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## Seers In Greensand

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SEERS IN GREENSAND

By

Michael Berger

Bachelor of Arts – Literature

University of California, Santa Cruz

2002

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts – Creative Writing

Department of English

College of Liberal Arts

The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

May 2016

**Thesis Approval**

The Graduate College  
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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This thesis prepared by

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entitled

Seers in Greensand

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

My MFA degree in Creative Writing, with an emphasis on poetry has culminated in a poetry manuscript of 60 pages in length, written under the mentorship of Professors Claudia Keelan and Donald Revell. As well, I've had two other committee members, Professor Emily Setina and Professor Sheila Bock provide necessary counsel towards the completion of my thesis. The manuscript is directly inspired by my experiences studying English poetry and poetics in the program, with an emphasis on devotional and spiritual poetry. Many of the poems also reflect my deep study of more modern and contemporary poets of the "sacred": writers like Charles Olson and Hilda Doolittle. A third of my thesis manuscript came out of my experiences fulfilling the "study abroad" requirement for my MFA. To fulfill this component, I embarked on a couple "pilgrimage" walks through rural parts of the United Kingdom. These walks also resonated with some of the devotional poetry I have studied in this program. The longest, most engaging pilgrim walk I took was from Winchester to Canterbury in England, a distance of 125 miles that roughly followed in the footsteps of Chaucer's pilgrims in *The Canterbury Tales*. Relatedly, my translation requirement was fulfilled through two semesters of studying Old English, which culminated in my translation of the poem *Beowulf*. Overall, my final poetry manuscript explores many of these themes of pilgrimage, spirituality, ecological mysticism and archaic English history as a way to revitalize a contemporary sense of the sacred, especially as it is connected to geography and landscapes.

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## Portals

## Flood Poppy

This road I reclaim in sleep,  
Built from hammered clay  
And the wrestling of hounds,  
Both wine red in memory.  
Out of a trough overrun by  
Jasmine and ivy. My road spirals over the city  
To see it anew, manmade sea, basin of  
Granite cut with steel. Her curves grow  
Lost in the derelict garden,  
Glazed in spring rain.  
Barbecues, tricycles, picture frames  
Forgotten, then reborn. Caved-in garages  
Embroidered in spider lace. Charcoal and security and  
Burned Christmas foliage. Here the  
City is a skeletal sway of fruit ships  
Gone aground, shore-edges danced in by  
Shepherds. A wind's cargo of  
Cardamom and lemongrass  
Caresses the body for ticks. Then to blow it  
All at yard sales where nothing works.  
I guess the past is over another road  
But it doesn't burn anymore. Only a touch  
From the summit brings sparks. As husks blown  
In from an altered season, this thicket of gravel  
Flowers in November. Robin's eyes of sardine tins  
Launched over a gully's blossoming rim.  
I step in an eyelet of bronze water about the stem of  
The *oriole* flower that bloomed sideways where the live  
Oak split. A road by any other name is how I dreamt it



## **Lobos**

Distant  
Green points  
But no city  
Spurs of light  
The tide eaten tower  
Clangs the shore  
Mid-winter furlough  
Downtown buried  
We abandon the door  
In a fabled East  
Pink-green abalone  
Trampled foam white  
Carmelite boulders  
Sapped in pine  
Raw windows breath  
Visitors besiege stone  
The wild goat lexicon  
Bleeds amethyst ink  
Pumice cleans  
Coral-cut thighs  
Pursued the copper waves  
A nobleman's story  
Thru parlor flames  
Kelp-heads confound  
Sepia viewfinder  
Salt cod spine quills  
Achieve the dread  
Woods to honor  
In a mine shaft  
The heart's folly

Rake sediment with bone  
Ice paths leafed over  
A clock ticks in the ink well  
Hands cracking at night  
These paths divulge  
Hieroglyphic mist  
Under the waves  
Slough of  
Brass and quartz  
Instruments:  
Farewells.

## The Plaza

Before I was ever Europe or fallen in love,  
I was a stowaway in a liquor cabinet  
of liquor no one poured:  
sherry and chartreuse and amaretto, leftovers from in-laws  
of the room no one used, not even for  
formal get-togethers.

Older brothers I'll never meet pulled  
sundries from highest shelves:

White beans

Molasses

Rice flour

Cornichons.

Lit lamps in a parlor  
anticipating Spanish conversation where  
I detail my struggles for solvency,  
my embellishments to stationary  
when I know you are  
reading them

on a violet mesa  
under more violet skies  
riven as these parlor curtains  
over your apprenticeship:

*our future is this homeless land (you wrote)*

*seeded by moths and bats*

*where trees are cactus and can't be climbed*

*without gloves on—*

But on crystalline days we foraged greens  
made an atlas of edibles  
for the end times  
cutting holes in fences

to reach the warmer parts.

An island gets  
flatter when the trees are cut down so

We  
took field trips to open houses  
with no intention of buying, or borrowing,  
just drowsing thru  
foyers, dens and pantries  
with voyeur's grin, sampling gleam of mirrors  
what plants are kept on which ledges,  
if a fridge is steel or ivory, how it  
unsucks when it  
opens.

This travel  
that comes to mind is from room to room  
in a suddenly estranged home,  
what it means to reassemble  
yourself from storage  
stare intently at the unremembered  
spread like cards on opaque tabletops,  
urns cooling on Thursday's stoops,  
garden huts of rakes  
cock-eyed and  
mud-caked.

## Portals

Shake the word open  
That sound harbors  
Breath says unveil  
How harbor blossoms

Juniper seeds scar  
Ground's autumn runes  
Overgrown mind  
Lost in birth crevasse

Place nectarine in  
Radius we touch  
Fleeing center kiss  
Axial salt flurries

Ships winch inward  
Paint blue doors  
On corroded walls  
Children hammer keys

Spit woven metal  
No steel figments  
Future stale  
Approximation

Of going anywhere  
Now is primeval  
Satellites tack the blood  
Final portal darkest  
Seen from shore  
Pull leavings of search fires

At roots of legs and doors  
Plant this entrance in water

## **Olives**

My stucco home is not like the others, for its front hedges and  
Bushes are hollowed into caves I hide in, counting cars.  
When I stare at the map in the kitchen by the fig-tree window,  
I make hidden spaces appear. Swirling blue depths hide live green  
Islands I can find. Emptiness begets form, as all trees are  
Observatories if you climb them. If I have a sister, she is the  
Cloaked woman of that far-flung neighborhood who comes August  
Nights to climb our olive tree, its silver bark muscled as thighs,  
To poach unripe olives. She appears after dinner when we sit  
Silently in adjoining rooms. Is she the mystery then, or are we mute  
For other reasons? When I climb it, I see rain forests from magazines:  
Medicine, fluorescent flowers, cataracts. Sprawled on pillows as  
Ravens shake fig-heavy branches I name the Portuguese explorers  
And watch her moving fast down dark blocks towards the others.

## Messengers

Rustling gift I sit in  
To become warm:  
From kitchen's window  
My mind's table  
I pour myself out  
Thinking makes me  
Strangely thoughtless  
Makes me eat fast as if  
Thoughts can become  
Over-worked or over-burned.  
I shouldn't think when eating.  
I open the window to  
Let light wring me.  
Mailman double parks  
I eat salad and cold coffee  
Watch him unload letters, parcels  
For the strangers I live with  
Eating by the glass I think  
His hands are benefactors  
Excited as a kid seeing him  
Quiet lake of that truck  
Plashing the pulled linen sky  
Aromatic green envelopes  
Deflect waves to palms  
Buggy waters in a mailbox  
My window reaches brackish  
Green, I feel envelopes  
Sliced open so thoughts  
Move other directions.



## Storm Gossip

*The sun looks outer worldly* he misheard in  
the minestrone aisle caked in dust  
that soup made from accident, he thought  
sand slicked curves of cove goers  
waterproof radios discounted  
like pineapples, all the telephones suggest bananas.

The numbers dial him.

She answers in the baroque part of town  
crenellated roofs of  
clamshell pools under  
cover of green bells  
she slinks down scented halls  
as if nothing had gone off  
in the *outside world* vagueness engulfs her  
her memory overheats into a wolf

his fingers consider large green bunches how heat will reduce them  
“*my inside world*” feels tight and small (complex) like  
this cabbage sustained Charlemagne’s soldiers for months

and she says:

“and the lightning was topaz! how we got caught under the clocktower the restaurant went berserk  
the actors attacked the casks you tripped into the last working shepherd in Virginia everybody poked  
holes in

their luggage for one more round—”

an arsenal is always empty in a storm:

sprigs of cornsilk at Curtis and Lorimer

the alley’s mauve shade made of silken moss,

stampeding elk motel vending machine handball courts

flooded church bobbing with lemons

here is where this moment fills he starts telling *starving*

of the false well and the black hen

or whoever it was she overheard

## **Boulder City: A Journey**

We fall for the doldrums as I fell for you. I plot mayorship on a sinking  
Veranda, breathe India tea fumes behind plum partitions. Fresh goat milk slakes our  
Thirsts on days we both dress as tomboys. A pullman drowsing on stacked planks, unlit  
Pipe in his teeth, holds postcards, half of them written to someone. The recipients are  
Bark, smoke, arrows; what has designed the park without anyone knowing. How would  
They know, being so preoccupied with soaps and lentils? The empty road is a shore,  
Banked by muralled shops and their wilderness of teacups. No water broods here for it is Spent in  
leaping shade.

When it rains in late summer, everyone turns the pages of a leftover magazine, checks into a Smaller  
motel. The chairs ache with vapor. Coffee burns if you add honey. Rocks are  
Buried under the rubbed-out plaques of the library floor. I look in every shop for the Curved,  
Edwardian handle I first saw in your pantry towns ago. We make our minds into  
A mixed quarry. The days blind like mountain lakes. If I find the handle, I may find you Dimmed by  
the wings of town square.

## The Wire God

I can't help but build you into a sky  
No less real for its absence of fires.  
Not pictures, only wet thrown language  
A mother must sing, only to forgive.  
Walk the charred remnants, kicked-up  
Diagrams from our tattered fish fires.  
Suspect anything but false remembering:  
Visions crouched in alien red mesas,  
Perimeter's white towers beg divinity,  
Chromium spheres obstruct the transmitter  
On last night when both of us bled together  
In a landslide, we made *puttanesca* by gaslight  
To toast the voyage's dreamy forgetfulness  
Sketched fast in overlapping stairwells  
Bow-tied noodle whipped sardine scales  
How close our houses rub in blue air.

## Visionary Company

A girl awakens the room's atoms, her eyes burning. A father awakes to reptile visions on the Bedroom wall. So he loads the car with mad provisions. The omen expands into a satellite That hounds us. Then, the lake of our home follows. Her story bleeds into unnamed Territories where kids play in the dunes to be rechristened.

Now in Bolinas the arrows are snapped gobs of agate. Rub them brighter between burnt Legs. Roadside kale and spinach bunches have no real metric. Leave spoiled coins. Soon the Seal-heads will blaze in the kelp. An alliance is a minute's darkness, the resurrection of the Water-House.

Nothing drops in the dust without becoming passenger.

These punch bowls unwashed since Easter overflow with marbles. They are albatross eyes From the window story she weaves. Now her carnation skirts flicker on the stairs that Descend fitfully into the waves. This Picture made of foam and blood is not for eyes alone.

My heart spins east, more vertigo than destination. This summons smells of wild juniper and Frostbit mahogany. Just over the glen, where there is another glen that keeps no shape.

## The Gulch

I lost a toy bike in a sea cleft I

Never saw. Sudden fire edged

Hole detached star swims midday.

Unreal even while happening as crabgrass happens to

Dance without moving.

This *love-hole* changes, as

A field of violets turns lime green in light. Sun turns

Things as mud curdles under a train. What is the source

Of distinction but

True blindness? All a world becomes

Holes for the bleeding of color. I can't speak

If I don't drop my definitions. Do you want me

To speak? I ask this (I assume)

Only of salt and its undulant weave. A child, lost to

Light,

I lost this:

Round creature in a crevice and a scream never

Enough red

## Glider

*That hang-glider is not a bird,* he said

but it is for that split second of  
paradise giant as a floating pine splitting fog

a struggle in space and then  
befallen by peace web of bones spread  
shudder of opal air gusts irregular

jingling keys in elastic sea-shadow:  
condor or spoon or plane confuses them  
cello strings beyond bluff thru those Roman doors

*they know that luminous motion!*  
ocean-drops on raised veins matted fur  
darkening wind steers ancient muscle

Laughing, they haul this legend with all its bright holes  
like netting across ever more vacant beaches,  
clams and keys and cufflinks and thimbles  
fatten their keep. He knows him for a miniaturist,

better for smuggling: falcons, gristle, hubcaps,  
algae, coins and flies, many red-winged.

Heaped and vagrant shore where city light dies,  
This difficult creature endures.

## Saint Lucy's Night

Her feast day falls when sentries play dead  
What enters like wind scours the plaza.  
Strip the home of shelter and run:  
All is borne upon you even walls.  
Watch Her loitering holy and apart  
Swedish saint given Mexican life  
In junkyard & junebug pastels.  
These are her sacral actions.  
Shapes fit what you think are shapeless hands.  
Beachhead of molten tides,  
Past all churches and museums,  
Embossed with crashed insects,  
Find the initiatrix: *theme of the night visitor*  
(Of that smuggled Arabic literature)  
Shoring of blue lights against a false order  
How we decorate our rock gardens in winter  
Is our garland of signals for Her.  
This birth lake percolates at dusk:  
Haloing scum dashed by ritual quartz.  
Freed by the flicker of her negligence:  
*The lamp at the end of the chain.*  
Avail the others as their walks come:  
Screen doors slashed with stars,  
Water fronds and moon wrack:  
Keep faith in the blind to feed the refuse  
Of day and keep the dark awake.



## Hesitation Light

Grasses pry open the road. Let them  
Sing without being heard. Our business empties into the  
Empty sea and the greener path unravells.  
The rain gutter is  
tennis ball green and I follow it into brown  
hills moving yellower past  
repeating apartments gone grey.

Phosphorus bulbs of the closed grocery store's,  
pulsing fruit hung, moon waxing puddle.  
Stop to breathe the splintered dark.  
To breathe under struggling lights, for

What I heard once about the gods.  
They sleep under  
unimportant wood, and prefer to flicker there.  
Linen shipments stalled at a gas station, I want to stay,  
But I cannot. The guard is watching, for I begin

Watching too:  
But the gods I watch don't have eyes. Rehearsal of  
Green silences wormed in stones: Let me idle.  
If I stop here, there is another delay  
Of pushing further. Another light moves, unspoken.

I want to alight on myself, as a  
bird of prey at peace:  
The condor that eats roses in the unknown temple

## The Wind

Emerald valley of air slips  
Into blue shadow, so I smell the  
Fires quenched in the bronze cliffs.  
Towers ride the clouds sideways,  
Thin fingers of rock, roaring.  
Springtime says I am burst  
Open in places I cannot claim. So I won't  
Be close to things without the wind.  
I can't feel air's edges without also  
Tasting river rapids. That green hole leaks  
Darker light. I run east until  
The ground splits like music. Root horns  
Rip out of parchment earth and  
Whisper as the shaken flame.  
This green wind falls into the  
Mouths of things to shake  
Their hearts open.

## The Wake

Bed filled with maps, bath with shoes:

They are silver or

Pink to me, shapeless,

Too warm. Days duller than normal: so

I become happier.

Something is now amiss in my life. All I smell

Is a pond moving below me. The sky too

Can live there, so I must live here. Where?

I thank the dead

For the wine that still breathes

In the unused parlor. It is easy

To find new rooms in mourning, and far

Easier to fill them.

Family comes, only to fly. But a dissection table

Holds many heirlooms, never mine or theirs. They

Are the river's. So her foam replenishes

These tables. I hold silver to my belly and see my wife's

Eyes in the grooves,

Of warmer green than I can remember. What heat is

This, in such widening circles?

For me, a child, the table is broken back

Into an oak tree, the unity

Of flight and fire restored. The sun is a thirsty hawk, of course,

Staying magically still, grasses

Below her the changing threads in

A windy Easter dress.

Awake to the noise of talons in the east. She tends towards

Yellow: the kitchen right before noon. Swish of canyon air:

No prize but falling

Crimson on the sidewalk, in a bathroom, on my chest

As it hunts the kisses of its hunter. I wake again, in a room

Without walls, only this air

## **Aquatic Hour**

Night radio, green dials. Half-animal  
Eyes. My bed flows, a thatched  
Vigil, as silver hills start to shake  
On the borderless blue window  
That keeps the figs in flight.

This is madrigal summer, or marigold,  
Caught on the roaring bougainvillea,  
Stuffed in an amber cognac bottle,  
Circled by hot riled dragonflies.

My heart says: the coyotes descend,  
Smiles out! Or low purple clouds drift in  
From farthest Maldives. All is imported this  
Night. The summer is in eclipse  
When music moves as smoke off  
The tiles. The howls and the vapors

Are mixed up in the moon, and her long  
Valley: news when you are falling  
Asleep but cannot complete the trip,  
Only see stars shave off into song.

So starlight flays the cotton and  
Now the green voice summons:  
Jellyfish, Meatplow, Houdini, Vespers:  
Sorcerers of strings, riddles and chords.  
All I thought I knew, I will hear again, renamed dark.

## The Wind Regained

Whistling whips of silver  
Crack off the red sedans,  
My ears suddenly slack.  
My land not mine, a wild cemetery  
Eaten quick by cypress, stabbed by steel.  
I walk too slow my blood  
Feels jeweled, a rosary of hot  
Indigo in my ears, these  
Arms. It's all the red  
Salt sea, in a transparent season.  
Wind turns into the  
Love for the gaps it sows. Holes in my  
Story are glowing today. I'm going  
Glad as the shaken  
Elms. Air becomes my new  
Arm to scratch, saffron as pollen.  
The horizon rushes as foam against my  
Outsized heart. There are no guardians in spring,  
Only an outlandishness of space, nameless.  
My heart knows its oldest teeth are out.  
In that blue spit, I feel  
Wolfish incisors twist, the speeches they force from  
Trash and gristle. A hearse blazing  
In lunch light, I imagine  
A swimming pool of air in  
The shape of a bronze bell,  
Solid enough for all my flesh to strike.

## Hecate of Old Los Angeles I

Out Lady of the chasm,  
    we are your children bound  
To the highway of your guts that  
    Unravels out of Los Angeles  
Into another darker  
    Los Angeles or  
Alamos or Feliz, or just, as we remember: Pangea,  
    A garden built of the ruins of a  
Children's mortuary. Celebrate, you scream.

Our aches and complaints are as  
    dollar store mascara  
To the meadows you cut  
    in your skin, the folds  
You've knitted into restroom visions.  
    A sky isn't a body with blood  
stained breasts, trampled groins, glyphic sores.  
    The earth isn't you, or us  
or bounded.  
    And the world isn't a world, as simple as it is to  
throw names at it.  
    There flow trackless lights to haunt  
thru blood that may be oil, in this deceiving light.  
    A distant, hot ring of  
obsidian, not exactly welcoming, yet all we can now imagine.

Television is no more a bonfire, even in a  
    Unwelcome and suspicious sexual hotel.  
Your arms snake us out of dying Colorado  
    In cooked granite black-haired with mesquite.

Your emptiness gains ground on us,  
    But in lilies and bees among the artillery and  
The drained pools of the dream-killer mansions.

Weeping feeds the cactus until it is drunk,  
    Ask gas and needles to pad our fall, our  
Flowering into your wound. If light repeats, we must, again,  
    Become beautiful. I cry into the road fire with  
The unnumbered lips, for or a daughter and a son eaten open,  
    For a beloved who blooms into mere atoms,  
*That atomic creature* and for those very poppies you harbor.

Simple passenger I turn into this dry ochre noon  
    Arms and face emulsify in mineral and vinegar lights  
My lovers in another void all my books and charts thrown away  
    Any knowledge I had as strayed as rainwater  
And your radium blue milks the only horizon.



## Wave Organ

Down a jetty of unused graves  
In a city of unexplained fires  
Caught inside ocean windows  
On a night we are mute lovebirds  
Because of how saltwater turns  
Into a drowned church organ.  
Green lights where no hill trembles and the wolf leers  
In night-woven oaks, how essential it becomes  
To watch purple-veined foliage shake with  
Fingers too numerous. Houses here are eaten  
With green speed of pier posts. The hawthorns swirl  
Over the archways and the exits. Their heart-shaped bells hammer  
Out sea hymns. We ask mewling waters in the night to  
Bed us: the mineral kiss that begs clarity short of oblivion: not that  
Words are measurable when they mean such things, or such  
Non-things. I ask your wet and flickering hands  
To feed us nectarines in well-bottom pitch, where  
We do not tell fruit from flesh. Listen to the albatross  
Sobs of the wave organ! Drink deep red  
Knotted kelp swarms grooved for bumbling hearts.  
Funerary quartz assembles a shore carnival.  
Even our woe, when it washes over us, becomes  
As shell mounds, as November's beaches musical

## Interesting Luck

*Ice skating noir*: six films featuring the miraculous “Belita”:

in one, she lands a dazzling triple axel thru a house-sized skull,  
an omen for some horrific, off-ice violation, and  
yet I might not be remembering right at all.  
I will never forget that tiki-horror skull in mid-grimace, her indestructible  
legs kicking thru it, music gone sinister, ice-dust in doctored lashes:

Erotic in that cruel and innocent way, how movies  
were then, whereas the actual crime, even never shown,  
is always sexier. Her buttoned-tight enemies watch  
Belita conjure up an unseen crime in her sword-heeled shoes.  
They try to decode her lunges, strides, feints, loops, & swirls; above all, that skull-piecing climax  
which should leave no room for doubt. But it does.  
And it’s already too late: if she stops carving ice, other blades will drop.

We also watch, from the crimson-velvet movie balcony, an empty February in the  
Castro. We feel in our thighs how shattered we’ve grown, so we  
envy the robust fatalism of Belita and her enemies,  
that edge-of-the-cliff lust for moonlit drags, predatory kisses. They eat offal wrapped in  
newspaper, then run off into any advancing shadows, while the  
people we live with plot against us, so our  
balcony heart knows all  
societies advance underwater.

After the movie, up a bald hill to the bar, I find twenty-five dollars in a mangled shrub under  
a creaking orange light. *Such interesting luck*, she said. You always had it. I see the roguish tilt of  
her hat under the big moon, lard-yellow over black bay water. It’s how hats, like her smart  
brown bowler, are always described in crime novels. But *interesting* means exactly nothing to me.

I dream, those winter nights, of crime that doesn't hurt anybody, only changes them: she is such a criminal as that, as I am to her. Feels criminal to always pick free cash off the ground to buy rum punch with. *Interesting*, she says. Referring to my luck, the hours that have nursed me along. And these arid silver hills with their stripped metal fringes, I never sick of walking, even when she's gone.

*You met me, didn't you? We made this, didn't we?* The moon is under us

## Descent

Spoons jammed in disposal, underworld  
Splash of toad ponds  
Shimmering under my  
Kitchen floor. I never make a home  
That is not vibrating or flowing. You need  
Scars from a forest to  
Hear another body rustle. All I hear is invisible  
Fire. Pile of library shadows  
Flutter as if flames spit near. This broken sleep  
Warns of earth igniting my garage,  
Cutting my green glass into mist,  
Shaking my ceiling into an infant galaxy.  
Where I would prefer  
Boundaries of linen or my shopping mall sex  
Dreams, now I want this creek bed  
To overflow with light. Once  
I walked a dusty red-lipped basin hearing the  
Hiding waters  
Watch me. Then I ran where the dream  
Again broke the surface.

## Di Chirico's Plaza

Soaked blouses, suede slacks: lemon water off a fire escape,  
Thermal towers of laundrettes, cut by steam trains,  
City of sinking hotels, darkened orchestra pits, which  
Was my marble block. We flowed fast, the buildings bled.  
Rainy gates of your mouth, mid-stern at midday,  
You crouched as a *hydrant*, flower-beast, in a brass-  
Silenced horizon. Bobbing hips smear night's ledger,  
Two cracked jade porticos, stalled in ruddy shadow.  
Night's Commander strips the heretics of shade  
So only saffron air remains. *Recess*, a glorious decree:  
Holes in time's-table. Windows bright across disinterred  
Squares flare with midnight treble of fish-netted hips.  
Autumn strews the plaza with trampled pocket watches,  
Antennae and umbrellas repel a ruby-flushed moon.

## **False Kisses**

In hell-red lipstick, as advertised, matched by torrential blue jeans, boots of volcanic black, the custodian kissed us in a copse of sycamore. Her remembered lips mocked, saliva hard on mangled bark like snail juice. Rush hour shook the grass skeleton of the afternoon as we made comic sprints to the bathrooms turned torture stalls, sounding like tortoise shells. I grew alone with pebbles and bug jars as kids played rhyme toss and sand tag. Ask me of home I said perfumed trenches in falcon-brown Ohio, where the whine of rockers invited the nightly barrage of glowworms on the Roman pillars of the patio. I buried soldiers by the tulip bed, gave my worry-stone lavender rubs as told, and fortified my arms with sandbags, dubious presents for my parents. A chalk drawing of a musty orange urinal on the sidewalk of our canopied neighborhood, where aspens crossed in the middle, the sun a snub-nosed pencil point. Pendulous burn of a swing-set was gearshift leather in adult hands. Bronzing and elder city of popsicle hunters, morning shutters opening like librarian's eyelids, how these dreams reconstituted as an orange left out after a refrigerator fire.

## Hecate of Old Los Angeles II

Our lady of torch whips,  
Let the road's vines choke us but not  
Till darkness yet.  
Lure us into sacred sewers where  
Old hearts are cooked anew,  
Just until they smolder.  
You spit out sky in pink and white thistles  
We cut our ankles or eyes on as wild rabbits.  
Earth favors your beacons at all hours, in varying  
Visibility. "The heart" is the cheapjack metaphor,  
Yet not the fires that contain it.  
At night, headlight canary companions,  
A heart can move into infrared.  
Does that change our names, our natures?  
We are the children of an incinerated mother,  
For any temple must get torched  
For her trash to awaken again. The temple outside, yours,  
Endures inviolate wolf-blue, the fur that outwits the frost.  
No monster are you but as close to the monster  
As we can plunge. We are praying in hot noise  
With the gnats and smoking too, those blue-boxed Gitanes we got in Peru,  
Reminds us of a perfume no flame has ever worn,  
When we lost our credit card in the duty free store, and we  
Are spiraling fast and unblessed on a black-flaming road.  
We had gone there, gone everywhere, gone finally into your zero,  
To hunt down that missing friend, this eternal errand,  
Dropping us in a surprise night forest, along train tracks that  
Careen unrusted from the creek.  
(Pretend we are fishing for jewels  
In Switzerland and not dying of calmness in the south.)

When mistakes tracked us with the  
Fury of Arctic wildflowers, as every friend gets lost, and  
Every feast spills off the rooftop of an abandoned  
Cathedral. Ancient Los Angeles bleeds from grape-colored  
Hearts, the colors of grape juice, tormented by azalea thorns,  
In-thrusting medieval swords, skewered covenants.  
To fall for a saint is to  
Ask your body to change:  
The first night I felt the cracks in the  
Ceiling flare cobalt, I knew Mary had many names besides “mother,”  
That darkness had many hues besides zero.



## Peradam: The Mountain Cycle

## Heirlooms (*After Daumal*)

Remember

There is a well in a forest that will find you  
    A cellar where the irons are heated  
There is a forking at the verge of two cities  
    A murmuring in the forest that is deafening

There is an underlying tide  
    Where castle grows replaced by castle.  
Things cleave away in all things,  
    Water is never content to rise.

Toss these flecks of reason  
    to dance about them.  
Thru us Noise moves, taut as bowstrings,  
    Aimed at me in all directions  
I must never arrive.

Am I to be stretched between song and flung?  
Breath, an invisible earth I am buoyed along.  
    Remember this song even in duress,  
To live as if living is something *sung*.

I turn into a thing on an edge, hymning:  
What keeps me from caving in.  
    Sound is this distance surpassed,  
Divine alembic of horizons and paths.  
Hammers and strings are never missing  
    Earthly floors are rigged with them

Wolves are never muzzled, knives never dulled

For the sake of plain song.

What is a voice but a thing changing the

Shape of my mouth. Nothing is a mute agent

When I open myself.

## Sails

Begin going naked and very red:

*satchel, urine, lobe,*

*the blue notations,*

distance collapses names into wings, to  
screech  
mists move redder and  
my mind today sleeps in unfinished stone  
hangs on the temptations of  
the waves I prefer to drown  
in muffled words.

Love throttles the tissues stretches the canvas,  
gilds the edges in abalone glitter,  
diminishes, returns.

We are as seedlings and drenched wood  
is reward for a snapped finger.

What if an open kiss outlives  
fresh stone? I want to know how ancient airs corral me,  
bones sunk in mirage. I mingle ink and morning sawdust only a  
dream in dusky curves becomes an actual shore  
All raw fabric at my call,  
no desire to churn the record or state the names.  
Undone stones, their unfinished waters set me.  
I bake the bread in the run off and  
garble about the posts:

*Immeasurable grain*

cannot be seen this close and can be held

## The Melons

At the goat level, we find the coal-black rose: a star-shaped gash in a white wall. Numbers stop working, at least in sequence. Their failed union becomes ultraviolet petals above the fir line, days past you last feel real hunger. Never are colors as estranged as these, a chameleon liquid that quit heaven to infuse the flowers of this turquoise floor. Savor the frozen melons, as segments of the next animal you must befriend. It was the same in Trieste when I skirted her shore one night: a red and undulant tableau of Byzantine domes above the water where no Trieste stood. How is it that those currents still shoot back the taste of the invisible? A crevasse always feels green, even with ice bronzed by dung and blood. Any thrown rope bridge is baby's breath, as flushed as lilacs in a hailstorm. You will gather faith in what remains of the rays. Change your colors to change levels. From the shoulder of the goat glad sheep run, and their lambs can only birth eagles, their eyeballs as crystalline as the sea without salt. Our cold fruit shoots fire into our muscles, as scree blossoms pink under boot. You can go no further than shipwrecks, each on each, enshrined in each other's ice, the yellow music of the ascent.

## Hawthorne

Pungent red stalks, then loss of hats, seaward.  
Hollow clang of onyx leaves, as the chapel  
Grows out through its acacia bells.  
Expect purple buds to  
Burst, our sexes to reverberate, where a trolley  
Disintegrates into the furs. Dunes rise with  
Tossed greens on top.  
We drift with the ashen cliffs, as  
They break agate mirrors over her swimmers.  
Wear crushed  
Pulp for strength, to dive wisely.  
Folk-lore is fruit-lore: the  
Chapel grows beautifully stained! Mauve amulet  
On your redder, threadbare swimsuit: so your  
Heart can sing contralto to the tides. Put the blessed  
Petals under your pillow to induce  
Mountain dreams. No possible vertigo  
After those scalding shores. Earth  
Always interferes if you stop  
Thought in its tracks.  
Shrubbery is  
The maze we say surprising things in. She lies  
Hard against the foam, forcing a stand-off between  
Hearts, the sea's as large as the wind's,  
And as nameless.

## **Rene, in the Grass**

Thru the canal in the meadow  
I hear your boots explore statues.  
You came with last year's cactus, caught  
Naked one July midnight,  
Bloody and laughing. I used garden hose  
To tug you into softer poppies.

We fed you figs from the radiant arches  
Over the eastern bedrooms. I remember  
Crows when I remember your sweat, as hot  
Francis stands a car's blue, his staff wind-broken.

Francis came with the yard, became her exit eyes, though  
Blind as garden saints become. I took you in the  
Lake after to feel what my fox feels. Know pain is only a second  
Moon. Another fire from before us stains her.

So my letters are saffron, for they are very old now,  
Crisply turning in an ongoing room, always aimed at you,  
The rose prints you left in the grass.

Fuschia the pilot light leads you to kitchen water.  
Cataclysm is crystal mounted in some bad dream. Don't mourn  
If the fox drowns or the olive wand snaps. You and I Rene  
Shall outbleed the cactus, and  
Outlaugh Francis. The meadow's yellows  
Hold untold paths.

## Cruciform (Lesser Alps)

On the three a.m. bus from the salt flats:  
Luminous wounds layered on the sky  
Let the cries become their maps.

Lunched by the adobe bathroom on  
Egg-stuffed potatoes with salty lemonade.  
I rarely eat as such an animal as sturdy women

Compose dripping mud walls, happy babies in puddles,  
Topaz water drops on their brows. What I am seeing, or think,  
Is my own relief commingling. Wherever it goes, I can follow.

Machetes skitter the bus floor, their masters sleeping.  
My companion shakes out pills to stay calm: Valium and Percaset.  
Passengers scream when our wheels reversed on an edge:

The edge always interferes, we think, but cannot say how or why.  
I commit to my fear and its passion for nothing. I am married  
To green air that precedes me. Useless anyway, but for my plunge.  
How can I help a mountain's shoulders? No pills, no leverage.

I smile when I watch the road's glassy rim glow:  
That crystal-colored beyond: a vastly untalkative chasm.  
Busses gone directly off the cliffs we read in  
All the papers, too much to read in them, too many edges.  
I open my own book of errors as the wheels correct, and some  
Byway of gravel resumes. Everyone laughs then, commingling, fleeting:  
Euphoria of real air we can still speak to.



## Peradam

Gather blanched snow fruit jeweled pulp  
Amethyst protuberances burst hill's ribs  
The summit buried in leaden water  
You only hound its musk in sleep  
Dreamt this mountain that never was  
Awoke with Tibetan froth on my tongue  
No way to stamp its mist from memory  
We move among obscurity streaming off a peak  
We all dreamt the heavenly obstruction  
Of steep tawny grassed slopes  
Tree colored tents medicinal oratory  
Marketplace in the ambrosial hinterlands  
And those clear blinding stones  
A good place to hide is this difficult mountain  
More than difficult but drowned

## Other Wolf

Anniversary of my sleepless self

in the meadow of sick moon.

A face happens inside me, then

escapes with dew on a moth wing. I remember that oceanic taste:

A sacred joke

takes root in no holy city.

Myself in an ogre's dream bled by olive spear-thrusts

spilled black wine I come adrift in shards.

No word reveals our

unseen wings my letters my unregenerate pollen.

Still and tomorrow *the forest is incessant*

My accomplice breaks a

crescent thru darkening oaks a weather balloon tied to her wrist.

A place by the name of *Adamant*, she says, exists.

No, she amends, there is a no-place called *Structure*.

But there are rumors, waving their hairs,

underwater: in our burnt arms

yesterdays' mud still fresh from the wreck.

## Island Lore I

Sophia flew away last night  
Under a cloak of ashes. The city  
Had blown up her final saint.  
You were in my arms,  
Weaving myrtle. I counted pink

Windows on the sky, almost  
Notebooks tilted on end.  
My mud was fresh from oarsmen,  
And my lost house was where I left it:  
At some foamy inlet of a dream

Interrupted or invaded but then  
Blue at the edges to be rewritten.  
This temple will burn down,  
Wherever cotton we wake in, so  
I go to a liquor store to buy a gun.

My name is not written in the stars.  
But what is known is that one  
Will survive the fire, she always does.  
Behind history, she revives  
Inside some rabid child. Not a doll's

Wedding to rig high. Not a rafter hung in  
Sulfurous yellow: There grows a border of  
Over-told wickedness where grows the  
Uprooted attic level with the looted cellar.  
From the shards of the burned tabernacle,

A muddy report of rifle shots, and  
An unfed child twirls her blue robes.  
The Mother is reconciled with her wood.  
The daughter of fire remains to destroy the story

## **Rene, in the Alps**

He answers the knock

even though he is working.

Everyone recalls his dignity, that remorseless goodness,

When the blessed Alpine ground is prepared

Draughts shake the photos of the dancers

in Siberian farmyards. Mesmerized

by the scriptures at their feet and all metal fallen.

Snowed luggage in moose down.

Notations from the East. Frozen rivers in Latvia.

They ate mussels on the shore after the opium wore off.

His night is forking paths from lexicons to embers.

His lungs can't match the nitrogen of conifers.

How the needled peaks recede from his quill.

The hut would be meager without Vera who is

Studying harmonic spheres in the straw bed.

The leaden door opens into pulsing whiteness.

Oxidized draughts the Latvian rivers our Russian farms.

The station was chaos, his friend says.

You look unwell. Unwell, he said, but working!

They embrace in fur and steep the Peking tea,

Vera appears as a peasant framed in umber glare.

They recite difficult syllables from the Rig Veda.

Two day pass and, without returning to the work,

Without knowing he will not go back

To the mountain, his lungs collapse, and we remain unfrozen.

## Leonora

So little of sand stays diamond, straining gold from nickel. Such shifting sands assume  
Their own alien color. The sky's pinks sour to purple. Day wilts in the west, yet that feels  
East, an exile's word as crimson as the shawl tossed heraldic on the sage bush. Scarves with Blouses,  
disused, discolored, dipped in vats of healing water. Slop pails: scorpion houses. Ruby-eyed birds  
joke on the adobe wall. My razor land opens and howls. Steel Clouds on forests veil telltale arch of  
entrances.

To go there from here: a question of extending a dream. Into what remedy ?  
More dreams for certain, so my eyes are pried open by the salt glare. Fulfillment and with no safety.  
Toes wed their pregnant rocks. Desert harbor of interred flags, ripe in iron rich water that tastes, as  
one's blood, of another mountain. But no, the untested dream: feel the silk's blue current initialing  
the pores, palms. It's a question of blithe spider legs, a horror of un-relatable, unfinished units. They  
use my Clay room for a loom, kiss a keyhole path inside, parading their dead. My legs love them,  
Especially at my burnt and bitten ankles. My porthole warms them, as it does those empty Mesa  
wells. They say there is no mountain here or there: only legs weaving into sun, roots And, finally,  
mud. And how that blooms into the way up.

## Lionessa

the tawny storm of your mouth flung you  
where the borders bleed poisoned water.  
So the healing is  
violent, as magic is, when the squares  
get circled by the sun.  
The other country is the  
flowering of your yellow symbols, writ  
backwards, into fertilizer, into erasures, into pods burst  
auroral afternoons, of a dye that flutters,  
fast, between rose stems,  
blurred memory of autumn, thorns blackened  
by the feast, a new needle  
to carve hymns with.  
An Arkansas black apple tumbles out of  
love-twisted sheets, kicking the spider from its idyll.  
A common name for  
Name is hole, a womb where persona burns up.  
The uncommon  
Name for escape is *spider*.  
Or sand is better, preface to any  
Movement.  
Kid's telescope, watch Saturn's earth convulse.  
Vehicles never could carry the weight  
Of magnificent sand my world bleeds.  
The ingredients of creatures, Leonora,  
Mauve diadem of alternating currents.  
"Nobody dares ask me if my myths are lies,  
As nobody begs sand to smother a rose."

## Maurice, in the Country

It happens in the darkness of the country when I try to  
finish what drain my inkwell. This work is penitence  
for all the wood that breaks away from me. I smell through  
cedars how the wars I've outlast have fled into an Arcadian  
north, butting into a mountain that is never mastered.

The weapon on me, in you: the vestigial bolt, welder of the  
present. This plaza, stump haloed, flowers. I try to  
forgive how perpendicular we go. Nothing swerves, or  
atomizes. Nothing errs as true speech, when it flees.

No time but a demolished, fertilized now. Projectile makes land.  
A lightning hacked river pushes midday haze, all words in.

My killers are *strangers* as dim to me, as narrow as  
birches on the Rhine's ghostly banks. Rifles awkward as oars  
pulled by holy immigrants. I dream smuggler's vessels in  
southern jungles when I am afraid. Coldness gone of

Socratic argument, only connivance with tendrils and escape.  
Fear unimagined persists as worms. A courtyard freshly carved,  
toppled chimneys in reddening dust, brotherhood dissolved.  
What is *strange* about them, in neutral hats they tip,

I can only give a *sign* of fast green water, radiant, sourceless:  
crystals that blossom away from a star. I never now conceal  
or reveal what they are after. Nothing, so far as it is spoken.



## Island Lore II

*Our cotton valleys are but glass:*

She sings this above me  
In the jade green room  
                                we grow up in.

The Moravians were  
                                Stonemasons:

They made our walls  
Move like forests.

My cousin Mercedes, too had visions.  
That's what they called them.

But a vision is nothing,  
                        To a child who sees all  
Underwater or outer-space.  
                        I watched her, too young to,  
Her eyes sunk into a net not  
                        For me to get caught in then.

Those nets glittered, pulled from froth  
manacle, plasma, lilac, diadem. Scales rained  
our nursery wood. Blue lights in dry  
rooms, star-sunken eyes not scaled on me.  
The lighthouse long collapsed a rumor  
Sun the lunar poppy, petals bone laced.

*Our transmission is always muted, she said.*

## **Autrui**

A maple leaf starts to work, plucked off the yellow mountain, bitten with  
Storm. Listen to the ridges flutter as a soaked harp. Anywhere

By night, you hear trains race thru birch groves, splitting them into rhythm,  
A red wind that makes your heart rise, as you imagine darkness lifts

Off moss. But words are no use in the morning. Hairs

In sink are useful, as is the butter you boil the lemons with. Gather  
Up your leavings, don't cringe and don't gawk, either. Between

The lights you can see, and the others underground, the peak flickers, and not  
One that will cradle you. Only beyond, crouched in Orion, is any kind of guide.

## Relics of Cold

What remains colored in a  
postcard on the vanity: this

lake of trains I kicked away to get  
a hawk's grasp on sweating flowers.

Lower myself into sand through love,  
At the base of the cordite range,

To germinate with fog, and become  
A quartz picture of what is abandoned.

Nutmeg with saffron wrapped in parchment, I sulk  
To Vera on borrowed show-shoes,  
Chanting Vedas.

Down villages of failing organs and  
Carbon snow and boar meat, blended in the

Lava of today's and yesterday's horrors, what becomes

Blue into sacred tomorrow.

## Bryher

eyes pierced by the evidence

there are more commitments

Let the long blue wardrobe

Answer suspicions in socks

Someone left before you moved

socks that are bone variances

pictures of sylphs under a foreign moon

I hear my walls turn three ways

Stars the constant answerers in

Hear heaven shaking under a yew tree

These the pages fallen off

*Images comfort then afflict*

*Live among the contractions*

*under a ceiling fan I read afflictions*

reading to sleep in pictures of

gods torn and changed in a room

where people live by themselves

forward into each other

women above me laugh and shake and holler

Their television is low voltage cooking.

Balcony drips with rugs a way of

never understanding what is left

Every system I prop up has fallen away

yet I come back to scant breaths

too convinced there is an unknown  
that I have some right to name as an origin

some right to enter to still think myself separate.

Scramble the syllables to dismember the letters  
I must let affliction become its own wellspring

observation must collapse at the threshold  
relent into that which cannot be named

for then it grows radiant  
in a room where it is useless.

Sentinels in the Dark. Pilgrimage Poems

## One

When you find a green shell, you find a way.

I have a net to cast over a meadow.

For each star, I catch a whisker of grain.

Needless to separate an oak from a steeple, or  
Shade from a hawk wing.

Learn to love

A tiny word cut into the earth.

Linger on a lamb's face as on an ocean.

Church curtains rustle with the East.

Their sickle moon, a blue hymnist.

Clear angels turn with noon's hills. Round land, holy from  
heaviness, plateauing sun christened by hunters.

The gates welcome

The red animal, soaked in strife.

Iron whines for egress

Rhythm ripens a shell.

Counting shells every hour with cow droppings.

To step in everything, to hallow all life.

I am in a vineyard where the raven finds the snake. A shell is a god's nest,

if we know the words. The only road to town is illegible,  
buried in hedge moss, arrowless. Creek hisses under cars, the music  
from before the hills swerved. Fox floats with orchids Her paw prints  
carve chalk earth, her lair I navigate with blue rocks.

The red tail is a promise, and I won't keep them.

## Two

Navigators rush the window,  
as the telephone and the light dies. With bag, boots, shells and  
twenty miles for peaches in a haunted chapel.

First grey morning in plum-walled hotel,  
island pigs yelping, or late bats,  
statues black and chipped with storm from a courtyard.

The town is further than was told, and  
trains are not leaving tonight.

At canyon's copper margins,  
where the grass is chalk,  
*you may hear bells*  
keep yourself towards the bog,  
that sloshes beneath the war memorial and the egret pub.

The coordinates fall from a tanned painter's mouth.  
He is restoring an Edwardian cottage, the kind  
That feels like a Dutch oven. My map crinkles in his crinkled hands.  
*I look lost*, he says. But happy despite.  
Layers of sediment, of memory, of direction, of what peculiar  
Meadow has shaped and beaten out in his desiring hands.  
His throat reddens with the memory of  
A Greek voyage he made with the wife.  
A nearby cow  
Watches shadows twist from a dusty wind.  
Those silk eyes  
Dam the water of a different light than mine.



### Three

A rustling corridor discovered  
And it's barely noon on a cloud-muffled day.  
Heart fills the belly with insect glee.  
No food but old apples, nuts, crumbs.  
I am licking my own sweat.  
Nobody can question me now,  
Nobody expecting an answer that is.  
This is a  
Hiding place you saunter down, almost as a  
Fluid roams the  
Lymphatic system. My flesh softens with  
Funneling shadows, mind slows  
To the tiniest shaking of thorns.  
A rambler is anything that disappears into a grove  
When the grove didn't seem accessible.  
Secrecy can be stepped through  
And on and over. The other world is many-branched.  
Ragged-robin shoots violet in the rotting leaves.  
Those pink signs lost in the ground  
Once were green shells nailed to a pilgrim's board.  
And "*without meeting another traveller*"  
Some broken song conveys me forward  
to a rampart of *greensand*  
Where my robed ancestors hid from the wood brigands,  
Not knowing what to fear the most.  
So we endure by making hiding places  
Until the faces rename themselves.

## Four

Descending from Box hill, spattered in meadowsweet,  
The Adonis blue butterfly bathed me  
In wings –a blue turned water-pink.

A rotten sign is burnt onto the sky.  
Matters not if it's rotten, the message blazes anew.  
Dusk, stranded on my feet, and these ridgeways are  
Moving from plum to cobalt to pitch. My muscles  
Are switching colors with the hills.

How I teeter this minute means  
I'm deciphering new signs  
Above me, over an outcropping of serpent tongued trees.

The inkwell hour, I think, an overflowing and

nightgoing Earth flings hieroglyphs  
On sky's mauve curtain, till dark drains them.

All of us ranging into  
the tall, sharp grass, slantwise, as foxes seem to  
do when they are glanced at.

The earth is a village  
Swaddled in branches but waking hungry  
To a lack of compass points, ground blessed with tiny  
rooms the maples cool.

If this is darkest water she lets me through.

## Five

A bridleway – either for a horse or a woman on a horse –

Spirals darkly

down gravel gulfs

one of the darkest

detours I made,

at the spot where the “Garden of England”

becomes the checker work expanse of Mexico City

From an airplane.

Every hour a person in a blue or violet shawl

Resumes her post among the shaking stalks.

The creator is the echo of the created: some dirt stuck on

Torn wings.

They merge into a horizon

The same fire cabbage green.

Again through upturned soil      objects groan in wind-cut

Sun. There is always country to sink into, teeth and grime and ankle.

I watch myself

Leaving, never exiting,

Shelter of bark, cave of fur, pool of wings.

First olive, then charcoal, then the ocean’s mottled ivory above

Where the hill is the sparking of hooves, black with shadow.

Fronds, then splashing rocks.      No transition but procession of redder leaves.

This chapel sweats ghosts      wood carved from a buried star

Six

*fuse with the material*

I woke myself up singing—

to meander *is to plunge* between pastures where the white horse is motionless.

My unexpected companion  
Saved me again from the hornet pit,  
Until I found trust was forever leading  
Me, fidelity to the sonorous things a field  
Hides.

Cleanse the blood with hourly quests, and keep a creek  
Glinting on your right. Watch a yellowhammer slash  
Blackberry brambles. Drink the rest of the indigo mist.

Where the tired falcon eats foam you have arrived  
At a turning point, in axes of burnt maple and moldering oak.  
Purple vapors over unending country, farmhouses blurred.  
Take the sunken avenue, I was ordered.  
As if the canopy becomes reversed sea—

The afternoon a thread so thin  
Carries me to a town whose center is a castle you may not enter.  
I accept sheep cheese and curdled tea at the inn by the mossy barriers,  
Sink up to my knees into the creek—

*A thread, tied to a cow* the cow plant child of the hill

Umber satellite.

I am leaving myself here, and there,  
Tied to a corridor between two farms.

This force I never pronounce

Still calls, when I call

And when I don't.

The call is

A clamor of leaves, *sentinels*

*In the dark*, shells where there is no beach.

There,

where a hill breaks apart in

glittering ditches

I grow woven.

## Seven

Today I had to climb a few jagged fences  
The path, or its passable mimic, vanished.

You make the way out of what is available  
You blaze a trail from the barriers you become.

A wind-broken city at dawn. Land's End glows in engine mist.  
The train is a ghost corridor. Stores winch open, revealing.

The infancy of doorframes. All stones idle.

## Eight

Paths interlace into the picture  
of a green redeemer

Green man is slow but commits:  
The green woman is him, finally,  
Aglow

She stoked the inmost fire  
So it danced outside them  
In all the dead ditches.

Pain to be gathered is dancer's kindling:  
seedlings, acorns, shells, pellets.

A small gathering in a muddy hollow. The Roman snail  
Is the color of topaz, the herald of the blaze.

A congregation the size of beetles awaits the new colors.

Skylarks bobbing in darkness a masterful accompaniment  
To a drowsing town.

The wood was shining as I angled  
Down the beach of St. Martha's hill, finely ground agate  
Biting open the graves, releasing the musk of bronze afternoon.

The beginner feels the grass play with her toes  
The beginner asks the river to gild her hair.

So the weaver is present.

From the bridge  
She asks the musk orchid  
To race the feather down the water:  
Thinnest leavings are still of love's foundry.  
All mud or wing accompanies her long swim.  
So many husks clatter the canals. There grows, in time, mossy passage.  
The strings

Are plucked among the dead, headstones suddenly  
Shot with warm rose light.

A white rose on the tomb for the death  
Of the King:  
Graves changed, obelisks of red moss, this velvet of transformed  
Things.



## Nine

A tapestry hides a fire-red door on a hill.

The hill rose for

That color to form. All rise

By accident into

Shapes that are meanings.

Threads are the scarlet from a bottled fire

You bring into a crypt to seize vision.

The hill is made

Of woven airs and signs that ignite

Through the hedges.

So the moon comes to veil her village:

A gold hill in a family of grasses leans

Long into violet.

Clouds burn apart over

Empty ponds, relics glittering their shore

As risen water ripples the fields.

I taste shore rot in the bleached rocks. So white

They turn flame blue in an alcove. Fall ahead of

Myself, swerve with colors,

drop apricots for the Roman snails.

Feed the air with my oiled arms.

I plunge the key into radiant orange sand.

Harp strings shake the oaks in midday.

A raven jumps, talks, sings,

Summoning the alders together. Winds spiral apart

coal-dark fringes. The path drops into the clay.

## Ten

Threaded in salt light  
I hunt the source that  
Candles the clouds  
Ferns rounded by night,  
*Smolder.*

Eroded walls grow from chalk, as coral twines an eddy,  
The moon-eyed mares are eaten by dark lights,  
A trick of the grove, sentries collapse into bark.  
Shadows make high tide over a land of fosses  
Where the perfectly orange flowers flicker.

At an *escarpment*, stone arm for falcons,  
Planet tests her echoes in me,  
blue the distance diluted in  
tincture of yellow-white. .  
Sands no color now.  
River blue in time.

I feel in my knees a  
Tremble of green debris  
That makes these russet edges  
Vibrate.

Seek heart as the gnarled root  
frazzled ends to never untangle  
reds never separate from the sea.

Snare the water as a fox, deception of unseen paws,  
makes blood boil into a dirt and tree music.  
Symptom of star-shine inside a pale birch spear

My eyes wired open by branches in feather hail.  
Movement is a whisper of women waiting in the barley.  
Their silence is the country's heart broken clean by wind.

If the holy way went through here  
It has gone fallow  
Become mulch

But what dirt does not refine itself:

When has redemption not been overgrown?

Grasses can be towers in half-light

## Eleven

Blood is brighter when I'm alone. The fronds swell with light,  
Caught in my matted hair. Fitted as creek breezes to the ear

*The rust in the canopy, ringing out –*

*In interlocking branches blood-rust spreads to sharp edges.*

*The canopy hums russet.*

Egrets leap from the fungus into the margins  
Of silver-blue scrub. Variants of stone,  
Their minds are sewn to a remote  
Valley: the gleam that jumps beyond, a footnote to the  
Wood's vanishing.

River is a serpent or a baby inside  
The eye of a bronze-cast horse,  
Cooled by the chestnut tree, her amber thicket noise.

She dispels the obstacles of space with  
Only a single eye level with Andromeda.

## Twelve

High spine of chalk,  
Topples into fossil-red valleys:  
The ribs of the woods curl over this  
Jade-green ridge of rock,  
The ribbon that pulls me  
Into low smoky clouds,  
Where my mind can't go without  
Changing its voice. Here gravel is  
Garnet rippling as a creek under foot.  
These different types of grasses promise  
Different breezes if I have the nose to name them.

Descend unknowing off  
A mulberry terrace,  
Dark agate glen below, lower curves  
Blind through pewter glare. Where was that  
Warm hallway of yews? That way  
Drops out of apple-filled air,  
As a name of an old love drops, my  
Map burnt into my eyes, then rung  
Out in watered-down song.  
*The song of the trembling wood.*

I am: *"broken open to reveal a dark interior"*

Nothing exceeds breakage, only resumes its cuts and blows.  
An inward-dancing dark, shaking cave the mind abhors.  
Retreating soldiers dropped snails on the path, warning

How the woods will return

In altered voice.

Each tributary of the road another

Shrine blazes in knotted-up shrubs, negative shine where acorns

Become bluer.

I long ago cut

The thread to circumscribe this swamp.

Let the woods soak:

Now the reeds, and their sharp tresses close about my

Unheard name.

I feel the brambles woven into

Isolate sky, an unfolding pearl

Without real white.

## Thirteen

Three p.m. warm amber eyes:  
A stag leaps from a rotting  
Cone heap. The flash of entrance  
Is not wisdom yet, for it takes many  
Turnings  
To make a turn, only to start another,  
Then: A perfect yellow blemish  
And the larches are hung in red parasites  
Like antique lamps.  
The man said: *I am an emotional simpleton when it comes  
To animals.*  
Out of earshot, the animals shifted the granite into an  
Ogre face.  
*I was of two minds*, I said to the paper.  
And at least two minds  
Weave the road together. On the way, any way,  
A heart is a furnace lashed to the back  
And the back burns with the sky: the circuits  
Grow fused, as sand melds into the shell.  
Elevated grasslands breach the church shore,  
A sunken cove of corn-silk sand.  
The *brome* blades sway among sandstone, a small,  
Foggy sound of ships among clover.  
Twilight comes at the 11<sup>th</sup> hill when  
I smell the after-dark pushing the violets,  
Foretaste of cool  
Waters in the  
Stems.

## Fourteen

Kindle my backbone with ivory light:  
Eleven hours and two days on rising pebbles. All my  
Friends have beautiful hounds with tired smiles.  
My skin has the feel of emerald bog water  
Baked long by the yew trees.  
An ancient, downward ditch I follow  
Is a twisting and constant re-encounter  
With denser, more knotted forms of  
Earth. Forest bowels are rose-hip mulch pit  
Drizzled in fur. Here I rebuild the  
Present circle in a vision where I round a  
Mossy wall into hot azaleas,  
Lifting my head at the half  
Opal moon cradled in thin ash trees. This  
Moon is immediate, flush with fiery stone,  
Flecks of blue plumage.  
I move on rolling land polished and  
Chipped as a lens,  
To see it closer is to hear myself  
Sinking, with light, back beyond light.  
Here the soil  
Holds water as crystal on a tongue, and the water shakes  
But never dissipates. The  
Turned earth is the veining of passing animals, battle hairs  
My shade blends with, a biting and salty  
Musk that invades my muscles.  
In my limbs my blood pleads for  
Distance that takes a forest shape.



## Fifteen

Pig, my love you are the name of the Invisible,  
For you eat anything that's real. And everything is real, you said.  
All flames copper and pumpkin this incense hour of day,  
Wavering sea curtain of the road, dirt baked mandarin and  
Stamped by fleeing boots, when it appears that our

Field wears the silting skins of an ocean. That slant light  
Falls fluid, and the charred leaves suck the shade from  
The tors. I remember, happily, poverty, bones and islands, now to  
Fall in a humming pasture, more alone than the owl: I will sleep with  
Chestnuts and their broken lambs attending.

In a trough of late spring we grow spider orchids  
And you don't eat them, Pig. You drag them between the pews,  
Bathe them in the ashes and bifocals and hymnals.  
The raw wooden hut never misses her infants for long.  
A hunter, her goats, the laundress and the unwell  
Crawl inside to watch the reverberating name,  
Each imagines the different name, slant and smudged,  
Not written on anything, not stained

By any jewels or bugs. Aloft: how the river-fed air  
Suspends the weakest rocks, soundless, then rouge.  
The longer I hold my arm still under the  
Noisy flowers the bluer this storm becomes.

Curriculum Vitae  
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**Education**

M.F.A. Poetry, Currently. University of Nevada, Las Vegas.  
Bachelor of Arts in Literature, August 2002. University of California, Santa Cruz.  
Honors In Major

**Employment**

UNLV English Department, Las Vegas, NV.  
August 2013-Current. Graduate teaching instructor. English Composition.  
Interim Magazine, UNLV, Las Vegas, NV.  
August 2013-Current. Reader and co-editor.  
Red Hill Books/Phoenix Books. San Francisco, CA.  
May 2009-Current. Manager, book buyer, and blogger.  
Goldstein, Demchak, Baller, Borgen and Dardarian. Oakland, CA.  
July 2006 – Jan. 2009. Legal clerk, mailroom assistant.

**Awards**

\$5,000 Creative Writing Scholarship, Poetry, Redlands University.  
Nomination for Dean's Award in Literature, UCSC..  
Semi-Finalist, *Diagram*, 2010 Essay Contest.  
Finalist, *Diagram*, 2014 Essay Contest  
Finalist, *Subito Press* 2015 Prose Manuscript Contest

**Publications**

5 poems from "Leaves from Soma Beach," *Bombay Gin*, forthcoming 2016.

5 poems from “Leaves from Soma Beach,” *Nomadic Press Journal*, forthcoming 2016.

“The Elevator” and “Postulates of the Night,” essays, *Eleven Eleven*. Jan. 2016.

“Vermin Psalm,” *Bad Penny Review*, October, 2015.

“Conches, Comets: A Love Memory,” *Jenny*, 2015.

*Ravish the Republic: The Archives of the Iron Garters Crime/ Art Collective*, non-fiction book. Punctum Books, 2015.)

“Behind the Rink,” essay, *Word Riot*, 2015

“Vigilantes,” poem, *Five Quarterly* (online), 2015

“Unreported Lights,” poem, *Whiskey Island*, Issue 66, 2015.

“The Gates,” poem, *Dogwood*, 2014

“Pilgrims,” poem, *Pank*, Dec. 2013

“Night Fire,” prose poem, *The Bolt Magazine SJSU*, 2013

“Letters From Soma Beach,” three poems, *Ragtag Magazine*, 2013

“Art At Work,” essay, *The Rumpus*, 2013

“Bartending, Booktending: Three Years At Red Hill Books,” memoir, *The Rumpus*, 2012

“The Beautiful Nightmares Of Roberto Bolaño’s 2666,” essay, *The Rumpus*, 2010

“Isabelle Of The Dark Brown Fists,” memoir, *The Nervous Breakdown*, 2010

“The Heat Of The Town,” short story, *The Legendary*, 2010

### **Editing and Teaching Experience**

Volunteer writing coach, *The Caring Place*, Las Vegas, NV.

Writing tutor, UNLV Writing Center, Las Vegas, NV.

Founder, *The Iron Garters Crime/ Art Collective*

Editor and founder, *The Salted Lash*, art and literary magazine.

Staff literary blogger, *The Rumpus*. 2009-2012

Fiction editor, *The Splinter Generation*. 2009-2010

Writing tutor, 826 Valencia Writing Center, San Francisco, CA. 2007

### **Performance Experience**

Performance reading, “Sex, Death, Laughter and Disease,” Center For Sex and Culture, San Francisco, CA. August. 2011

Editor, researcher, collaborator, *Liminal Performance Group*, SF State, CA. 2007-2009

Performer, *Leviticus*, short film, City College Film Festival, San Francisco, CA. 2009

Performer, actor, writer, *Sutro Stories*, New College Experimental Performance Series, San Francisco, CA. 2007

### **Academic Conference Papers**

“*Ravish the Republic: Radical Intellectual Strategies*” *In Service To Nothing: Intellectual Inquiry in the Open* symposia. The New School, New York. 2015

“Culture Against Control: Genesis P-Orridge and Hermetic Strategies,” *His Master’s Voice: Digital Utopias and Dystopias* conference. Krakow, Poland. 2015

“The Prismatic City: Delany’s *Dhalgren* and Perkins’ *Evil Companions*,” *Endnotes: Disquieting Desires* conference. UBC. Vancouver, Canada. 2015.

“Pleasure at the Margins: On the Risky Worlds of Samuel R. Delany” *On The Brink* conference. University of Reno. Reno, Nevada, 2014.

“The world is a midway and cities are its sideshows” *Utopian Studies Conference*. Utopian Studies Society. Montreal, Canada. October, 2014.

“The Metaphysics of Urban Planning: Cortazar and di Chirico and the Magic City,” *Far West Popular Culture Conference*, Las Vegas, 2013.