

INSTANT CONDUCTORS

by

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ABSTRACT

Instant Conductors is a collection of poems meant to engage the reader in conversation about the imperfect nature of the world in relation to the imperfect nature of readerly experience. Walt Whitman wrote, “I have instant conductors all over me whether I pass or stop / they seize every object and lead it harmlessly through me.” And so the things on these pages are intent on transmitting what one experiences in the minutiae of memory and routine: the sounds that surround a blackwater tidepool, what one imagines happens behind the closed doors of the friendly neighbors, or what’s heard in the whispers of an elderly man sitting in a waiting room. These pieces are situated along the spectrum of narrative and lyric, between self and other, around various speakers and listeners. They flow through the sensors of Florida swamp, pray to the train ride of some nebulous god or lack thereof, and comment on the artifice of social media. They visit the transient nature of relationships and interrogate how one comes to know, or not know, the self. These pieces speak to old form and new verse. They touch on place, and time, and timelessness. They attempt to reimagine the negative space of individual, sometimes muddled, histories, into some understandable or at least familiar, organic, whole. Universal truths or no, these are the electric currents of language. They are hazardous. They are harmless. They are instances and instants.

For Angela and Peter.

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| <i>99 Pine Street:</i> | “Rust” |
| <i>Anamesa:</i> | “Linguisticity” |
| <i>Brickplight:</i> | “Father Constructs a Tudor” “Grow” “Love Poem For My Husband (Love Poem)” |
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| <i>Eyedrum Periodically:</i> | “Gentrification” |
| <i>Hitherto:</i> | “Exercise Semantic” |
| <i>Ishaan Literary Review:</i> | “Beached” “St. Johns” “The Light, The Choir” |
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| <i>Shooter Literary Magazine:</i> | “Tiffany Takes a Selfie” |
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| <i>Tincture Journal:</i> | “Afternoon Interlude, In Cubicle” |

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INSTANCES

St. Johns

Your curve
of upper basin
wet in the dark,
cushioned bank
of cattails;
you kept company
with Mocama
and Seminole—
your swan neck
ligature
keeps me
company now,
holds me together.
Grandma had
a fish cabin
on Lake Harney
gone to rot;
moist *madera*
crumbled underfoot.
Your anhinga,
snake bird,
you curve
—like a sentence,
carry me north.

Tropical Depression

In the morning
—top of the stairs
we fallout
of love,
trip steps
like
a giant oak's
root-ball the size
of a small planet,
tipped,
ripped up in backyard dirt
mirrored
in hurricane-force wind
as neighbors happily
kayak
down the street—
our feasts are long gone,
long lost to unfisted fights
down
in a basement
shelter,
where we stay,
damp,
unmoving
and windowless.

Specimen

This body needs HBV protein
as in High Biological Value,

as in high albumin to obstruct
this low albuminessence

to fight this lack of effervescent breath.
O light as of the inner kind

O time as in rosary blue
cameo soapstone box filled with ash,

timber of vitamin and bone,
this body needs to be tacked

to corkboard, a pin through the chest
to dry in the sun,

an imprint of borders,
O light all that is left.

Father Constructs a Tudor

A metronome click-tock killed us
softly in songs by our father—
1973, wet smell of wood truss triangles
ramped together with spit nails, bruised fingers,
good for construction.
Sticky orange-grove-anthills run over by a hoary
surrey in the yard, its smell like horse leather
and damp hair, good for time travel.
Cigar fumes like locust wings, plague-colored,
under our feet a forest of garter snakes rope-thick,
good for omens—
inside his hidden forbidden music room,
rheumy clarinet coalition squeals, Glenn Miller's *String of Pearls*
anti-crescendo roped into concrete-loop foundation,
good for scabbed skin. Our tudor house
is baked full of dead fish,
sting bees in the half timber,
his wood reeds tongued thin,
the moss green Karmann Ghia
parked under a dead navel tree,
Roberta Flack on his radio.

Listen

He may endow you with some diamond
ring and of course you will say Yes;

you may then wonder if the feeling
that you can no longer breathe is so much jailhouse

stink or love love fabulous Kung Fu chop-love
my dear, the love you've been waiting for

since you played the *Bride Game*
in second grade and knew you must have

something lacy and blue to bestow
upon your virginal thigh. He will peel

the garter off your upraised leg
to pacify the mob;

he will tell you I Love You Forever.
It will be wonderful, really.

But later you may fantasize
that you fashion a tomahawk

out of your prison razor
to slice his face in retribution

for the time he called your cooking *ass*,
no really, he called your cheddar biscuits *ass*,

or you may vow
to Kung Fu chop his throat

Ip Man-style (as he sleeps)
for saying your horsemouth

could eat corn through a fence.
Your teeth are only slightly bucked after all.

You may finally
find yourself

sitting on the porch after the kids
are asleep, cursing

his ungoverned mouth,
not knowing that in a few years

he will call you
a low caliber whore

and though you know
there is no

instrument as lovely
as a voice, you listen

for his silence.

Grow

grow me birthchrist,
your deep plan your lineaments.
 cry cry the other line,
the coffin the dogfog
of this divorce—
him was then,
a close man of light light
sky blue Paradise,
godwant of the century.
 his name
 twists again
against my body a canoe
of one water, blue stones
finished
diagonally finally,
intolerable
this liminal headache
 of something.

Semi-Sestina on Six Words by Donald Justice

I thought that to erase the past
I would think of thinking
about things passed, the forgetting
of the past which I always think
about, I asked, to think of
something other than the past.

I asked to think of a different past
but what I thought had passed
had only dug a way deep, of
a deepness that kept me thinking
of who the past was, to think
a map, to forgetting.

I became a gap of forgetting
what passed,
an erasure, to think
that the past
was only about forgetting
things I remembered, of

people, I remembered, of
cloth placed atop a light to dim the forgetting,
to nebulize what I was thinking
of the man in a past.
The non-memory passed.
The shadow, gray, to think.

It grew dark. I had to think
of grimed hands that smooth hair, of
smoky sour hours passed
through time. I became the forgetting
numb of a past,
of a girl thinking.

In that ice tingle of thinking,
in the numb, I began to think
of a map to nowhere, an age of passed
time in a mind of
caverns that led to forgetting
what lingered of the past.

But the man—on the hill—makes me think of
the past, will always imply the forgetting,
always, present, when thinking of things passed.

Flight Distance

This is just to say
I have taken
measure
of a country
mile
in which
I perceived you
an enemy
at escapable nearness

Forgive me
as the crow flies
with wings only partly opened
above no warm fire
is too short an augury
too close
too cold

Love Poem

-Of Victor Jara's *Estadio Chile*

He remembers
Jara's smashed wrists,
when he was young.

Death in the Stadium,
the broken
moan song.

People disappeared
at night.

Now he believes
in tiny trolls
that run along baseboards,
sabotage
water lines and light switches.

Pero we don't wonder
how many we are, *dos*
juntos.

We are found
in starry night space

without silence,
without screams.

Poema de Amor

-De Víctor Jara, *Estadio Chile*

Él recuerda
de las muñecas rotas de Jara,
cuando él era joven.

Muerte en el Estadio,
la canción triste
fue alterada.

Las personas desaparecidas
en la noche.

Ahora él cree
en duendes pequeños
que corren a lo largo de los zócalos,
sabotaje
líneas de agua e interruptores de luz.

Pero no nos preguntamos
cuántos somos, dos
juntos.

Estamos encontrando
en el espacio de la noche estrellada

sin silencio,
sin gritos.

Trans: Lisandro Perez Debelli

Past the Southern Andes the World Opens Up

Unto the sound of rain,
of tree leave shifts

on a breeze, like the sound
of a quiet grin.

He says, *we has to clean the houses of bird*
and, *the best thing you can show these kids is play kite,*

pero no worry, I forget you—
which means

he forgives me for letting the birdcage get dirty
and allowing the kids to watch too much TV,

which means the sound of rain
is only a transitive, the signified, one word,
understanding.

The Sound Needs Heat

- after Neko Case and Terrance Hayes

Love, I shovel gold into my ears,
want to be real full, want to hear
hot pink lips, the warm tone
of together, the red round of the sound.
Will you love me more
if I puke up a sonnet?
Abandon the couplets?
Say a word-played mouth, swallow
the sound of need,
taste the feel of alone?
I chew a thin melody
of endgame, iced with the sound of quiet.
Say I'm not starving;
make the mouth move as it should.

Third-Wave Loose Sonnet Run-On

“I follow politics to ball all the chicks, cross-pollinate then call it quits.”
—MC Paul Barman, *N.O.W.*

MC Paul Barman has the goods to show
that you can have a sense of humor while
making fun of lower-case letters, though
bell hooks might not like his writing style
or what his intellectual rhymes say
about uptight ladies that can not see
love is an act of courage meant to make
one find humor in a song by MC
Paul about hairy armpits and belly
necklaces at an N. O. Double-U
convention, so grab the K. Y. Jelly,
board the bus, re-ink your E. Jong tattoo,
and let Barman's gut-busting witty rhyme
on feminism grow on you in time.

Gentrification

He says the potential hides inside;
he says go into Brooklyn bars and take notes
on the interesting stories people tell while they're drunk
as if I did not already know the drunkest story.
Mother retches into toilet at three in the morning,
varicose-vein legs curl under the butt
(then knee-push to chest like birth),
mildew stain in the shape of South America
like a map to so many nowheres
(the Staten Island of southernmost Argentina a black
dot between long toes that flex and curl
with each convulsion). As if I did not know
paramedics have a tendency to roll their eyes.
I'm happy alone in my head—I gentrify me now—
where I surmise that if I read about
a Tom Vek concert in the "Night Life" section of *The New Yorker*
then I've somehow actually attended it and thus I can join the ranks of those
musicians and night club proprietors lead complicated lives...
who oh-so-hip-ly know who Tom Vek is and isn't his music like so much shiny things?
it is advisable to check in advance to confirm engagements.

Day Turns to Night

The weird thing
was that I recognized her name
on the paper after the doctor
dictated his note and I typed it.
The name was the same
that hung on the door shingle
across the street from mine.
H*****D, it said, in yellow
letters on a wood
slat over the entryway;
I saw it every day.
The doctor dictated to me
all of the strange happenings in her
cloudy utero, *sarcoma*, *carcinoma*,
adenoma, those crazed messengers
of sure death. I knew she was dying
as I drove by her house every evening,
a day's work done. At night I would imagine
her female armies metal-hatted
and hunkered down in wet trenches,
distracted by a small yellow butterfly
flitting on a crushed can of peas
while an invader fed on her blood,
mutated cancer, genes gone bad.
I dreamt I created a supercure to stop them.
I wanted to shout out the window
as I drove past her house, *Take your vitamins!*
Eat kale, Mrs. H! Exercise!
I would watch the miniature windmill
in her front yard click out vacant turns
and I would remember that line from some movie
that said it's all about making peace with what you don't have.
So now her car is gone from the driveway
and there is only the lantana that strangle
into tiny windmill slats.

Birthday

I said thank you God
and almost believed it,

then a woman in a riot stole
toilet paper and paper towels

instead of a TV or cell phones
and a radio DJ made fun of her;

you cretin, paper products
aren't a benefit of SNAP

plus you don't even know
how to pronounce "judgmental."

But really it's not so much that I want
to preach to the choir

it's just that I hope there is a choir
and it doesn't necessarily have to sing

but more, hear, and it would be good
if the choir knew what it was like to be on food stamps.

I don't blame her for stealing
those things,

I've done it; taken toilet
paper rolls from the beach bathroom.

A woman in a park
swung her dead child for three nights.

I stay up till midnight
to instantly win a new grill

but what I really want is the free
trip to Hawaii.

I love Hawaiian rolls,
they're so darn sweet.

I hear Hawaii is no paradise,
the flying cockroaches,

but that flowery blue ginger
is like a purple heaven-bird.

I had a patient from Palau and that chick
was nuts but sweet like an Almond Joy.

The Pacific must do something
to create some chaos effect.

Maybe it's floating radiation.
Maybe it's crawling disappearances.

Maybe they just want their spoons
to not tarnish so quickly.

My daughter is upset because she didn't get a picture
of the prison's pristine garden as we drove by.

Sometimes we see basketball players in the yard,
nuclear white in uniform.

All it takes is one person
to describe you as mediocre.

You lie still and dull-colored
and think of that squealing skinned-alive rabbit.

Lie still and remember the way the Italian pines
shushed and curtained just for you

because you were only Italian back then and the fortresses
you built were in your backyard and not in your mind.

Peel off a vegetable's vitamin skin,
your stone-thrown Medusa

snake hair only gray and soft wires.
Peel off another month

on a Japanese woodblock-print calendar.
Cherries still blossom. Warriors float.

INSTANTS

The Winner

A hail-sail plunked on the hood of your truck;
a bullet of wind came through the crack
in the windshield to tie up your bad luck
tight like a prizefighter beaten to a pulp,
still trying to stand. The storm beat down,
ice-nicks in the metal, chasing you through town
in your already beat-up ride, hell-bound,
whiskey bent—like the dent in the hood
of your old truck—on destruction and rust,
curved to hold standing water and driving
dust, bent to skew a worldview thriving
on impaired vision, crooked lust. You held
the wheel tight, weaving between drops and stones,
threw yourself to the sunlight just beyond
the gray, beat the day.

Beached

The sea appears,
A blown sky.
You understand me!

O mediocrity;
A case of mistaken identity.
You understand me.

Twined sea-berries,
Understand me.
Taste the salt of bad news,
Phantom sea breeze says

Come here!
A second-guess echo,
The sound of blackberry waves.

Exercise Semantic

It's like a meditation, him out there
running by the water,

oceanhead barreled down
like the bull he was born under,

one machine with the rhythm
of that seawater, horns

cutting through salt air
like so many pierced

skins ripped open
to heal themselves.

Royals

We take the Mercedes out for the day,
wave to adoring fans who stand along
the roadside of Calle de Rio Quetro
all the way to his Concepcion seaside,

the king and his queen
because this is the good life baby
and don't we deserve it
and isn't it fair that the buttery leather of these seats

smoothes under our calloused hands,
dirty fingernails, like we belong to the other side
where we don't have to return the Mercedes to the body shop
where he works and eat expired deli sandwiches under the oak;

we wave away mosquitoes. He tells me
te amo para siempre and I say I love you too.

Lantana at Night. After the Bar

I ran over an alligator,
a giant behemoth of thud.
Surprisingly, he smelled like citrus lantana.

My El Camino, *El Terminator*,
mushed through mushy Florida mud
as I ran over the fragrant alligator.

I was an immediate eliminator,
though there was no blood.
And the night air smelled of weeping lantana.

I was a murderous nature violator.
My tires, crusted with crud,
carelessly smushed the alligator.

Moments before, I'd derailed a salivator
at the bar; maybe he begrudged
my smell like white lantana,

maybe he was a prestidigitator,
slipped into my drink some drug
and made me run over the poor alligator,
jealous of the lantana.

Econlockhatchee Song

O shadow figure of Mary's
white statue,
greet us as we come up
the banks at night,
the blackwater
pool of Shady Oaks Trailer Court.

Our ritual is to smack her face
we're not the least bit sorry
on our tiptoe home through the scrub pine.
We shush cataract-eyed baby possums
and locust trills. Blind swordsmen,
we feel our way through evening-length works
of mosquito song and swamp swims.
We have need of no vision.

Our Man sings his whiskey woe,
switch-whips us when we sneak back in,
finds us wet and muddy.
The saw palmetto scratches
sting less, sing more.
Sing the praise,
pray to our sinners.

Rust

Two twined on a balcony,
she believes
it love, wrought with iron twills,
 tendrils, balcony rail
 pressed into her face,
he is just that strong she cannot not stop

like arms holding her down
the first time, like wrought
 iron rotten, wet-gray
 weather inside the body
 of the word *no*
that oxidizes into nothing.

Surrender, Memory

- after Edward Hopper's *Room in New York*

Does she need
to say how she remembers
his hands on her sharp,
soft chin like pieces
of white cloth
floating, hands
moving the flushed,
pink round of the cheek
out of the way
to get to the mouth,
lips not letting
go until they were red
as the lampshade
lit up, electric,
hands like white flags
waving back?

Lunch Break

An hour at the Seaview Hotel,
again. She listened for the waves,
dream-swam away in warm saltwater,
far from where she was ten minutes before
when the waves still pounded, but inside
the room, over them.

A sip of water, her throat raw,
they put things back where
they should be, tidily,
ratty covers on the abused
bed, his red tie picked up
off the floor, keys,
lighter, silver change,
a gold ring, a cheap
wood nightstand.

Sometimes she would tie his tie for him, laughing,
standing on the bed behind him, her arms
around his shoulders to get the knot just right,
sateen material slippery in her hands,
her lips on the scruff of his rough neck,
her hands, her face in his hair, laughing,
pushing into him.

She held the ring out
to him, singled out his finger
like she imagined the priest
did six years ago, held his hand
upside down in hers, felt the meat,
muscle of it, her smell
that lingered on it,
the hand that twisted
in her hair, held her head down
on the sweaty pillow.
She wet his finger with her mouth, slid
the metal onto it, whispered
as she kissed him,
took his hand,
the circle of gold,
his finger, took it,
put it inside of her.
Another of their long goodbyes.

Hangover

Wake up throw up. Drive home, tight shirt lung-strangler,
I thought it might happen. Giant snail consumes small skinny girl
in dream. Man on hill watches, the protector,
she said so, the awake head knew it while the asleep head
played like a movie. A creek near the scene, the man on the hill is dead
in the water. He floats. Snail mushes, slimes the girl,
eats her. That's the dream.

My sister says dreams start as soon
as you fall asleep
(do not write about them)
(she's older than me)
but you only remember
the ones that happen right before you wake up.
I question
how she could possibly know
what brain scanner sees dreams,
what x-ray machine. Show a picture on film—
hold it up to the ceiling light,
see the illuminated dream-shape
giant snail eating a girl. See it right there?
My finger points to the snail's swirly shell, white like ghosts
on a gray sheet of x-ray film.

Seismic Activity

There is a ridge
in the short nail
on the ring finger
of your left hand—
it creates a line
like a cable's border,
like a curled strand
of her box-red hair
hung out the window,
wind in her teeth,
pink-nailed fingers
curled around the volume
button to turn up
Liz Phair's alligator
cowboy boots on sale,
the drive through
saguaro henchmen
to the Golden Gate strait.
You are tall and orange
in rusted suspension
 just above the water.
Look at the way you rise
in the center to collapse
on each side like some angle
of troublesome air.
Map out her tremors,
brace for defeat,
your right eye hurts.
You mow the grass.

He Can't Breathe, I Can't Hold My Breath

- Eric Garner chokehold, Staten Island, 17 July 2014

Life is so you only live once,
yo, so look inside his backward

civil choke headache—wait
for the bus, take asthmatic New York stock

of his currents and indices—wait
for rapturous misfire moments

of some historic difference, his static
neurons alone in personal public insignificance

as he unfolds into reverse manumission—take him back,
his breath hard to hold

like southern antebellum, suspended
mouth foam, no inhale. I exhale, goodbye July.

The Light, The Choir

The Trayvon Martin moment is just one moment in a history of racism in America that, in large part, has its underpinnings in Christianity and its history.

— Anthea Butler

Me and my wife Queenie have no children except the sleeping kind.
Maybe that nurse, Miss Lorraine, the one that takes care of Queenie,
maybe she has no babies too except the ones in Heaven,

maybe that's why she acts so crazy, so *cray* like my niece Sass says,
maybe that's why she talks about *Jesus*
and talks about that *guilt* and talks about she's *repenting*

and talks about the *Devil* like she's crazy like she doesn't know
she's down here on Earth with the rest of us. Ignorant as the day we were born.
I told her, I said, *Miss Lorraine, why do you have to talk like*

how when you were young you ran the streets of Tallahassee,
took on any man that wanted you and now you're paying for it, like when you
were young you had a nursemaid that looked just like my Queenie and she

washed your hair and cleaned up after you like you were a queen or something?
Something is we all have no children except the kind sleeping in Heaven
and my God of the Scriptures will forgive that man who shot that boy

in the hoodie and my God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
had a reason for the sickness that took me and Queenie's babies
and I hope to God that Miss Lorraine will forgive herself

for her sins and quit all that carrying on
cause me and Queenie just want some peace
and quiet to hear our angels in Heaven sing.

Jeremiah Denton Makes Love to the World

- North Vietnam, 1966

You blink your Morse code, signal us your story;
how low the moon, it hides away

like a fogged jungle treeline. We flawlessly trace
borders of smoke with calloused fingers, all dips

and curves, the torture in your lines,
the irons that sing the woe. Signal

us the solitary story, your secret language
so heavy-lidded, dotted and dashed;

O now how we understand our lowlight,
the nonsound, our flawed hearing

like a few minutes hidden together
in a hovel while the world goes blind.

Afternoon Interlude, In Cubicle

May Day mayday osprey
Honestly I want to shoot the thing
It will not stop, its causal claws
Outside my window
Screech
Scratching
A mafia in the magnolias
A siren like wires in the sky
Fish in mouth
Blood, *enfin*

Linguisticity

Dumb it down, slum
it. Succumb to the sound.

Voiceless bilabial stops
vibrate vocal cords.

Chorales voice three
features of articulation.

The voice
of labiodental

dirty things
as in the places

they like to play.
They tongue

alveolar trills
in their manner

of speaking. They sing
scientific round mouth sound.

Talkin' Crazy

This our broken-hearted
crazy day. We in awe, her crazy
Colombian Felipe, touched silver
barnacles on river rocks, said they were
like gems, crazy for the Indian River,
for the wind on it like her. We crazy, we say
that Mario, that crazy Rican, had a mouth
like a god, drove me crazy, like a god.
They ain't gon' change, girl. They crazy, girl—
but the moon's been hiding for a few days now,
maybe they're okay these days, for now, maybe
we're all okay, be okay for a few days, anyway—

A Circus of the Mind

- after Lawrence Ferlinghetti

a terrible island of the mind's soul
your abstract landscapes
the wing-tails of a spray-painted
'50-something Cadillac so
and so because it doesn't matter the name
the game of the jetstream
of oblivion wherein a wounded
wilderness dreams of bird nests
and old Italians sing on the streets
of San Fran
we are mindless prairies *in flattering*
falsehoods of sleep
the tender dogs huff and bay with belled
antlers on their heads

Slut Shamer

I stay in the shallows—
everyone knows
if fish are jumping
it's because something
is chasing them
plus I saw a fin so I know
there's a shark in the water
(my daughter says it's only my imagination)
but I know a guy who works at the hospital
who flies in helicopters with doctors
and he told me sharks are always
right on the periphery of swimmers
and I believe him
so I have a plan.
The eye poke is said to be the most effective.
I stay in the shallows with the seaweed
and when it brushes up against me
I tell myself it's only seaweed
not shark bait
and I can even eat this seaweed
if I'm ever stranded and starving,
it's amazing, I can eat it
with a little vinegar
or hot sauce,
but what about the other swimmers,
what if the shark bites someone.
I think it might bite that girl
with the bikini bottom going up her ass,
I can almost see her hooaha in front
kind of like the suit used to fit her
and she's hanging on to the last shred
of youth she has but in my opinion
time has not been a good friend to her
and I don't know, I guess she could've been
my friend at one point but who needs
kinda skinny kinda flabby friends so I'm afraid
the shark is going to attack her
because her female parts are hanging out all over the place
and he can smell them
but then I'm jealous because she has blonde hair
and why doesn't the shark attack me
(it's obviously a male shark
maybe a tiger or bull)

and I'm sure he's the mayor
of his underwater town,
I mean, these fish are jumping
like crazy for him. He must be super hot,
and you know, sometimes you're the hammer
and sometimes you're the nail,
so, hopes high, I swim out deep, big thighs
rubbing together like a wreck of chunky meat lures.

The Game

He eyes her in the WalMart shoe section
She's fingering five-dollar flip flops

He thinks about Emily
(The wife's name is always Emily)

But only because she's such a pain in the ass
The husband's name is always Jim

But not today because he's about to get a blow job
From the chick in the shoe section and she doesn't ask

Man she's hot and she's got a big mouth
Goddamn Lake Superior big

Enough to swallow him up in the back room
Behind two dirty gray doors that swing and slop

Back and forth behind tiny tanks of fighting
Fish they float at the top of the water suck dead air

Iridescent purple like this girl's toenails
He grabs the metal shelf full of boxes of Pine-Sol

Mountains of washcloths and not-quite Yankee
Candles that smell like a winter cabin

His vantage point dazzles (the crisp part of her hair)
This chick is good she's doing real good now

She coaxes him good he's swimming now
It's snowing now snow on the lakeshore

His drops of wetness he's careful
Not to touch her young smell like something

Sky blue this kind of thing really happens
In a WalMart storage room he just came

To buy some chips for the game
What was the name of the team he likes

Maybe he'll buy some charcoal maybe
He'll grill she gives him her number she hopes

He'll call her tomorrow she's got a great set
Of stemless wine glasses she's been dying to use

What Ever Happened to Heather

For here were tequila shots
and trivia nights
so finely served to us
on the finest of social
media sites, I think
we ignored the sadness
effervescing weekly into her curly hair.

And didn't we take her word as gold,
for there were tigers
under story-beds
and a blog of the finest
quality ego-written
cuss words, I think
we deafened ourselves
to the distant Twitter of some far off gun,

for pain is a doorway into the soul.
For we thought she invited us in.

O axes of Heather,
her Heather words,
susurrus of Heather,
Heather wine glass,
Penelope-Heather,
5K runner Heather,
sky of Heather, blue eye Heather,
the things we lost in the war
of Heather, the fire of Heather,
of overwintered Heather,
Heather wife, our Heather yoga sister,
how we longed to be
Heather, to follow
Heather migration patterns,
cook Heather paleo-cups,
wear a tiara as only
the how-to of Heather could,
for here we are abruptly
without her, nothing but a salient silence
of absence, the disappearing ghoul
of our incommunicado
Heather tomorrow.

For the myth of Heather,
for a friend is a stranger.

Tiffany Takes a Selfie

External connections pulse all up in this club.¹

A Lazarus body weeps for what makes it worth rebirth.²

Reductive representations of signals signify arbitrary significance.³

A tattoo in the shape of a felted bird equals permanent ennui.⁴

Phrases of three predictably tell how to how to don't do.⁵

The most important thing is the feeling inside that you're going to win.⁶

Gala in Dalí wears fiesta time on naked shoulders.⁷

We hang on plastic clotheslines like white cotton shirts.⁸

#Hashtag cigarette Valencia filter.⁹

¹ Grinding; feeling one another; if only for a few moments.

² The perpetuity of the Internet will keep a picture alive forever.^a

³ Can the inadequacy of language^b be replaced by the adequate language of the deuce in a selfie? Btdubs, nice nail polish, Tiffany.^c

⁴ A permanent picture of a real bird is more interesting than a permanent picture of an artificial one.

⁵ Fiction writers frequently write sentences in phrases of three;^d Tiffany is writing her autofictionography.^e

⁶ Believe in yourself, not your selfie.

⁷ Warped wife-selfies.^f

⁸ We blur into sameness.^g

⁹ Per Wikipedia (the most reliable source of knowledge on the Internet), “the hashtag symbol (#) is a type of label or metadata tag used on social network and microblogging services which makes it easier for users to find messages with a specific theme or content.” “Valencia” is a photo filter that people use when they take selfies to make themselves look good. Tiffany looks good while smoking a cigarette; she must post this selfie to Instagram so others will tell her how cool and good she looks. She will feel better about herself if many people (preferably 100+) tell her how cool and good she looks.^h

^a "Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all / Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know." #OdeOnAGrecianUrn.

^b Language is inadequate at times; it confuses relationships/people in general. All one has to do is look at a Field Service Postcard from WWI.

^c A "deuce" in a selfie is when a person takes a picture of herself showing the "V" of the peace sign; a popular selfie pose. "Btdubs" is slang for "btw" which is an acronym for "by the way." Because Tiffany is throwing a "deuce," we can see her nail polish in the selfie.

^d A rhetorical device called "tricolon"; the selfie generation is learning how to be human while living in these socially created tricolon media fictions.

^e A made-up word meant to mean a fictional autobiography.

^f Time persistently melts.

^g Someone asked me if there are such things as plastic clotheslines. This person has obviously never had to hang clothes on a plastic clothesline to save money. #SomePeopleShopAtDollarTreeSomePeopleDon't.

^h #HenryThoreauSaidTheBestThatYouWriteWillBeTheBestThatYouAre.*

*#IAmNothingWithoutYou.

Cemetery Flowers

I walk five hundred lines in my mind return to that story I've read a hundred times wonder how soon is now when will these drawers close right how now till black chalk images of murdered boys under floorboards fade into erasure how small we look when we die smaller than a fluttering wee grassquit wings tied to our sides the march of the wounded lost in a funhouse of nothingness an unheard throb of memory's scent of muddied and muddled histories dank against underground tombs and animal balloons Delta Dawn what's that flower you have on could it be a faded rose from days gone by did I hear you say love's unfolding dream is locked inside this tin of rosy powder that smells like your dead grandmother she was a drinker who wrote messages on paper napkins balled up in her dark coat pockets I use it every night move in the darkness like a sharp wind instrument but I'm only reminded of that John Wayne Gacy song a mellophone tone gone wrong with impatience.

Swing Split Scene

Here, on the hammock, is the truth of things.
She meditates, eyes closed, morning sun.
She rocks back and forth, to and fro like a child
on a swing, the sling's green and white-striped canvas giving
way to adult weight. Big trees hanging above move
with the ebb and flow of the wind
as she floats in the curve
of the hammock, a babe,
crook of its mama's bent arm.
The truth of her, her things, is here under the dancing
oaks, waving leaves wavering in the wind's gusty rhythms,
lusty rhythms of this place.

She begins the back and forth game she plays
as she swings, her brain fighting
*She shifts her weight gingerly, careful
not to topple the tense-strung fabric and overturn...*
her body, a duel to the death,
to the truth. She is a shadow,
*though the dewy dirt below the hammock frame
seems almost inviting. She tries to think before...*
her matter is over her mind,
her sensibility versus sense,
*moving her body, to control
whatever strange urges might come over the thing...*
her lust close, hard up against love,
this forever shuck to the left, the left,
*the body constantly defying her
to let loose, lose control, for a little bit...*
left, land of soymilk and honey in all its gooey
forms, freedom, forgiveness, to the left,
harmless, heaven-less, it's all a mess, in her head.
everything she owned in a box
to the left after he kicked her out. Her desires,
indiscretions, her sex.
*You're a cheater
just like your daddy, girl.*

This is her last lazy morning
under the oaks. The old, comfy hammock
is his, and he wants her to go. She moves
as the hammock's rusty metal chains
hold the fabric taut,

echo deep tuba bellows
with each swing back and forth.
She swings, waits, one last time, for the truth.

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