

Gallery 2: Slow History, Slow Context



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JOE SAFDIE

Empiricism and “Slow Poetry”

For years now, Zen had been living in a world where reality seemed to have been drained of all substance. Once upon a time, and he could still remember that time, authentic experience had been the default position, as unremarkable as gravity or the weather. Now, though, the authentic sounded a melancholy blue note as it receded, a Doppler effect induced by the speed of cultural change, as though sadly waving goodbye. There were, however, still exceptions to this general rule. Zen’s experience was that for every ten kilometers you traveled between Rome and Cosenza, you moved back another year into the past, finally arriving in the mid-1950s. Authenticity was not as yet under serious threat here, . . . back in the lost realm of the real. (*End Games*, Michael Dibdin, 113).

History is, by definition, slow, if not always slow poetry. Pound’s dictum of the epic as a poem including history springs immediately to mind – epics are always slow – but they’re out of favor these days. Of course, so is Pound.¹ An internet document called [“Neoliberal Poetry”](#) attracted some attention recently; it quoted “a recent conference at St. Marks” with the news that “It has become clear in the last 7-10 years that a poetry of quotation and citation in the Pound tradition is over.” (The argument, such as it was, went on to praise poetic and social communities of the Black Mountain variety, setting them against what it called the new poetic infantilism – it’s only intermittently interesting, but those who are interested in the “communitarian” strand of what Dale has written about Slo Po might check it out.)

What I’d like to spend some time exploring here, however, perhaps as an introduction to my own poems, is how a disinterest in history might be problematic in other ways besides the loss of poetic traditions – it has a little to do with the loss of empiricism that Aurelio Zen, one of my favorite fictional detectives, is mourning above. Now, empiricism was problematic even in the days of Locke and Hume in the 18th century (blank slates, anyone?), and I’m sure there are lots of poststructuralist critics – not to mention Flarfists

¹ Except at *FlashPoint*, an internet mag edited by Joe Brennan and Carlo Parcelli, whose [Winter 2008 issue](#) is about Ezra Pound and the current economic crisis – thanks to Ron Silliman for the link to that.

– who would argue that experience just isn't what it used to be in this media-driven and mediated age. But what do we do, then, with such commonplace assertions as this, in the introduction to a Shakespeare anthology I'm using?

. . . we have in Shakespeare's writings a remarkable breadth of human experience, analyzed and depicted with acumen and compassionate understanding. His characters fall in love, experience jealousy and rivalry, cope with parental obtuseness, . . . As they grow older, they often encounter religious doubt, go through the dark night of skeptical uncertainty and loss of faith, . . . They sometimes experience the total disillusionment of misanthropy and misogyny. (Bevington, *The Necessary Shakespeare*, x)

Or this, in the latest issue of *American Educator*?

But the humanities are distinctive, for they begin (and end) with a willingness to ground themselves in the world as we find it and experience it, the world as it appears to us – the thoughts, emotions, imaginings and memories that make up our picture of reality. The genius of humanistic knowledge – and it is a form of knowledge – is its continuity with the objects it helps us know. (Wilfred M. McClay, "The Burden and Beauty of the Humanities")

Most apologists for the humanities eventually get around to acknowledging that what they teach is a full spectrum of what it means to be human . . . including our immense capacities for depravity and immorality. The 18th century, in which Locke and Hume first generated their empirical theories, was good for that – the satire of Pope and Swift focused largely on the stupidity they found around them in their daily lives, the Goddess of Dullness, in Pope's *Dunciad*, eventually extinguishing all light and life on earth. They weren't just cranks and haters – they were also supremely witty and often hilarious – but they did consider themselves as citizens of the world, and felt free to comment, in their work, on what they perceived and experienced in that world.

I think many contemporary writers have shrunken from that particular assignment. The poetry I come across, often written with wit and facility and intelligence, seems not to be referring to any shared public space. And history, at least the kind I'm talking about, is also public. Gary Sullivan, one of the originators of Flarf, wrote (four years ago, on his blog [Elsewhere](#)): "A particular strength of poetry is its ability to accommodate nuances of

language use and thought. The more ‘public’ poetry intends to be, the less this particular strength is exploited.” I wrote back to him, objecting (perhaps with these 18th century writers in mind) that a practitioner might be able to engage public themes and still incorporate nuance and imaginative language, that these things needn’t be opposites. History, of course, has other virtues besides shining a spotlight on the constant cruelty and short-sightedness our species has exhibited – for example, much of Shakespeare and Milton and Dante is unimaginable without their historical knowledge, and ours of them – but it can’t be denied that its study is slow and, often, dis-spiriting. And if we can discover, through Google searches or tortured syntax or random combinations of words, silliness that entertains us or even momentarily diverts us, isn’t that enough? For that matter, why does poetry have to *perceive* anything? After all, there are ideas that come to us in other ways, like intuition, and association – “the poetry of witness,” as it’s sometimes called, is only one possibility. What’s the necessity for “primary sources,” even the ones made possible by our own limited sensory apparatus? Poets shouldn’t voluntarily put weights on themselves – what happened to “Leaping Poetry,” the quickness of associative thought? Why be such a drag, man?

There used to be a school of philosophy in Athens called the Peripatetics, which got its name because Aristotle liked to walk around while lecturing – (and walking, lest we neglect any chance at associating this with “Slo Po,” is one of our slowest means of transport). Here’s a summary from *Wikipedia* about what they believed:

. . . *matter* is the basis of all that exists; it comprises the *potentiality* of everything, but of itself is not actually anything. A determinate thing only comes into being when the *potentiality* in matter is converted into *actuality*. This is achieved by *form*, the *idea* existent not as one outside the many, but as one in the many, the completion of the potentiality latent in the matter.

The *soul* is the principle of life in the organic body, and is inseparable from the body. As faculties of the soul, Aristotle enumerates the faculty of *reproduction* and *nutrition*; of *sensation*, *memory* and *recollection*; the faculty of *reason*, or *understanding*; and the faculty of desiring, which is divided into *appetite* and *volition*. By the use of *reason* conceptions, which are formed in the soul by external sense-impressions, and may be true or false, are converted into *knowledge*.

Since this is written for an internet publication, I'll trust that some of you click on the highlighted links. Meanwhile, I know that poets have always been habitually inclined to the honey-headedness of Plato – for one thing, he's a better writer than Aristotle – but looking over this summary . . . is anything missing? This would seem to be a description of the world I live in, or would want to live in.

Four years ago I wrote, for *The Temple*, a review of one of Dale's first books, *American Rambler* – I saw it, along with Richard Blevins' *Fogbow Bridge*, as an extension of what I called "the Olson legacy," which, in part, I defined by quoting some of Olson's works:

. . . in "A comprehension," this same "wish-magic" becomes "the new post-European concept of soul as *psyche*; . . . the primary error of analogy as logic instead of image or actualness." The antidote to this poison was always the perception of and attention to minute particulars, "so that gesture and action, born of the earth, may in turn join heaven and hell" ("The Advantage of Literacy") – along with a new/old system of discourse in which "the words and actions reported are set down side by side in the order of their occurrence in nature, instead of by an order of discourse, or 'grammar,' as we have called it, the prior an actual resting on vulgar experience and event." ("Review of Eric Havelock's *Preface to Plato*").

And that's what history has always been to me, "an actual resting on vulgar experience and event" – it was that way in graduate school, when Ed Dorn got me to pay attention to more than just what was happening in the literary world (the latest grants, the latest jobs), and started me on an exploration of American and European history which hasn't yet concluded. It's slow work. Moreover, its recognition as poetry will probably outlive me.

Elsewhere in that last novel of Michael Dibdin's great detective series, Zen gets off a train in Rome's central station, finding it

both physically difficult and emotionally repugnant to battle his way through the riptide of people coming at him from every direction, empty eyes trained like a gun on the personal zone immediately in front of them, attention absorbed by the loud songs or little voices in their heads, fingers fiddling with iPods and mobile phones, all oblivious of each other and their surroundings, marching relentlessly onwards like the ranks of the damned. (153)

Those wired individuals, it seems safe to say, probably weren't listening to Will and Ariel Durant on their earphones. And they're a far cry from the living, sensate, exploring, perceiving individuals that we sometimes are (and that, if we're not, we can read about). Because really, what's the alternative? If you're not willing to take the time to explore the endless world of the dead, are you really even alive?

RICHARD OWENS

Love Song

tread the measure chosen
curiously frozen—Goo Girls
& the Reichstag went down

sun & sincerity
let it go down

close all in a circle round
Freddy Mac & Fannie Mae

Facial Abuse & Bangkokneon
catastrophe cleansing solutions

strike crisis staffing
securities exchange

concretized foreclosures
leveled—as many as
remember Milosevic

detritus reconfigured to match
game & sunset
so I might sing a love song

transmit through expansion
genital conditions
of cholera & careless spending

tan line likened to liberty
financed jewelry—barricades

I saw my love—an upended dividend
scarlet cheeks

conceit threaded through
measured verse

at home hustling
for a quick buck in the kitchen

they do—as we say—what

has always been done

I saw my love—down the drain
retainer fees

my love with rubber legs
climbing walls—you

don't in the evening
but in the morning force back

a bowl of dried fruit
to push provisions
to the limits of scarcity

exchange on the market
a text sexy as her legs

strawberries she says
are an erotic fruit

so to pomegranates split open
with the force of the casual

mail like bonds
junk like genitals

senators in open stalls
workers shoveling shit

let it go down

incarcerated—inconsistent
neo-Keynesian calamity
Fukuyama's end of history

she fled the scene
mean—like the average income

erectile injunction
big like pharma

sing for me a love song
entangled in Eros

deceptive spasm of flesh

rock right the rhythm

I've seen penises tall as towers
thrust up from the earth
through cracks & crevasses

lend me a tool
to expand & delight—outward
into the world

with all the force
of mechanized love

before bells ring & markets close
shut down the shelters

& into the streets every conjecture
soldiers commanded by semen

& the violence of ecstasy
wreck it—privates made public

this is a love song
calibrating distance
between face & fist

with all the love
of an abused predator

cowering in a space
no god can bear to see

just for you
a love song

pixilated transmissions
for you dearest

darling children
& a bin full of empty bottles

wired into the game
conquest of Canaan

dicks like dogs in the dirt

cultural anthropologists
live for the way you spread your legs

don't you recall Benny Hill
how erotic
those closing credits were

you wanted it
he promised it

enter your astrological sign
in an increasingly anonymous age

strut—your nightmarish gait
degenerate in an age
of surgically produced grace

into an ether
only convenience & privilege afford

sing for me Apollo
you who know love
only by way of war

who know defense contractors
locked in at adjustable rates

at precisely the moment levees break
homes tractored out with tides

& bears like Stearns pawing through trash
what any sensible woman wants

middle-aged men—rock steady
destroy her with your cannon

Arcadian Eclipse

Though they
have been punished

the word punish
does not exist in Mixtec.

In other words—money
does not grow on trees

nor do apples.
I see them

in supermarkets
where their value

sways & flutters
like trees in a tempest

Wayfaring Stranger

Shriek fled leaning
undermine the infirm

emancipatory shackles
firmly crack inside

archipelagos of mein
und ich the catalog

half forgotten half
dreamed possibilities

excoriated internalizations
given to lived shenanigans

creeks run down
as gravity demands

—lived maternities
crouch down liberties

excavated documentary
impulse bursts asunder

say nothing to nothing
something to nothing

nought where ought lives
systems bring symbols

to bear on bodies
dirty socks for a night

on the town where a town
can be equated with gold

there is nothing to say
where nothing says all

extend fingers outward
broken under heavy traffic

rattle—meager & meek
broken under barbed weight

roadside truth value
an equivalence

driven to drive nails
—mine for me—the little ones

irreparable ruptures
erratic power supplies

world dispatch—human price
snatched amidst further blasts

anxious—constant—tonight
tomorrow & tomorrow

libidinal accumulation of capital
produce for one another

sirens—exquisite—ambulatory
the borrowed hours

heady numbers duped
gossamer thread

death knoll
grassy—discombobulated

quarantined—be nice—it is
what cuts the lip

leisure & convenience
reclined prostrate—head over heels

sadness & the lonesome
lifeless landfill

gazes toward horizons
actively seeks a sign

a desire to make ends meet
brings no meat to the table

signs—subterfuge—space
canyon-like chasms

separate ape-like gestures
from a transgression

for which there are no words
so they are broken

to paraphrase: lowly ministrations
mark the will to care

bare-ribbed—fate beyond
market metaphysics

not as in the world but of it
uncompromising assemblage

sapped of strength
recovered & remounted

so sweetly sang
a summons given

fractured bits piled high
filial boundaries sustained

—muted dialogues
sinuous virtues sated on cud

evangelical white noise
mars curious frequencies

magisterial methinks—the character
of collateral affection

the question a metric of damage
officiating figures (unseasonable

—preside unthinking
over indigenous impulses

there were gardens—ancient Sumer
others lain down laid waste

a movement in the wind
exalted but not of the wind

tidings dost thou tether
ill will aerial bombings

marked from above
burly spear & brand

clamorous paeon to place
ingratiate the local

diminutive—dull thud
do not remove the rubble

parse out a passive voice
in the present perfect

shift & stagger under weight
regal beasts nae mair spare

a lad sae rare—stoop slender youth
wretched seeming clean

hang on—throw back—tear—hack
fair to whom—bound—unbeatable

FARID MATUK

[We talk of having a baby]

We talk of having a baby
 I hate that kid
turning your name
 I study now
 into mother
well after we die

Poem

Goodbye oughts
being no longer a young man
she wore my gold
 Italian horn
New Year's Eve
 (What do you think of such men?)
 one tells my mother
I need a horn
 Finger the calcium
 knob at my cheek
 what a three-line English
What if the city we love
 is Dallas in retreat
 Saturday morning quiet
turnabouts, big stores look away
 On the frame of our mirror
 two long-tailed birds kiss
 a flower between them
1974 to 2009, a good chunk
a few presidents

[My awareness heightened]

My awareness heightened
after a film of men hunting
one another alert to the toothpicks
I knock over from our liquor cabinet
while storing the glass sake set
we got for Christmas

July 18

We drive the parkway
fun skimming the tops of trees
salt my palm

an edge for first
contact settlements
everybody's house is ugly
dump the mirrored sideboard on the lawn

roam the earth, who knew
local lanes are going faster

forget this American freedom
if we were on a train right now
we'd be fucking in the bathroom

HOA NGUYEN

LEAP DAY NOTES (2008)

Oya

Winds of change the primeval
Mother of Chaos Queen of the Nine

Machete cuts through old growth (sword of truth)
needs to be done

She is the wild woman

Change

lighteningfiretornadoearthquakes Storms of all kinds

As the wind she is the 1st and last breath
carries the spirits of the dead

Adept with horses shrewd

Mother of the Mind Warrior Queen

Shaper of storms Fire Goddess
but also the wind

PUTT PUTT THE CAR

After you rescue all the baby animals
the cars can visit them driving into
the zoo saying "Yay"

But then
the game ends before the cars can enjoy
the families inside their enclosures

MOUNTAIN GORILLAS

Mountain gorillas one named “Future”
Newborn naming ceremony
Name her Future

Summer 2007 Mountain gorillas are 700
On Monday Hollywood celebrity names one
Future and a metallic gorilla taste in my mouth
getting out of the car

\$85.73 goods

Food and general wares

No gorilla wine named Guture A metallic
gallbladder taste and liver and spleen
and gorilla energy in the right shin

Survival energy shoulder blade
an effective saw shape
leaving gorilla shaped hole

Her face was rough Rock face or porous
Like a pumice stone Skin pores enlarged
with age

That’s Virgo the magma gorilla

The mama gorilla

Waking up the earth gorilla mountain gorilla earth

YOU CAN RIDE

You can ride outside the plane but it's scary
clutching your backpack Ride
on the wing all the way to Boulder
and then look for your missing satchel for hours
in the airport

Transitions and the part of yourself
that hates
you the other person
in the shape of the sweeper

Catch pasty butterflies for your critter cage

We've won the climate change bonanza
Mild summer lush lush gardens

For the first time in a century
the Chinese statue above the dammed lake
can churn its legs in the water
Male stature of a man
 Green legs churning

BONANZA

Bonanza Roll a big
money-barrel
 with bills sticking out
the “bung hole”

 Because you distract
me I’m writing:

 “The bread is never this fluffy”

We can have all kinds of bread
from the bank money to
 borrow to pay the money we borrow

A sense of propriety

Bare small foot Pegged pants

Keep writing this for you that wants

It’s never a game post-storm-wind
in my hair

A gnat annoys roaring airplane and
at least some rain from paranoia weather

EXERCISE #3 *from* ***COLLOQUIAL VIETNAMESE***

for Tuan

1. He works and studies at the same time.
2. He can speak French and German.
3. She is both beautiful and nice.
4. I work both for The Foreign Ministry
and for The University.
5. She is happy and sad at the same time.

BILL DUNLAP

Coyote America Action Block

I would never have gone to Europe with a coyote, or as a coyote. But there are other animals, eagles, for instance, as abstracted symbols of intellect and the West, or what the Indian wore on a headdress. This I would go with to Europe, as if a technical device had made me, as if a vortex had vomited out a rainbow spray from an enigmatic center. Of course, there would be echoes of dominating technology, would ride these, ride away from these as heartbreak or dampness, where sad stairs creak under weight of ill bodies, persons, I mean, living alone in damp minds, sad echoes chambering within. A moiety competent engaged by our king, a soldier, his feet on curling rails to carve the ice, himself as though dunked in blood, the blood of others, and this is the spirit of fat, of energy, I mean, against the which the triangle, as crystalline form, but in molding thus, we have only unmolded molding, the golem or glebe, the semi-organic godless beast of Prague, seeking this connection unraveled from Cabbalistic sleeves, Talmudic matter without form or outline, turtle doves and guilt, gilded cardboard gifts from fighter pilots, as if these trivial rags could somehow make up for all the horror. The artist said, "The fabric has brought me back to the fold." The coyote embodies the cycle of physical torch, of light growing weaker, shadows longer, concerns of value, really, necessitating a theory of value, or a theory of sculpture, for they are one, molding, but we cannot theorize, at all, for that's our problem, we cannot think, at all, at all clearly, for when one starts, a clear one I mean, a bitter gall wields a hammer cut with knife, and then matchbox goes the hope of sense at all, as the devil thigh bone juts out sniffing earth for pussy or cake or

some such nonsense to drive us from our ordered halls, from our decorous minds, our hoses, linens, and rat traps. My brown gloves represent, the flashlight represents, the felt represents, bullshit, for nothing represents, and one cannot throw a glove to represent a hand, for one simply throws a glove. You may think you know afflicted thinking, exerted money, tyranny of organ necessity, but my organs churn in turbine rushes like castle gates collapsing on plague victims, so that in merely a matter of human time the stink carries off the failure to neighboring hordes, huddled in huts against the rats of darkness, horse eyes for ears, their gnarled earth hands reaching for some anchor on a spinning globe, their garlic breath quenched in straw, and even poor hygiene in plague time of war cannot stop the fondling, longing for moist warmth and relief worth, apparently, any risk. So the very being of western rationality is, after all, merely a beard to emulate, a clock bird, who, shown it as a cave of bile pools reflected, can construct it, game like, and stick to it, merely because they themselves are happy punch clocks. While the fruit of all dalliance, the concocting ones, I mean, they, the mud houses on bookshelves, the firing chaotic threads, the, but, really, this cannot be named at all, but is only always out of reach of meaning at all, those mystics, I mean. They go down, forgotten under, but even in going down there is this confounding enigmatic all, ALL.

MARINA LAZZARA

A Letter to Dale Smith

Dale-How interesting. I've been involved in the Urban Farming movement, the Bicycle Community and the alternative music scene here in Frisco for some time now and have continued to write poetry. What you are talking about is what these communities have offered me for years now. These communities are full of socially involved, creative individuals who address their actions and art in terms of the community and their environment while also being true to themselves as internally evolving beings. (yes, of course there's exceptions, and competition, etc. as well) I have deliberately stayed away from the Academic world and the publishing world, finding them both institutions of the forces of Capitalism that have clogged my brain with competition and the ambition of legitimacy & materialism. Not only that, it all seems to cost something: money or time spent away from writing AND community. I say this without judgement. It's just something that has worked for me. Only recently since I'm more homebound with a baby and probably going through somewhat of a midlife crisis (heeheehee), have I started to send my work out again, but I live very frugally and am limited to that which has no reading fees, have alienated myself from poetry circles and so the process is often lonely, seriously. Whether I'm published or not, it's still somehow unsatisfying.

What you are writing about here is an important evolution of "the institution" in our social makeup. But you're also talking about two other important things that came to mind for me: 1. The practice of DIY (Do It Yourself) practiced by such groups of artists/activists like Surrealists or Punk or the Anarchist scenes in Urban places and which has been ignored or scuffed to the side and ranked as unprofessional or lazy by the Academic/Published/Signed/Gallery Supported artists, unless co-opted on Capitalist terms to be deemed "marketable", "sellable", a new Trend, a Cool product. 2. The evolution of consciousness expressed through the language of poetry, but in the language of WRITTEN poetry, for this all only applies to that which is of the page. This last point intrigues me most, as basically my reaction to your analysis of academic and the publishing world poets to become simple, more responsible consumers and producers is basically just long overdue. This should be a call out to visual artists and musicians as well, who flood the world with "products". To me this isn't just a reaction to a shrinking economy or damaged environment, but a change in an attitude about Status and Hierarchical arrangements in the art world, as well as our overall concerns about daily life as Human Beings in a consumer society.

I recently started to edit a tabloid journal called Plastic Ocean, which gathers writing about our changing relationship to Nature and our actions as consumers & artists. After receiving several crazy quotes for what was at first going to be an Anthology, I decided to compile it in a handmade book. Since I have a toddler these days as well as work part-time, this felt heavy and time consuming. So I have chosen a newspaper print tabloid design because 1. I can (not really) afford it and 2. It is the most biodegradable product I researched! I also began to like the idea of the Poet as Journalist. Remember that the poet (or troubador or bard) in preliterate times went from town to town singing the news of the

neighboring town, the gossip, internal conflict, weather reports, that which effects the listeners' lives, etc., as well I'm sure as pure entertainment from life's daily routines. They were the messengers. The time lifters and expanders.

Otherwise, I like the idea of a Slow Poetics. Having done a lot of reading and writing on Emily Dickinson's work, I always thought her work a Slow Poetics. I wonder how language has evolved up to this time in history, besides the obvious due to the computer and widespread literacy of the English language. Not the evolution of it's use, per say, but of what we've worked our way into with it's potential for deeper understanding of a world where technology has evolved faster than our own imaginations, really. I think the existence of Spoken Word Poetry has a lot to do with affecting the Poetry of the Page, where Spoken Word has a driving force that dances, is more physical, a Slow Poem on the page walks one's sense of time through water, and then may float. And yet I wonder if poetry of the page has always been slow, the invention of the printing press making us self-conscious and dropping our thoughts from time to the page. This is what the poetic language is catalyst of, sinking itself inside and in between layers of time and meaning. Maybe our Culture of Speed has detached us from this. Maybe there is a call in us all to go back to basics, not in a shabby, drop out kind of way, but a conscious, determined, empowering manner. Or maybe we aren't going back, but discovering something we haven't yet conceived. It just feels like something familiar.

So much to think about. Such exciting times as these. Times in history when definitions envelope in and out and over and around and scatter themselves with new cultural influences and ideas, roles of artist, worker, partner, leader being looked at, when our actions and concerns are reevaluated both intellectually and from the heart. A thinking heart. Yes, let's move toward a thinking heart. As a poet, I want to keep to the slow road where the pulsations of the inner ear are human history. A blink of an eye can't compare. Although many may feel these as dark times, there is I feel excitement in the possibility of new social relations and unexplored creative places.

Peace to you and your family. And thanks for the thoughts. .

Slow Down! It's Round! (Chorus from a song I wrote with my old band Poetiks a few years back)

Marina Lazzara
marinapoet@yahoo.com

The Place that Opens Up, the Dragon

is a brook
A cult whisper and it closes
Filtered juice in an acre acorn
And more or less a cultural twist

If its money for a fortune or fortune is a field
To make immortal all this jumping around
On a tightrope
Bordered, bound to make A to B a straight line

The difference, if any, between now & then
The biodifference
Digesters, recyclers
Whatever passes
Here in green
And in green before
A townie now, a move
As urbanity; an era
While my foot rocks the babe
& the Frisco season
Teases and turns & lastly you're
Remembering nothing too important or benign

Swing that stomach
Gravel mass this floor some more
Debris in sites industrial force the evolution
That won't set these strawberry feet down some more

Echeum builds borders &
The blue haze point
The sky is eternal
And wounded and
Sleepy in my eye
How the most sun on my face
Is my neck and my name

Handprint in dry wall
The pebbles made out to hearts
A crawl

some days the sky opens in
other places but the sky

Blue South Staging

Blue staging caught
A fluke, a gorgeous gift, an
 independent suspect
To know
an anchored arrival of
 walls as real lawful
Sounds that digest
 a great vision
As though those who are chosen
 are mean and vicious
And incredibly tall

Pressure is the lake-wood grove
 the unprepared responsibility
Of some sand spring or another
 as if the world at its bus-
Fare, silent, roaming, carefully
 fixed in a kilowatt of harmony
Elated to be born and births
 daily into
What you are about to see
 as fierce
 noise as night
Fast around the ribcage--
 nothing for silence
but Robbery
 plentiness & an afghan wig

BROOKS JOHNSON

Untitled

I [Loomings]

Loom of citylit clouds back and forth
walking with a winter sunstroke aimlessly, slack
jawed. The woman who lives in the busstop.
Chicago and Damen
In its latitude and it's longitude.
Where we believe it. covered head to toe in white cloth
, a makeshift coma,
clinging to what warmth is there. rend hair
rend skin breathe shallow, fallow soy-sown
eyebrow ridge. O wintery swamp. Feign sleep
all, all, all the weight of an iron lift bridge on
the south end of the city raising to let a yacht
pass under.

Heading out to Lake Michigan
heading out to the gentle seas
of wealth, smearing the keel
with crows blood, writing a poem
there,
maybe

A sunburnt calf resting on a box of pastels
A sunburnt calf resting on a box of pastels
on the whitewashed deck. A sunburnt calf
resting on a box of pastels on the whitewashed
deck in the bright sun attached to a man. A
sunburnt calf resting on a box of pastels on the
whitewashed deck attached to a man dreaming.
A sunburnt calf resting on a box of pastels
on the whitewashed on a whitewashed deck deck
attached to a man dreaming of Ma Rainey. A dream of Ma Rainey
resting her head on the calf of her lover. Her lover laying on
her belly. The sunburnt crests of waves. Palpitations.
Ochre turning bluish over thousands of years from the moisture in the rocks.

II [Eurydice]

The tea takes to the water
in its small thro at in yr
small thrown voice, orpheus.
holy these jumbles of match
sticks, unignites, full precessional
elephants adorned with teakwood
head adornments, moths laying egg s

where they will, royal birth (s)
royal jelly. Poorfolks laughing
poorfolks building their own coffins;
tending to the bees, tending
too their sweet fingertips. One another
in the nesting doll geometry
of memory. The path of electrons
is the path of electrons.

III [Space]

Due to some delicate
bow in its molecular
structure

a protein de- natures.

(thread and ash)

(the chambers and the winds)

A grammar of the telescope; on the crook
of yr elbow in (its vastness) saying:

“I’m not” or “It’s not” or

“let’s us lay here and listen to the suttry box”

The birds’ being; no better for it.

IV [Apple River; Lethe; Jordan]

Three catterwalls from the tall river grass

three steps from the tall river grass

to the rock where I lay my head;

three heads in my head on the rock

as I doze off to sleep

When I woke up again, a muskrat disappeared again
into the water.

V [Marche]

There are armies-- I don’t

know how fortunate-- that

invade with the returning monarchs.

And wondering “who’s hand is that holding her hair?”

The air around us changes holders.

The baldness of any given arboretum

[a smell of talcum somewhere]

bone dust in the bed of the Euphrates

There are armies--

I don’t know how fortunate--

That invade with the returning monarchs.

Oh, the pollencollecting collecting on brows,

helmets, boots, and nosetips.

VI [Renga]

by scott pierce, david chirot, an unnamed one, an unseen hand

a verb is not always

a god. which is untrue

(i.e. 'being').
the poem is the vein
in the muscle on
the minds. bones
warmed as they are by
being cupped in his hands
the flakes of snow like huge butterflies wings
crickets--
only once do they
interrupt each other
narcissus in the cold;
reflections don't stay still
for long. shivering.
VII [Burn yr self up completely: An Allegory]
At the confluence of
the Kennedy and
the Eisenhower,
in spring rushhour,
[well, it was Autumn, really]
Malachi Richter lit
himself ablaze for
a poem. The poem
was called No More Poems.
VIII [your]
slowly eating
a plumb; you
came to mind

Poets of the World

for sun ra

...

Hale Bop is real
and it is the
internet
Walt Whitman
invented discovered
the blurb
desafortunadamente,
martians, lovers, russians, dreamers
Today is Tuesday
Decembre 30th
It is 41 degrees in Chicago, 3:60
I swear to god
A poetry imploded
somewhere
(the supercollider in Bern)