole of mystery.

A greedy hole where no bird sings – cut through the torso in a surrealist painting; hollow with no blood.

The way the surrealists smoothed over the rubble of dreams and made this clean but terrible world.

A POEM IN WHICH I WANTED TO FIND THOSE GOLDFISH

I never really came to grips with the way they batted at the plastic bag with their slimy lips and never stopped unlearning — batting right until the end when the oxygen ran out before I got them home from the fair.

fish breaking the barrier between us

Silence asks questions that your ears in hearing answers give shape to. I subscribe to the truth. It arrives every morning at my doorstep, somewhere between sleeping and waking.

WRITING IX

an echo

before the movement achieved

in the capillary of the eye remnants of a bird in the place of fire

mirror with eyes closed

WRITING XXXIX

to put a tongue to the distance of things

sky collapsing in my heart

language hatching the world inside me

floods the air memory of birds

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