





Editors **Amanda Raczkowski**
 Joseph Reed

I have the sensation that the most honest man in the world is the artist when he is saying I don't know. At such moments he knows that, to the questions that truly interest him, only the *work* will give answers, which usually turn out further questions. This should be an instruction to any possible audience.

—Clark Coolidge, “Words”

The box and the key: I don't have a clue what those are.

—David Lynch, *Catching the Big Fish*

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Emily Carr

13 ways of happily, draft 7

scorned as timber, beloved of the sky.

1

you emerge from the photobooth
with yourself in triplicate ferrying corn
on the hoof now pigs in a barrel
the Swanson man lifts a finger, honks

2

then it was fall: or no, it was summer
ending. there are statues & fountains, ruthlessly carved,
plastic bags in palm trees (now again, trees)

3

freshly
bulldozed

childsafes you
are leaving the
details of your
body behind:
the (il)logic of
wings, mind
swaggering
in strips of
meat, sunwhite
diamond
shedding sun

4

stilettoed spaghettistrapped bare
backed girlhood is a dying economy & the birthday is a
makeshift—

5

what world is made, that made us that we keep on making
(i'm not sorry she says do you/ believe me

6

the trees
in their un
believable
foliage are
scissoring
& razor
ing the
crushed
aspirin sky,
syntax spills
from car
radios
you stand
there letting
the words
fall over
you, splash

7

you don't look old well I don't look/ my age/
well I don't want to look 18 again do I

8

sparkling like snakes, like barbed wire, like sunlight, she is
thirty-one—summer-muscled & blooming blackly in the
gunpowder of *yes*

9

god hovers over the antique
rifles & white wicker, spoonbread
pickled tomatoes artillery punch
lobstercoloured crumbs & fleshless
bones, the housewife reassembling
youth in her mind—

10

looking at/ like/ what
shall I/ say how is the truth to be/ said
believe me/ I

11

happily comes into the world & there
it is a moment of accelerated hellbent flush with the curb

12

step over & step lightly
into the fact: a man unfolding
a woman into an ambulance, a rainbow
unspooling from a crucifix, sirens splash
& a frog sings back...

13

(where is her mother not that she/ or any other
could have

for E. Wunker

Nora Almeida

T o w a r d s

Dear Henry.
Battery Park.

Once.
Beside the freeway
12 seagulls eating 1 dead seagull.

Infinite disguises
of the infinite.

I wanted to write you
a long time descends on the farmhouse.

calling the dog in from the yard
because he recognizes your voice

the same way I don't remember the ceiling fan
until it's switched off.

Clothespins remind me
of the moon—

alas is a little mouth.

a month of
little mouths.

T o w a r d s

I was conceived in the footpath.

clouds are geometries.

the weather impotent.

looking is a gloss.

Here's to.

I supply my own

supply.

waxing the car this morning

I am thinking,

if the earth were butter

I would sink into

gladly.

Servant

My face on a rabbit and she curls into herself, into a stone, and sits. *Scary* she says. I watch it hop, watch it stand on two legs, walk away, but cannot once see its face. *Don't leave*. And when she turns to me, my cheeks have grown fur, my eyes grown large and black. I haven't gone anywhere, I say. She grabs each ear and tugs. *I cannot kiss a rabbit* she says and giggles, turns shy. I take human hand and run it through her hair. Press our cheeks together, let her disappear in softness of touch. This will last hours, the warmth of day heading into horizon. This is enough. Then a bird flies by. *Scary* she says, then flinches as my face gives way to beak. She turns to me, only this time no giggles, no shyness, just stone. Grabbing her hand, I wonder when I will be whole again.

When she was a boy, she'd roll in the dirt. Sometimes mud, sometimes love. It rained on off days and she'd roll up her boy sleeves and pant legs. And then grunt. This was back in those days. I'd watch from a hidden tree. Hidden branch. That boy was always a girl, I just didn't know. Some days she'd take eggs and hide them in mole holes. Some days she'd smash them

against rocks. Tomorrow I will stand with my arms reaching. I would have parted the sea back then, or I would have watched her do the same. Both of us parting the sea, separating one from the other. Maybe this is how it happened, how it was. Maybe she rolled in the dirt because she knew what was in her future. Maybe I washed for the same reason. Maybe tomorrow we'll grab hands and part ourselves into our own little world.

Like a seed split open, the first leaf emerging as hand. She grew from a knuckle or two. Or so she says. It was a moment of miracle when an old woman blew on a wound and an infant appeared. *And you were the spittle from her lips* she says. I want to embrace her, for making the world real, taking away all expectations. What else was there for you to drink, I say. She scrunches her brow. Do I say it or does she just think it and are we holding hands or are we holding throats and if she grew from a knuckle I grew from a fist. *You were the dirt I was thrown into* she says. The two of us standing side by side. This is apology as best she could. I was your earth, I say. *You were my beginning*. And what are we now. A bouquet. A crib. Or grasp of neck till that one last breath.

She was in the basement while I was sleeping. She coughed three times and what did I feel but a shift in dream, a dampness. *This is a bird in a box* she would say. This is a room I would reply. I coughed three times. How else did we speak but in a

clearing of throats. She washed clothes as I sweated through the sheets. I was asleep and she was a box, coughing three times. We held hands once. *This is where your bird first came to be.* My bird somewhere in the basement. Somewhere in the damp. When we laughed all I heard were wings.

Spinach and oil over and over again. Once, it was good enough for sailors. Good enough for strength. And I'll draw a sun in the sand large enough to stand in. Eat, I'll say. Stare at this. Her eyes already rings. I have always been the periphery. Saving sight for the sightless. Feeding a pile of bones. But, I am not useless, will not be. My arms becoming legs and I will be her beach log, her picnic bench, her throne to seat when she cannot stand. Time smoothing skin until barnacles lay claim. When she forgets the ocean, I will sway with the surf. When she forgets the gulls, I will speak in their voice. When she forgets happiness, I will move her bare foot over beach glass. No more cuts, I'll whisper with the waves.

She used to grab both my cheeks and say *When it's beautiful out, death is funny.* This is when we were surrounded by flood-water and different shades of pink. I don't remember how I responded. Maybe I painted her face with a light shade of blue. Maybe I covered my own with a shroud. It's funny how little I remember of that time. *Only laugh when you're in pain* she'd say and that I've never forgotten. Nor the bandage on the wound

across her chest I'd change each day and the daisy I'd rest on her shoulder after. *Beautiful children usually die first.* Was this a warning or a statement of kindness to grieving parents. Or maybe just a taste of bitterness on the tongue.

I kneeled and through an opening of a blackberry bush watched her purple her lips. I licked my own, tasting berry, and she spoke to the birds. *Roll over* she said. *Shake.* I placed my hand against vine as if it were a frame of a window. She pulled her hand to her face, sucked the tip of her finger. A sparrow played dead. At half-past two, the rain started. I closed my eyes and opened them to see her in a dance with the sparrow. They splashed in a puddle. I waltzed on my own, eating berries, and let the rain carry juice down my chin and chest. *I love you* I heard her say, through the wall of blackberry. It drew me back to the opening. I saw a shy wing covering her eyes and knew beneath feather she was staring right at me.

Arlene Ang

Self-Portrait in Green Dress

(a) With Collapsed Lung

As in, holding a bat by its feet. As a study in attachment, I have resorted to a wooden arm. Thirty-six stitches bring the face into focus. I am sitting sideways with one leg shorter than the other. I am a passage of distortion. The chair, pushed against a blue door, is covered with scars. The unswallowed pill whitens my lips—a weakness similar to the living when they come back for the dead. Fire and water are eating different paths up the green skirt. All this skin is a mask; all organs, lesions or birth defects. On the ground, snow without its globe or the city famous for its snow. A chest tube between my second and third ribs juts out, like a smoked cigarette as it turns away from the burden of light.

(b) Using Sky and Poison

Language. The objects and their order around the body. Signs of freezing fill the sky. For example, portions of a biplane that

are cut off from view. For example, solar eclipse. The skirt slashed to receive the scorpion. I have enemies, my eleven fingers raised to count them: the thirst, the club foot, the distance between the gesture and the meaning, the branchless trees in the horizon. There are bruises on my face—a family of four—and a barbed wire to separate the eyes from the mouth. Around my neck, a string of black origami cranes disappears into the green bodice. The lace is gelatinous, indicative: this is the outdoors: ice melt and the ground turning so dark it is the shadow of a corpse about to hit the soil.

(c) Variations on Pressure

Memory is the entry wound, involved but unseen. A lightbulb sputters in the presence of moths. On the wall, a fire escape twisted into a flower. My feet dangle. As the body's distance from the ground increases, the hemline appears to shrink in perspective. I have birthed a dead thing again. My legs cling hardest to the embryonic fluid, their toenails either painted with daisies or torn out and replaced with stitches. On the floor, a green bottle spills a shudder of moon; one black shoe is empty and lies on its broken side. I have the face of my thumbprint: proof that oil paint feels anguish before it dries. A meat

hook exits the left breast—the tip dulled by heart tissue, like a wrist being licked of salt.

(d) That Which Shapes Rainfall into Individual Entities

First the fruit fly, its entrails conjoined with the skirt. Then the larvae—intermittent white embroidery on green fabric. The evening cups the alley in the manner of someone eating a pear with both hands. I have a pair of scissors. I have a pair of goat horns on my head—and a blue bowl that collects and brings water closer to its image. The neck is whispered in snakeskin tattoos. On the ground, dissected rats with their feet in the air giving instructions on how to reconstruct the human body. I am perched on a yellow hydrant. My lips are invisible, washed away by light from a keyhole. There is no way out. I have taken my hair down. From a distance, the drizzle communicates a barcode structure. A birdcage.

(e) Unfinished, But Not Without Mutation

The lake is a spoon is a fish belly is a coil of plaited hair. With the eyes removed, dark stains bore through the gauze around

the head to indicate a previous awareness of eyes. The tripartite beard is both alien and incorruptible. I am wearing black lipstick. And here, the landscape becomes dangerous. The elms have been replaced with fetuses. To reprocess animation inside the stillborn, the edges of their smiles have been stapled to their cheeks. I am a door a submerged city a denotation device with blue buttons. This is the body as it will be found: attired in formal green, serene and geometric, strapped to a skeleton, my arms transformed into miniature arms inside the beaks of winter birds, feeding.

R. D. Parker

A q u a m a r i n e

At night, ovoid gasoline erases Schenectady.

At night, swallows mosquitoes. Schenectady.

At night, piquant Schenectady places a jar in Kankakee.

At night, deco-blobs arc arc arc arc saunter. Kankakee.

At the fall of evening, slap-dash labor complete anomie.

At the fall of evening, heads of lettuce port slovenly.

At the fall of evening, retina flashes. Upper Sandusky.

At the fall of evening, tangerine tangerine nectarine tangerine.

Mine - Haha

A samovar, a sink. In regular succession or promiscuously; the misery of all at once. A hot flush, a headache and bruised knees. A bouquet on every branch bending toward the street, girls in borrowed garters dropping press-on nails in the stairwell like blossoms, silvery-pink and fluttering. I'm inclined to collect them all; the nails of generous women clogging every gutter. The bottoms of my shoes crusted with yellow blooms like snot. Great pink clumps surging, as if a cord has been pulled, a shade opened, a door and her eyelid.

A salt rain in the clouds, the scent of kelp and whales with mouths ringed with ancient toothbrush bristles, caught in loaded trees, shaking salt to the street. A velvet surging, all too much at once, my heart struggling against my stomach. The house won't hold.

Pushing a sponge-headed mop over the floorboards in an effort opposite the direction of the boards laid across the room. Swallowing when I'm done, slowly and clearly. I keep myself busy by holding onto something. It is still raining and the rain has nothing to do but sink.

A welt carved into my thigh from an object which I kept on my lap for awhile but which is now gone.

Street signs and addresses wavering, as if cold, water riveted to broken doorbells; no call to fetch me from suffering. Herds of trees anticipating the mail: no packages today. A rupture in the sky and the street lights struggle to turn on, hissing and buzzing like bawling girls, pulling pigtailed. If this continues, I'll learn to swim: a bucket and a bathtub, a girl in galoshes with a broom, sweeping tadpoles toward the drain, taking care to catch each one. For no reason but a way of keeping time: each stroke, feet together, knees together, blowing out air. Can I count each button, every light I left on, a room I don't use.

A door left slightly open, so that the cat hurdles against it, his claws catching on the bottom edge of the frame: he pulls and pulls, the force of one cat wanting in, battling a block of wood. When it swings open he falls back, legs pumping and then thrusting forward, propelling himself from floor to window ledge. The screen he can't get by bounces him back. He moves in the way of girls jumping rope, hula hoops, somersaults.

The heartlessness of silver lined hips. Hard to get salt water out of silk. I'd wear black before a tragedy, inexplicably snap a button from my sleeve with my teeth. Swallowing whole suits worth of small buttons, glutted in my belly; the sound of buttons shuffling against each other in the bottom of a girl. My dress

punctuating me, coming to a full stop at my wrist, resting on a sleeve. Kneecaps scarcely seen, hovering beyond the outermost edge of my slip. I depend upon a breeze to start unsettling the arrangement of my skirt; otherwise, I'll have to start making unrestricted movements, crackling in chiffon. The extra charge of glamour distilled by the telephone's ring; when I answer my obligations the illusion is effaced—I answer as anybody might, the receiver clinging to an anxious ear, the trunk wafting through my loose, dismantled hair. The threat of fabric, simulating skin; I take time to slouch in satin, taming my dress to bargain, blackmail, bless. I'm clashing with the scenery, collar slightly askew—a girl groomed by tulle, raiding the dress rack. I'm always stopping here, stooping to see myself set loose by the earth. Mountains around me peeling, shedding slate.

To be the prettiest, the most ready to descend. From the rituals of the jungle gym to nylon stockings stretched over wire hangers. The forest is empty of anything but girls in white dresses. They can do what they like, such as slip into a clock. They don't like to be told what to do, to have the mechanics explained. Time is often passing and what they love is to steep in the senselessness of forest paths lit by fluorescent lights; the feel of a kidskin glove on a bare thigh; the limpid eye of a rose in her lap. If I leave I can go anywhere: from here to a seesaw, a swing, a shallow swimming pool. Because I have been alone and

I have flung myself from here, drawn by the constant gravity of trains moving underground, the incessant pull of water to the sea. Girls in a city they've never seen, every tree a furnace for forgetting.

A kind of maze of white ankle socks. The kinds of snake-skin secrets girls have, sloppily abandoned in favor of something new. I haven't told anyone; I've been hushed by moths wrapped in wax paper and the relentless ache of getting ready to be in line. Moving forward to smile, to lift my chin so the bones in my neck collapse.

A girl won't ever be here again. She'll lose some blood, cut her nails, her hair—but no wound. And then again, the bathtub water lukewarm, clogged with skin cells, soap.

A S a d S t o r y o f F a c t o r y G i r l s

He was as busy as ever. He was absorbed in his studies. He was deeply attached to his school. He studied assiduously. He delved into his books. He used his brain. He had the ability to speak fluently. He had clever enunciation. He lived simply and frugally. He was willing to do hard work. He was engaged in two trades at the same time. He was born in misery but brought up in happiness. He was Rhesus negative as a baby. He was short for his age, as a baby. His head was too big in proportion to his body. He wore rimless spectacles. He wore straw sandals. He was a rosy-cheeked, handsome young man. He was a habitual smoker. He went to bed if he felt sleepy. He behaved pleasantly toward everyone. He showed sincere feeling and expression. He didn't stand on ceremony. He was overly modest. He laughed easily. He laughed like a horse. He split his sides with laughter.

He strode into the New Year in high spirits. He advanced with great strides. He was pleased with the progress he'd made. The wine never gave him bad after-effects. Meats never disagreed with him. He sliced gala apples in two. He mixed whiskey with water. He drank his fill. He drank to his heart's content. He took

what was said with a grain of salt.

He behaved congenially toward her. He gave her the compliments of the season. He passed the time of day with her. He walked with her under one umbrella. He was frank and said what was on his mind. He had a jolly time. He helped with her digestion. He supported her proposal. He chopped meat into small pieces. He minced meat. He cut a skein of jute with a sharpened knife. He went 50-50 on expenses. He went Dutch. He made her a duplicate key. He called her by her pet name. He got carried away with good grace. He was beside himself with joy.

He praised good people and good deeds. He warmheartedly served all customers. He raced against time and went all out. He won universal praise. He made a lot of money. He hit a tremendous home run. His stock went up 30%. He broke the level of one hundred sixty yen. He offered his seat to the general. He invited the guests to be seated. His words set everyone roaring with laughter. He enjoyed great popularity. His meeting was a great success in that the hall was filled to capacity. His students came in swarms. It was well done; he said so himself.

Even though at an unfortunate moment he typed some words incorrectly. He discovered a nasty plot behind his back. He received all the blame on his shoulders. He was handicapped by illiteracy. What's worse, he had trouble with his teeth. Someone put despicable ideas into his head. In spite of himself,

he pushed his way onto the bus. Unconsciously, he resorted to physical force. He paid extra for taxis late at night. He arrived too late for the best item on the program. He apologized for having kept her waiting. She raised a variety of objections.

He said more than was proper. He shot off his mouth. He spoke unkindly. He made caustic remarks. He made an uproar. He said it again and again. He let loose a flood of garrulousness. He demanded immediate attention. He brooked no delay. He disrupted the market. He disturbed the public order. His double-dealing was disgusting. He was puzzled by difficult questions. He knew the how but not the why. He fell into dire straits. His spite was deeply ingrained. He engraved his spite on his bones and in his heart.

He broke a dish. He broke a wooden bowl. He broke a glass. He broke a fork. He broke a spoon. He broke a butter knife. He broke a napkin. He broke a table cloth. He felt sad. He wept bitterly. He endlessly choked with tears. He went around with a long face. He went around with a pained and sorrowful look. He keenly regretted his mistake. 'I was duped by that villain,' he said bitterly. He had a less sentimental view.

He took a bath. He joined a hiking club. He was very fond of skating.

Such a person as that, in that way.

Michael Burkard

The Drawer

I am not sure what my parents thought of anyone.
But this isn't going to be one of those snow-poems,
goodbye-poems, teal-poems...

When you are drawing look deep into the eyes of myself,
my sister, my sister whom I cannot erase...
Why are you my best friend?

I do not know what your parents thought of anyone either.
There is a time factor and a forest factor in this disknowing.
You will tell me about it some night. I know you know.

One of your melodies turns up in a little empty book of pages
I buy. The ghost on the moon, the moon in your lap,
the moon simultaneous

and following me and Chris down Houston Street,
to the legends of the family
where I will kiss you at last.

Report

Report says rain now instead of snow.

One day the clear sky will have authority again.

Words will fall into the correct places in sentences

again. My sleep has eaten numbers for so many nights

I want to write a small poem upon my finger, in closer

possibility of taking a dream to sleep with me, a vision

which wrote me, my father's face, my autobiographical face,

my inoculated face. Your face or the face no one can

tell anyone. This last face which really isn't a jail

at all but for a moment makes me think of the sound of

the rain as a jail, as if I have misunderstood all along

what jail or what rain can be.

Travis Brown

Far from Bad Axe

on the Lower Peninsula

There on the Thumb, at the edge of the silver-lipped lake, we were an eyelash fallen in the craw of the metal-mouthed implements, the mosquitoes flittering in the skin-tight aspen. Paper bark on the solstice, a poke in the eye with a stick & there was nothing as heavy-handed as the heat. Swollen, a breeze planted the sassafras with smoke. I had run out of desire, divided our leg hair & combed it over the top of my head. Before dawn, my mother kissed me, a cigarette in her smile. She handed me a loaf of white bread. Wringing the jack-rabbit's neck was going to take every ounce of me. I couldn't help it if the butcher block of summer was carved by hunger. Half a mind of chokecherry & I hacked at the soft core of poisonous pulp. An arm, a leg, the tree traded limbs with me. At night, I grinded my intentions. I followed the curve of the moon & it set me straight.

Sillage

I.

good morning, mister. I look for ways
to startle you. perfectly marvelous.
with jokes. October. raw light.
is the way the day opens. red triangle
sweeps the bridge. white drags the path.
seats a sallow moon. in ænemic day.
let us kill. what we cannot find. anyway we're dead.
every night until morning. when our thighs
crossways catch swallows belly-out.
if the flock is the sky. then we are always bleeding.
green-gold. down wrist & knee cap. and we run.
to meet. our waking selves. in the panes.
I am my morning face and hands.

II.

sweet moving water. sweetly
moving water. water sweetly
moving under. like in your
dream. honey spilled. over balsam.
that kind of light. an instant's freezing.
watching the sky break. tender
and ugly. over the reddening sea.
delicate salve. for the broken season.
the dead aren't really dead. they are
here. with us. wearing our clothes.
in the wake. of the smoke. of abandoned cities.
they site. along the limp compass of melancholy.

III.

the scale of the body is musical
& reclining. how often do I see.
in my sleep. but on waking. cannot
recall. heaving narwhal.
for a mast. dream narwhal charges
the forest. ambergris & balsam.

balsam & hair. dream October breaks
over dead dream forest. sweetly spilled
October breaks over. the worried trees.
dragged after narwhal. cumulus. sillage:

IV.

ambergris
balsam
hair
ozone
ash.

V.

oh mister. & how the morning breaks
open. over the sills. I love
when you call me mister
& you.



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