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Always Away

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ALWAYS AWAY

By

Mollie Rae Bergeron

Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Literature
University of Rhode Island
2009

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing

Department of English
College of Liberal Arts
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2013

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the thesis prepared under our supervision by

Mollie Rae Bergeron

entitled

Always Away

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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Department of English

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May 2013

ABSTRACT

Always Away

By

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At any given time, there are pages of notes and thoughts running through our minds; these have to come out in some way. In order to stay sane, to stay human, I write poems. These poems are interested in breath and space, memory and nostalgia, loss and water. Each of these ideas has its own fit as part of the poem as well as part of life and being alive. Human emotion is varied through these. Observation and perception, turned into poems through the very physical act of putting words onto a page, allow these memories and experiences to live on as physical relics. My poems are always working with space—of the page and location. The space afforded to each line, each word, is deliberate and crucial; the pauses created by the whitespace deliver the breath of the line and the weight each line necessitates. My poems were begging to breathe—they needed to be freed from the invisible box that seemed to be containing them. This allowed my writing to be more honest to the experience being conveyed.

My time spent abroad in Barcelona as part of my degree requirement for this program was an experience that not just allowed, but forced me to be more conscious in my writing. I heard English nowhere except for the page. The poems produced during and after those months (“Barcelona Tableaux”) are not an exact, detailed record of my experience, but are rather a breath into the memory of my experience. Poetry retains the

dead in the beauty of the undead. Nothing can be brought back, not exactly, but we recognize and remember or imagine, so the people and places of the past—things that have been lost—are never truly gone. They live on in poems, where they can be returned to time and time again.

Of course, poetry is constantly dealing with life and death. Because a poem is a recording of the poet's experience, however abstractly, it must be in conversation with humanity, with what it means to be human. My poems are grappling with life and death in terms of space and loss. The whitespace on the page is, in addition to breath, absence. The title of this manuscript, "Always Away," stems from a realization that indeed I have always been far away whenever a loved one has died, but further, it thinks about the gaps between experience, memory, and what finally gets translated to the page. These, too, are human experiences that are, to me, simply fascinating. The failure of memory, which often leads to nostalgia, leaves us with beatific images of our past, and also causes us to pause—to breathe—while recalling or retelling the event.

The poems in this thesis are always struggling to find the truth of the experience. They want to breathe and to feel alive. When the poems are read aloud, the whitespace forces the reader to take these breaths with the line of the poem, to feel the music in the life of the language.

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RECURRING SPACES

Downtown

the absence of lilac trees and cherry blossoms—

that reading last April when Darcie took petals
from her black peacoat pockets and threw them

all over the room the listeners *they were just too beautiful*

the petals clung
the cement sidewalks outside

near where Broadway meets Westminster

the cleansing scent of the bruised pink petals
the rain dropped
and feet stepped

as the air warmed
and the snow melted down
into the sewers

friends sat in a flat grassy park
in the sun with a guitar and a frisbee phones at home

—fresh & invigorating as the damp dirt wakens

dogwood next then daffodils bright yellow patches
planted on the hill next to my house with roses

tulips rhododendron really all shades of health

in the high trees, telling Ursula—someday, you'll die here

Alone by the Shore

birds dispersed into one
 sea one particle
among them—my song & their chirps—calm

I'll join the ocean soon

I sing the waves a lullaby about does and lambs
 I sing to starfish and urchins
 how they die
 how they'll miss their bodies

Late January

a Christmas tree stops saltwater from exploding
frozen the ice on the hill &
it slides
back inside to come out through toes &
footsteps

pounding down the snow and the pavement—
no it didn't happen

something about the tree
dead
needing to come down

ice melts into rivers
overflowing & shutting down highway & state
flooding the bank whole towns

rowboats tied to doorsteps
cars buried in wet streets like oceans
encase houses emptied of breath

Charlie

I was not supposed to remember
a green-flavored lollipop

from the bank
down the street
closed after the new money machine

a grape lollipop and a man with no cheek—
I was scared & hid under the dining room table
there was nowhere to kiss him

curious about socks messy rooms
& bumpyskinned I was three
didn't know what Charlie was

I forgot he had an accident
& stopped asking for kisses goodbye

June

icy needles of cold early ocean water

meet the area fresh between arm and torso

quick slice

body acclimates

after waiting

in the desert

waterless

crashing silence

dive under & escape overhead pull

thousands of pounds of water salt

dust and fish swirled into gray translucence

the sun that desert element
meeting me here amidst endless miles of wet

Newport

she was a penguin for a minute—
tottering down cracked cobblestone sidewalks

oversized overcoat stopping icy ocean
mid-June breeze
see the bridge there
to the left & glowing through fogged breath

once inside the red car
windows open
half-asleep & sideways backseat
spitting up words in no particular order

standing in the sea for the first time
never having known the ocean

the cold sweat of the water
hear it lapping against the wall
all and concrete

rush of night sand through toes
sticking even when we try to brush it off

Pawtuxet in an Olive Green Room

I forgot what I paid to see—

John says there is no forgetting

the dog is panting in the door

he wants nothing attention

the same reason John wore those shirts

it's all now

before the start of a couldn't be

no guitar sway now, the crackling leaves in his cigarettes

all ceiling fans bring me there

thick wool

wrapped in his navy blue discount sweater

apple-scented candles are masking the smoke

holding my eyes and eagerness—here, for now

all of the things that John was and wasn't

the revolutionary v-neck

After Rhode Island

there is no ocean

angry at you for eating the fat on meat
taking my bedroom door off the hinges

at me for not saying regoodbye

not taking you seriously
loss is a wave becoming thunderclouds

you are a wave
a wave pushes off itself
which is nothing which is water

how would you help if you were here
with you nowhere and I

still

how am I brave

did you cry when you died
I saw you cry—saying *merde de bull*
in a church

I don't want to be a rock ever

I can't replace you

I miss sea glass, heart shaped rocks, rain
the stale scent of your room when
the garage became too cluttered

where were you when you made the dollhouse?

come back

come home and I will buy you a beer
a pack of Marlboros a book a powertool

they've stopped calling me to ask for you

blue denim shirt, flannel lining,
now a war-teddy bear—

bookshelf collapsed, the button-up now on my floor
and you might be angry it is un-fixable
I wasn't there

WRITING HER

Resistance

swallowed myself you meaning these waves
the ebullient immersed in the dark

self-disdain
hasn't been surprised
hasn't accused a funny desire to bring out sick

she resists death and you

write! for your body

take why before the age of twenty-seven
too great *great men* little secret

you punished yourself—you didn't go all the way
irresistibly in secret

attenuate the edge off as we come we forgiven
or to forget

let no imbecilic capitalist publishing relayers
imperatives by an economy not yourself

smug-faced texts sexed texts write woman and man
an oblique man
his masculinity
& femininity will concern us

women from without health witches from their childhood
men make them forget eternal rest

girls and bodies intact frigidified
seething an effort for the sex cops
display of forces for centuries in the trembling
equilibrium

returning in circles
in deadly brainwashing

slow them down with apartheid routine
they begin to speak you are Africa your dark is afraid
don't fall into the forest we internalized this horror

the greatest crime against their own enemies
immense strength against the executants
women an antinarcissism!

loves to be loved for
infamous logic

Anima Rising

the dead figure the nasty companion —inhibitions & speech

body immense
unconscious spring will spread values of the old game

decensored woman womanly access to goods

bodily territories tear away the structure occupied for the guilty
—for having desires & not enough by emancipation

marvelous self urgently learn without body
a good fighter is reduced to his shadow

the false woman preventing the live one from breathing the whole woman

the occasion to her shattering
entry based on her weapon

every symbolic system is time to start oral language

the torment of getting up to speak entirely lost for
language

daring transgression to speak

distress words fall upon the deaf in language

women will confirm a place
the symbolic out of the snare the domain
the harem

throw trembling body let go into voice with her body
the intractable have speech

(never generalized into history)

the common logic of logic bound by calculating mastery
lip service plus the mask

Multiplicity

there is another that affects the living cloth of an adolescent-mother
yes absolute assent

unknown transfiguration astonishes us all
& then resorts to a shell of this kingdom beyond experience

its heart makes the voice & complicated truth another woman man
not myself

this doubt thinks
it is all infinite possibilities as another

single self and boring peoples accomplish the ballast
the weight the memory

the delicate joy is that (creature) the most wonderful
pluck of being not the other
& this boundary is performed
within this time I am always trembling not quite clumsily

in secret love to be exact absolute inexchangeability

located together
wished in a dark experience

we were afraid of never coming back—this dangerous desire
to go to be transfigured

War of the Raven

any kind of raven
those the woman will ceremoniously touch

any female
must wait
form a poetic of what is allowed—inventory

species that I watched
for a long time

birds hated where I honor & cherish

the noblest traveler upon language
willingly reached by the ladder of danger

joyfully
people know each thing gradually
—including the opposite of those people

these birds have something one wishes to give
he didn't demand & experienced

an offence
love & we feel unclean, tau[gh]t disgust

a universe
appearance so raw and humble

On Speech

speak about what it will do
& bring women away as violently as the law

same fatal goal

put into the world into movement

the future must not deny the past—still I refuse & repeat them
irremovability of destiny to confuse is imperative

reflections on the point
during the new breaks (la nouvelle de l'ancien)
no grounds for arid millennial sides
& two aims: foresee the project

write as a woman against conventional man
a woman who senses history

the enormity of the dark as time
no typical infinite richness

constitutions can't talk about a uniform any more than music
writing phantasms incredible

I amazed more by a description of a world she secretly haunts
since early childhood

a searching of knowledge a systematic bodily function
passionate practice inventive masturbation

accompanied by each stage of rapture
inscribing something beautiful forbidden

write this unique empire unacknowledged sovereigns

my desires have invented new desires
my body knows luminous torrents
in frames & didn't open my mouth

The Platform

nothing is itself a struggle with itself

two sprigs and joy—the thing that escapes all ether

I do not understand

misogyny the eagle depths the things they can't swallow

there is no memory who invented hate

on bastions of Bibles those apocalyptic criminal kings
the loyal adulterous women with everything unjust
amidst criminal heroes which slipped the miniscule garden

loving couples doomed to strangers
abominable to a world without visas

deviations return to our continents

and fierce hatred as human say[s] hatred

books are the miracles of millennia
inestimable being of strengths
equally mysterious

loving a little flame
in the darkness while sleeps massacres
watchers of the cause

without waiting love the other
they cut their tongue
in two

in the forest of closing and ejecting
gentlemen among men—it's war

women are not among the dead with the children

that history shared equally responding to curses

men in infancy already giving and speaking
unjust glory in endless mourning

by accident a space in disease (misogyny) wherever it's there

in public whirl

the uneasiness death drives
doesn't enclose REincarnation—

the hopes of the living to one's self
these agents increase in undecided fate

no longer formidable
laid bare to nobody & always very striking
a totally alien image to keep its face always with consciousness

separation complete

there's absence for one the space is ready
without particularity for the outer skin
inside it waits for the assassin a combination

any preoccupation couldn't take place
& mistrust cannot wait to heave a fabricated shame

a simulacrum cannot last passion is mute

invocation into the night & what happens next

return to the body more confiscated
from the uncanny stranger

Broken Letter to the Flower

love that's the one
before the influence
that began & flees
she flies to the arbor
breaking the flowers & the bench
hope brought to the running
it's the one who stands up
the only long time between them
estrangement not made for happiness
marriage up close would be
from afar
a bench of the isolating the running
the running for a long time
from the end of time
the german comes into view one letter
far & departed
much involves the letter
two seated between time zones
it's familiar time frames
inspiration is the soul... waiting eyes
now nights scorching sleep at some foreign hour
the mountain searches every country
to translate black blood
born to dance
at spring time
unlivable side by side
it's necessary to be struck
beyond the letter slumbering

to set fire

the force we obey

strange joy that lament is real

the blind embrace faith

they separate horses

to appease a dream to love the ancient stranger
lacking in unexpected Egypt

we read high of destinies
finished

characters think they'll make night
to get lost on looking

tearing blurs
of years

triumphant timorous betrothals
already always one meter granted

the cradle still a low back

of breaths when kingdoms smile
at the staggered going

just words but no story enter an instant
flight east away from eternal fasting of angels

The Flower's Response

we miss the tide &
the letter the limit

you everything, nothing
yes everything

gave us absence that impatiently we return
a childless time that did not axe the story our eyes glazed

a story our torment is mortal
horror we adore

fierceness love & the adversary defeated
in French the wall we like in books

in the garden can't be crime

careful, it comes with poison
plunged in a single mouth (writing) their separation

its truth it's dark only such darkness till the dark part

WITHOUT MY OCEAN

Imploding Star

when the world was held up by the roof of my mouth
the globe was not solid was not of importance
I slept
in the silence of that warm cavity—I knew

I am a star galaxy a universe

I see out through the capsule (that is the glass)
& I see in to all encompassed which is to say all

the roof of my mouth is a pillow that holds strangers' heads

they dream & I am their dream I am that stranger
in the dream we walk on the beach and learn about ourselves

Underfoot

even Walt Whitman would not like your grass
overwatered and unnatural
 sprinklers drop on sidewalk and tree bark

the beautiful uncut hair of graves
 grandpa's soul tells me new

dandelions you beautiful weed appear
everywhere in the frozen spring
 (I pull you out by your toes and hear
 your silent scream or shrill in terrified delight
 painless)

myself only when with
myself self some other
when accompanied by dandelions
empty grass sand

Maundy Thursday

she ran across the field of dead
grass I across the water because I was thirsty

I'm not surprised
or shocked or sad

& it was Thursday & I never wish I were someone
or something different

I never miss her face
his scent
the way they acted together

The War

destruction of the creative flame—heat in its white glow
dim blue base sprouts
melts the cupboards and crashes the plates
through a skylight bursts a new flicker & the roof is gone
clothes all eaten

the beautiful mushroom cloud as it spreads its silent pain
juuuuajjjjjjm
brilliance of a human mind
tragic in pure form—intangible though physical, visible

c'est magnifique mais ce n'est pas la guerre

Recorded Selves

bird-like squawks, shivers—
 conjured out of old scratched vinyl
slivered grooves across the grain of the deep

I pour my ears into the melting wax
feel the heat before the line becomes solid again

 cheeks bearing the marks
 baring the marks
a strung-out quiet
 guttural and glamorously diseased

we sleep through nights for days—waiting for some bit
of darkness or sunshine or tempest

 our own tempestuousness a lie
—we are content in our sloth & our filth

 we scream to hear our own voices
carved in the tape of a cassette
 burned into a file—we will be permanent

EI

jukebox—broken extinct—

the bottom of a cobble

stone hill in Thessaloniki

lyrics cycle foreignness—

(the strangers perfect)

the eleventh stop downtown under

Savoir

a slow rotation is all I am sure of

I know

it is fast
& no longer understand why

long-forgotten complications

it doesn't affect me or the flowers
we pay no mind

the rotation is
beautiful

& the flowers turn up
their faces to the sun

Swings

old wood swing
replaced by tire swing

(both homemade)—ropes replaced by chains

the rope broke
only bruises

grassless yard before the playground

stump-seat to pick daffodils
bluebonnets

I sat here and watched as the sandbox was built

the tree branch where the swing was—
cut down for sunlight—
itself a swing for its final act

sending a man through the sky as it fell

*

swing set made of metal
four children

feel it pull away from ground
(no-gravity belly)

see-saw horse

screeches back and forth
waits to be righted

*

jungle gym
castlelike wooden and looming
splinters
sand below and afraid to fall

Aeternam

Ah, Ti Pousse, avec votre triste, triste histoire...
Qui suis-j' à pleurer?
Et vous aviez raison, et ça me rende malade—
Égoïste, tellement foutu égoïste.

Et tu, Papa, tu es un ange maintenant.
Tu n'as pas de cercueil plus.
Tu ne plaisantes pas.

Je veux savoir ce que tu pensé dernier.
L'église partout. La nôtre est la maison des morts.

Vous aussi, Ti Pousse, Ti Jean, vous êtes morts aussi.
Enterré quelque part dans l'Est. Ainsi soit-il.

*

Aeternam

Oh, Little Thumb, with your sad, sad story...
Who am I to cry?
And you were right, and it sickens me—
Selfish, so fucking selfish.

And you, Dad, you're an angel now.
You have no coffin anymore.
You're not joking.

I want to know what you were thinking last.
The everywhere church. Ours is the house of the dead.

You too, Little Thumb, Little Jean, you're dead as well.
Buried somewhere in the East. And so it is.

Dusk

cinnamon houses dead brown dirt

feet and aalii
scrape at tephra beneath carmine
walls as red rolls in

birds bomb their belltones over flat yellow sand

quiet choirs of stampeding mice
furrow alongside joshua

distant song petals sing softly
lowering sun into the hill
brilliant fireside

cicadas welcome
the cold moon invites stars

burn faster

invites the stars to shorten their lives for the enjoyment of the birds
the mice

Mojave Sunrise

on top of the burnt corner
green skies reflect

and the colors reverse and the colors reverse

orange

yellow

encapsulated by fog—

the delicate choking as air traps in open space

sky that escapes drifts away

fog chasing after

fog

plush

soothing sky stop

*don't
move*

and the colors reverse and the colors reverse

smooth & submerged

stifling white

all colors inside

sierra charred and calmed

LV

this city built on lights & love or something

in desert under no-rain skies

Joshua everywhere

holding up casino walls

Joshua open stars with
tireless arms

let me bring you some water Joshua
you might be thirsty

Joshua your stoic & spindly gaze
arrests all your lovers

Joshua
Joshua
Joshua

all I can do is catch & hold your steady silence

Shadow

desert heat

 storms lighting streaks
across skies dark & clear

 there is soup waiting
 a warm blanket and air conditioning—crickets
 their hiding places in stuccoed houses

asbestosed buildings

 slippery concrete—well oiled for dry
 days without this wet

 opening clouds & not clouds
 splitting trees to dump the rain

 inside dead damp rings of rotted age

 young leaves fall & the old leaves fall
 in crowded
 overflowing drainstops

This Is Morning

the earth is spins beneath my pounding feet
each step pushes me further above the rotation

breaths come sharply in and out

pain sets in and I look up
mountains and the sun rising
a poppy-colored sunrise over desert rock

I think *this isn't so bad*

I keep going

keep pushing the ground
behind me and head away from the valley

toward sand and the silence
stoic beauty of a new high-rise

Eternal

throw away the skies

for something else

stronger
or darker

my secrets held

in imploding bits

dust &
stars

the country does not matter

which ocean

all same under all stars

I've thrown away many skies

each spectacular
& unexemplary

under this sky

I wish for another

never finding a better blue
than this

never finding a sky

where nothing has changed

each place

sky
star

has watched the others

& grown accordingly

Flight

without my ocean
I found my legs

a new way
a feather floating west
or east

traversing winds purposely
& aimlessly

each breath
a new direction

where is your bird?

I am the bird &
its missing tuft

my wings are less powerful
than the breeze I travel on

w/ brothers & sisters

this is our way

if I fly on the breeze
I can never fall

Immutable

there silence was fine

I enjoyed the lack of expectancy

this silence now

forced

words unheard & so
unspoken

entertainment

unnecessary

my streets too wide
& still overpopulated

the man on the corner wants my change
wants me to hear his story

I want to pay him for his words

I understand & wish he could know

trees are blooming
& it is no different

BARCELONA TABLEAUX

//

the old woman diagonal (who waters plants)
waves hello every day <hola> and goes inside with a smile

Whippets or Greyhounds walk leashless down Passeig de Gràcia
I can't tell the difference their skeletal frames elegant
sickly

one white dog / one spotted dog
trots between streets—across Carrer de Sant Joaquim
the birds pay no mind & thunder down
toward the open apartment windows and doors

in the morning I wake to a pigeon on the balcony railing
soon joined by another to fly away in the crowd

the man walking down the left side of the street is now a woman
I don't know the difference between individuals
—strangers all

each Spaniard a familiar face

except for my waiters I know by voice and face
you are kind and serve me lunch some days
you teach me words in Spanish & bring me wine
I tip you extravagantly

a blue bike rides away from me up
this is not an orange or red—the rental—bike this is his own

a new traveler struggles with her suitcases
they fall over and every few steps she stops to pick up the yellow bag

the construction is back where the dogs were
the workers take trash out of the bags and place it carefully on the ground
the building is where people live & it is boarded up
they must tear down the fence each time they come and go
the workers put it back each day
this is how the work continues on

my waiters are kind & are happy with their lives
their smiles and the lilt of their <hola>s and <gràcies>/<gracias>s
those are what make it clear

there was a cat on another balcony
not the balcony of the pigeon it is gone
the old woman with the smile has not appeared for days
except to water her plants at night with bottled water

//

night rolled thunderclouds in with chilled thermostats
begging the cold air to stop the heat disease the light never flashed
the thunder never broke

the thunder makes sounds—the rapids the river
((the place where Jesus died

a girl who knows nothing of crucifixion
& proclaims J died whitewater rafting))

a story much more believable, really we rafted with him at his death

each window with a cross—a capital C Cross or a pane of glass—
we watch through in and out at the beautiful strangers passing

my night sky covers the stars with a blanket
let the pretty sleep
let thunder go river rafting with the light that never flashed

I will be here when the light flashes;
when the clouds break the chill

bring espresso and you will be loved

//

windy sunflowers on iron clad building sides face away from the light
there is a rooftop garden where tomatoes and peppers grow

it is out of reach & I stare at it, next to the roses
that cover a window with green shutters and fall toward the street
reaching for strangers with their pink and white petals

a few fall on two men below, unloading a van of bags that look like garbage
they are moving in to the apartment above the roses
they do not look foreign

next to the roses, a couch hung dangerously over a balcony
a stressful half hour of watching a family
move their furniture into the building
the couch was brown leather

the kindness of these elderly is unfathomable
each says hello and smiles as if he were your own grandfather
they laugh with the children who are playing
it is understood the future is all there is

the past was fought for their Catalan laughter
so they could play soccer against the Generalitat doors
against the clocktower near any flat surface

//

each clear-cut manzana (illa) (block)
—not always in straight lines
so obvious stunning simplicity
 the view from the balcony down the adjacent

C/ Sant Joaquim i Trav/ Gràcia

9 weeks home exactly sunny-street barça
“across from the plaça de la revolució—massacre

 we weep into wine glasses on the death march
 (!)salud! ”

BVdG 3^{me} floor (poesies i literature)

 out the window, the winery
 beautiful glass-wall window
 myself and I watch the people between Travessera de Gràcia and C/ l’Olla—
 the awkward no-crosswalk

 the awkward curved lines of this city
 this is what Gaudí was after
 not-quite-crazed beauty; nature
the ineptitude of steel to match a forest—yet how we still try

 the unbelievable silence and stoic emptiness of a forest
 the stone columns arching up always
intimate and vast

//

thick city heat presses in on lungs &
the man confident—white-shirt swagger
through the sun a thick black afro
cars beep incessantly driving back and back down the street
down the off-main travelspace
it is monday

shops close people come out
everyone walks drives their cars their motos
the construction (months long) is stopped
men sit and eat in the shade the buildings across the street
smoke their cigarettes
talk about FCB's last big win

sit & sip lemonade on the balcony
dream up lives

woman walking in cable-knit sweater looks so sad
she may be of thousands of unemployed (under 25 // 50%)

pigeons know to turn as they bomb down the street
one last straggler nearly forgets
this is how they get through the summer heat

this is how we spend our afternoons

//

sun rises over Casa Mila
alone walk to the center of La Rambla de Catalunya near Diagonal

the tourists locals transplants
sit & watch the people

mingled over café o cervesa before work

midday they come in hordes
complaining about the sun

not minding the sun
strapped down
shopping bags from El Corte Inglés

I cannot afford these & buy tasses from Starbucks instead
I try to buy a dress & forget & fail

when O visits we see Barri Gòtic
walk for hours & are ever in awe

the beauty

//

the floor of the outdoor room in the castle
—where we fell & danced on our backs & our toes fell off
we hold the trees and watch as the birds chirp at the sunrise
through the open sky roof

I step outside without shoes & look down on the city
I want to walk home
there is no sense in finding a cab at this hour
this daylight with cool morning sun

you and I begin walking downhill with hundreds of strangers
pulled up a hill and up more steps by further strangers
the ones who brought us here at the start
the one who caused our toes to fall off and our shoes to break in half

he was not on the dancefloor inside or outside Poble Español
his green bag and his friends outside

upside and up the dirt and the stairs
until we stopped and turned
breath taken by the full city view in the dawn

sun streaming on our benches
over and next to the castle the brick or stone
we were there and are

we don't know

that morning we strangers were awake for thirty-five hours
the few up the hill and the stairs became more
became frightening

we had no shoes

when we left we walked down miles of steps
through miles of subway and up more steps and down to the trains

we lost our feet for a view of the sprawling city in the morning

we started on the floor falling and staying down holding the tree and a neck

I did not know we were outside
the birds came in

I forgot it was a castle until the sun until
we got lost and found another way

//

surreal vision absolute perfection of art in structure
smooth & all curved

 I want to stay in this moment always
the magic of shape and color what I saw & did not see
 a replica of coastline and mountain animals / insects
nature in stone exemplified and accented

this is what is missing
 what has not been cannot be gone
a warm smile recognizing my return

 the sunbeams streaking through your face through the clouds
ninety-four is a good year peaceful & taken by the yellow butterfly

el ojo de dios

 back into the mountains and the coastline where there is a better view
& I will travel and never stop moving
 I will see what I could not while standing
 all of it

//

conversely the sharp lines @ Avinguda Diagonal
triangular building connecting w/ Còrsega
stark contrast also breathtaking

in the cool morning light I stroll this street to Basílica de la Puríssima Concepció
back to The Daily Telegraph where I drink Pilsner Urquell & eat free popcorn

another night I return with friends and we have imported American cervesas
they are cheaper here than at home

from their hotel rooftop we can see a panorama of the city
the highs and lows

ongoing construction of La Sagrada Família
towering high above the rest already

we make a plot to return every ten years & believe it will happen

//

when I close my eyes I am still walking those streets

 waking to the wide unshuttered balcony doors
the trucks underfoot wider than the streets driving up on sidewalks
 unloading fresh chickens or fish

I run down the streets through the smells

 saying hola as I pass strange looks or smiles returned

 my nearby plaças empty in this early hour
del Sol de la Vila de Gràcia
 the city sleeps late

I did not bring water
 and stop to drink from the wall fountain
 splash the water on my face neck

 I keep going slowly up the hill
back to my balcony doors
 my view of distant mountains

 café amb llet from the corner coffee shop ease my eyes open

ease the soul awake to the heavy morning sun

//

the hole & absence today as odd as ystrdy or six years ago

I see the missing pieces in bits around the world or city
in a cup of black coffee (no sugar)

here and there it is and swirls
a headdance confusing misery and ecstasy (¡esta sí!)

for a moment I see a musician and picture another
one with a mustache and deep scratchy belly-laugh

hear another voice singing playing another guitar
then it's gone and the same musician is there

the nose stays the same and the crinkle around the eye corners
a strange conflation of one and one

these things happen sometimes
it is overwhelming

//

near l'Eixample where the street widens
I buy bread daily (€0.44) & wine (Antaño @ €1.95/bottle)
the man who sells me wine asks me the same things every day

<<¿d'on ets?

& ¿quin és el seu segon llengua?>>

always I answer brokenly in the wrong languages

<<Estados Unis & no segunda... hablas
anglais?>>

he tells me of his children & I understand more each day

he speaks no Spanish or English they do & are away

the man smiles and speaks as though I understand

I like this I feel welcomed & unappreciative unlearned

I try & he knows this

we become friends in my mind

my Catalan wineseller

my best friend

we end each day

¿borsa?

no gràcies. moltes gràcies per tot. adéu.

//

xchange the mountains for mountains
sand for snow and cold that cracks the knuckles

a place that feels like a place to breathe deeply and happily
the world comes together in a single street corner
where the bar/bistro/café leads us back to the sea

I watch the pigeons flutter purposefully and coo
sounding like baby owls

they shit on my car and I don't have a hose to wash it off
I'd like to get rid of the car some days

I'd like a place where my mother will visit / a place
she does not hate by default

there is too much orange there is not enough blue
we are out of balance here

//

Night brings a cool starlight breeze
sea's breaking waves out of earshot,
I drink and watch Estrellas on my balcony
endless drifting peoples underfoot—moving.
I think of dad. I think of loss and lighthouses
—I sit back and try to see that in the stars

They seem to blink at me, the stars...
light drifting toward me as on a breeze
the ships roll in on waves, aided by the lighthouses.
I call to the ships, hoping they are within earshot
they need to stay; they need to stop moving
I think this at the captain from my balcony.

Up here on this second- (third-) floor balcony
it seems I am closer than ever to the stars.
I watch their gases swirling and feel I am moving
closer to them, pushed along by the breeze
I'm drifting away from this city, out of earshot
of the people below, of the lighthouses.

From up here, I can see all of the lighthouses
from my New England coast to my Spanish balcony.
The stars are now all here, within earshot.
I watch them, but am reminded of the stars
atop the lighthouses, and the sea breeze
on my skin as I would watch the light moving...

when there was fog, they were always moving,
the guides and protectants of ships—lighthouses
standing tall and strong against the salty breeze.
(I taste the salt on my lips even here, on this balcony.)
Ships moving quickly over the waves beneath the stars
—deckhands falling victim to the sirens in earshot—

the mermaid-like sirens, catching those within earshot
finding their way to ships lost and not, those that are moving
swiftly and deftly beneath the sky, guided by stars
guided by the voices of sirens, guided by lighthouses.
I hold my breath and wish the best for the ships from my balcony,
I hold my breath and lean into the Mediterranean breeze.

I feel home here, feeling this breeze...
so I sit and I smile, alone on this old, metal balcony,

remembering the safety I've known from the lighthouses.

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