



Ahadada Books

Chapbook

A Labyrinth of Visions

poems by Bruce Stater

Bruce Stater



In 1992 Bruce Stater received a B.A. in English and American Literature from the University of California in San Diego, where he studied poetry and performance under Jerome Rothenberg and David Antin. He went on to graduate studies at the State University of New York where he flirted briefly with the idea of a career as university professor, adjunct teaching literature there and film at Barnard College, Columbia University. He left Stony Brook before completing his dissertation, but was granted a terminal M.A. in English Literature. Following his diagnosis of schizoaffective disorder and several difficult hospitalizations beginning in 1999, Bruce's interests shifted toward political engagement while his performance and writing began to focus on the phenomenology and social experience of mental illness. Between experimenting with performance strategies on the streets of New York City and participating in a series of ephemeral "collaberrations" with TENTATIVELY, a cONVENIENCE, he took on a more conventional acting role in Jennifer Montgomery's film *Threads of Belonging*. In 2004 he received a second M.A. in the teaching of English from Teachers College, Columbia University, where he acquired a deeper understanding and commitment to the principles of a radical constructivist pedagogy. At the outset of 2006 Bruce returned to California and a few months later became committed to working with individuals diagnosed with severe mental illness. He currently resides in Oceanside California with his wife Lori of twenty-two years.

Since 2002 Bruce has produced several collections of poetry, each touching in different ways upon the experience of trauma, loss, abandonment, psychic reintegration, and psychotic semiosis. They include: *Wound Flower Heart and Memory-- Poems for Paul Celan*, *The Language of Angels*, *A Labyrinth of Visions*, *Shaman-Machine*, and *What Happened*. Of these, *A Labyrinth...* is the first to be published.



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The Journey of Metaphor & Remembrance

Say the poem is a journey
taken with silent walking sticks
on a path strewn with memories
deaf, dumb,
blind & beyond measure.
Its mouth filled with words
its pockets filled with stale bread.

Say it is an elixir derived from chlorophyll
or the royal jelly of expressionistic bees.

Say its stops & turns are towers, shrines
or little discomforts in sleep.
That each of its shafts pierces
a separate element of dream.
That its bewildering sunlight
is a glittering city where ecstasy dances
hand in hand with death.

It was something I went
looking for.
I was afraid of getting
lost. & so I hid
in the island of branching voices
illuminated by the ubiquitous pathos
of forgetting. Something had
torn a hole in my heart
like a leaf, extended finger,
or bone. & so I stuck
to the honey of something
heavy & eternal—
a breath where celestial light
fell in spurts
dampening the pain
of the infinite unmooring.

Say that it is
or say that it isn't.
Say that its exhibitions of false skies
are symbols of a catastrophe
at the dead ends of streets.
Say that its arrangement of white
sticky sugar skulls
is the hypnotic process of forgetting former lives.
That its burnt & empty homes
are the paralyzed angels
in the next century's enactment
of Paradise Lost.
That its black tarantulas are seedlings
or the trials of an affective disorder &
that its iridescent scarabs
are the ozone above a chronic facultative storm.
That its conscience is a giant
in the form of a dragon guarding the treasure
of deceased gods.

I felt my existence
pressed against me



like a heel
piercing the grain
of the bark
of a fruitless mulberry tree.
I remember it from childhood
when its flesh stopped
falling & its leaves
turned a color of brilliant
unfed reason
that blistered in laughter
at the raindrops
which fell from the blue-
silver patina of branches above.

Say so much of its
weight that it sinks
ten times
into the river
traversed by smoldering bridges.
& that the ash
of these bridges turns to bone.
& that inside these bones
floodlights surge
horizonward
into the eclipse
of solar meaning.

I looked forward
to it
where dwelling
circled
in the sky
in the form of a hand.
My hair hung heavy
at my side
like the muscle & bone
of a being drawn
on a page outside of time.
My tongue wagged
this way & that
inside the continent
of my mind.

Say it is circle, screen, or vessel.
Or that its round is flat
& drifts in-between
this broadstone
& that clenched idea
of a terrible god.

My arms weren't what
they used to be. When
I pointed to a star or rooftop
angry dogs barked in the distance
while the shrill whistling
of trains drove me further away
from home. Into the hands
of enemies who advanced
on all sides
in signs,



light, doors, baskets, empty casements,
hallways, grass, & mirrored reflections.

Or say it is earth, sun, star, or moon
the purple veil between
this realm & the next,
or paralyzed boat adrift upon
the black sea of wintered orphans.

Say it is the alchemical soup
one swims through in a dream.

I saw a light at the end of a tunnel
which grew in distance
the faster I ran to it.

I was in the back seat
& found that my vehicle
drove on faster & faster
completely out of control.
Each of the immense clocks
in my room had turned
an insane color of red.
My heart palpitated
like the motion
of a fish pulled
from lake, stream, or sea.

Say it is the daylight of fissure
& sunwheel
or the darkness of
the muteness of moonlight.

I learned to
hunt & play
in the shimmering starfoam
of darkness--
I've heard the hyena &
the tokay make noise
by moonlight. In the
circular music of their mouths
my own screams ceased
& I plunged into the depths
of their secrets.

So let us say the poem is moonlight.
& in it a litany of spider webs.
Say black candle flame,
say rotten sky of stars
say swarm of unrest
then say bruise & broken bone
since it is easier to say that
it is fleshthrong
than that it isn't.

I wandered beneath
the dome of stars
suffering the defeat of
naked rosaries
& the ground flesh



of mother-of-pearl.
& I tripped over the flea-ridden
questions
& lice-infested answers
beneath the silver glow
of moonlight.
In noise & answer to noise
in flowering echo
in fruit laden well
in the seedlings of cavern, grotto,
& locked room
providing dim eyes
for the minds in which
I found myself
as one within.

Say it is asylum
or the perfumed terror of boredom
or simply the jasmine scream
which blossoms & fades
in the dim season of oblivion.

Or say that it is hungry
& opens its blind little mouth
in a cry raised for food.

Say it speaks with humor
because it survived.
Say it speaks in silence
because nothing really happened.
Say it speaks in darkness,
through the spider's web,
because it is still a bit confused.

It was hot
under the eternal blinding gaze
of the Sun,
but I still felt a shudder pass
through me,
as if I had awoken from a dream
& were no longer prince,
queen, or horseman.
The more I ate
the thinner I became.
& so I buried my
hands beneath a confused
tree, hoping to spare those
drawing mandalas at the beach
the agony of committing
further crimes.

It listens.
It speaks.

To the industry of beneficent
others.
Of hope perhaps,
or the dream of an uvular & unconscious
utopia.



Too seriously of what is half-known.
Not the lives of the despondent saints.
Not the history of unhappy books.
Not the geography of sheep or birds of prey.

Of what then?

I repeated what had already been spoken.
I broke bread between my bicuspid.
I spun in molten laughter & the embrace
of the carbuncular sun
& raised my fist against the certainty of death.
I plundered the tombs of the Pharaohs
& slew monsters in the forests of Arden
or some place whose name I can't recall.
I promised clouds I would disentangle them
from dark sky, rescued lambs
from the slaughterhouse, rediscovered
the divine harmonies that echo through gutters.

It listens.
It speaks.

Of the self-inflicted wound.
Of the society of clawed reason.
Of the facets of the prisms
of unrestrained desire.
Of those lugubrious half-lives
threaded through our own.

Of the fossil
& the decay of youth.
Of first meetings
& of petrified & borrowed speech.
Of social contracts
& the figure of mothlight.

Say also that
it resists the urge of order,
eluding the definition of crystals, starfish,
& the curiosity of the platypus.

& still I sensed
a thin blue order swelling
outward & inward
binding word-gap to gap-word,
silence-form to form-silence,
& rupture-pattern to pattern-rupture.

Then say its silence
is a frozen eye fixed upon
those silver stars that
refuse to obey the laws of time.
Say it lies in the brilliance
of those anarchistic constellations of becoming
whose metastable fires commingle
like blazing chimeras in the throes of passion.

I turned
in the little boat which floated



nimbly on the sea of sense.
I felt something uncommon lay beneath my hand.
It might have been a leaf
or a flower in flames,
but it had the smooth skin of an earthworm
& spoke in a language brought back
from the third circle of hell.
That language crawled under my skin
until it rolled & turned
into something a thousand times older
& slower than language.

You cannot describe its gesture
its dream
& so you do not try.

& so,
turning on the road paved with stones,
you imagine that which comes before
& after you.

I questioned the journey
alone & sought out others.
I searched for a word
which would drive me mad.
I looked in silence
to the whispering palms
& the sand which passed
through my fingers.
But the sand kept falling
& the palms spoke in
broken lies girdled around
dim stones whose silence approached
the intoxication of the prehistoric.
& without names I passed into
the oblivion of the glug-glug
& the labyrglossorinthia.

& so,
turning at the edge of abyss
you say the poem is that
rainbow bridge
which unites the inner & outer spheres.

Though how this is so
& exactly what it means
you can only guess.

& so,
before the boat on that sea
is overturned by the waves,
before its riddle
is dangled once again
in the face of a frowning sphinx,
you say it intones the seekers of visions,
or raises a ziggurat to
the broken bones of Osiris.

& I paused there
for just a moment



in sympathy
to the god of death
who diverted me
back into myth,
into the flesh of story
which stretched out its arms
& parted its lips
in offering of embrace.

& so,
resisting the path
of this fork in the road,
this first sip of wine,
this promise of love,
you say more abstractly
its enchantments open closed doors
& locked boxes.

Say it speaks of the wide-eyed dreamers
whose every ray of sipped sunlight
dribbles from their lips.
Whose stories are fatherless,
homeless, reft of age & place,
severed from earth, & careless of their wreck.
Whose lives are blessed with loneliness,
longing, & death.
Whose dialogs of cruelty & kindness dissolve
the pacts that others have made
with untried devils.
Whose heads radiate with nimbuses of orgone.
Whose flesh sticks to their bones
across the eons
in which others dissipate
into idea, memory, & pure emptiness.
Whose beards grow white overnight
in anticipation of winter.

Let it testify
to those driven mad by God
accident or fate.
Those unskilled in magic
who listen to the night wind
& hear the howl of the hyena
& the bark of the gecko.
Those arrested & dismembered.
Those married to the shadow,
whose pain is sweeter than delight.
Those who feel the energy of animals
inside their minds.
Those brides & bridegrooms
of the cross who come to believe
& disbelieve that miracles lie outside
themselves.

Let it sing
of their nadir darkness
& the zenith stars
lost in their spheric music,
beating time to every heart that hates
or loves or mourns or casts its dice



against the curb of irrational gutters.

I conversed
of the height of the steeple
the depth of the cavern
& the level of water.
I struggled to unlock the meaning
of meaning & raised my fist
to the insanity of terror, hunger,
& war.

Already, you seem to know
of whom I speak
& greet me there halfway
at the crossroads
on the path of prosthetic fantasies
paved with truly human stones.

My course converged
with yours
at the intersection of the outskirts,
the borders,
the vicissitudes of chaos.
At that point sought out
by the seekers of visions.

The seekers
those credulous waifs
in search of a polestar
which will guide
their becoming.

With them
I branched into the dim
gray light of ambushed devotion.
Of angular seeds.
Of what's worthy
to be grasped.
Of the calendar of this prison
of flowers.

Who are wounded
those beings of slack faith
from birth,
perhaps from the outset
of thin-lipped time.

Abducted by negative
metamorphosis
to the island of waiting.
A bit drew blood from their lips
& tongues.

Who are snails in search
of the speed of machines.
Angels with burnt wings.
The playthings of those
who reside beneath bridges.

Their feet were set in darkness.



Their hands
were steeped in blood.

Lost, their forms are so darkened
that childhood flees when they draw near.

& surefooted
I advanced
toward them
through the rainbowed teeth
of masked & skeletal abyss.

Treading inward & outward to
those lights of light
beacons of transfigured becoming
whose blossoming
pulses
with the purity of a lost paradise
or dessert of strawberries & cream.

The sole & self-subsistant ones,
who are sung & celebrated into being
as children of atoms, feathers, & fur,
brothers of winter moon,
& sisters of summer grass,
cousins of homespun concoctions,
& locusts & hair.

& still I paused at the entrance
of the poem's dark wood,
at the circle of its gate.
I kept searching my pockets
for the keys which would
unlock its secrets,
kept returning to those crumbs of stale
bread which even the ravens
had rejected, which would rot
beneath the laughter of the black sun
or petrify at the touch of dawn.



The Seven Gates of Hades

But before retracing the trail
you have already made with those
crumbs,
with that ball of golden twine,

you press the ashes
of the blue-green past
to your mouth,
the prayer-coffins spin
the knots of unknowing
around your wrist,
silent wrist
which speaks in burnt sign
called Footsoldier
of Death.

I was frozen in the mad love
of an immense spring of broken symbols.
I turned & twisted within the circle
of ravenous longing to know & unknow.
Dark birds in silent trees
lashed me with their incomprehensible siren songs.

You unlink understanding
through the aorta,
press your wishes
to the measuringboard
of the wheel that turns
through the half-image
of imaginary sky. Converse
with the orange Sun
which tells lies of the leaden seas
beyond Ithaca.

Home was a deep red wound
of eyes that throbbed with the glow
of a toothache. Eternity was
an interminable knot of ash-blackened wire.
Song birds mocked the shrill peep
of my broken words. Light
hung heavy at my side.

You traverse the maze
unwinding silence
in that ball of ancient twine
which passes between the shadows
of scylla & charybdis,
madness & its sister, truth.
Until maze folds into labyrinth
& labyrinth unfolds silence into word.
& the words are signs
which insist on the tenuous quark of idea.
& the ideas are vectors
which raise their quivering fingers to the stars.
& the stars are imaginary beings
which have forfeited
the existence of the nameless unknown.



I passed into the depths of a secret.
I stood at the edge of the gate of worms.
I ran back & forth in blind alleyways
led this way & that
by the stench of putrid birds.

& you row grey-eyed
into nothingness
through the gap
between the great chasm
& the little bitter almond
which appears in mid-thought--
the promise of the medusa's smile.
& you row
past the flags
in the desert of uprising
flailing before the king
of unthought & moment.
You keep a shadow
which began in the origin
of nightstrob
& settled in noplac
with which you train the hydrangeas
that strive-crawl around the root syllables
of mouth, eye, & prostrated sign.

I limped on broken legs
through the garden of memory.
I could not determine true from false
or terrible death from dream.
I started in my sleep
between moth-eaten sheets.
It was summer & winter--
I couldn't tell which.
I was as old as every one
of the voices which crowded my mind
with their crusts of bread.

Say to them of the heartswell spring.
Say their songs are designed
to tear skin from muscle
to tear muscle from bone.
Say their songs unite us in vision
over the expanse of awful separation.
Say they unite us in love
over the desperation of irreparable loss.
Say at night they shake through our limbs
like the death-rattle consumed by dragonflies,
exchanging eye & mind
with the sooty ashes of the deceased soul.

I followed the corpses of pigeons
to abandoned doorwells. I fed
the rats which tunneled through passages
& gathered at the shore. I
kept searching for the crazy balance
between slavery & the thunderstorm of brooding abyss.

& perhaps you sense in the drama of such
language



that you have entered Hades.
& perhaps you are right,
& being so,
you raise questions
of love, death,
verbal contracts & the return
of silent stones.

I died once in the arms of a torment
which had closed its eyes of love.
I died twice in the blind scream
of the madness inside of madness.
& twice again beneath the wings
of terrible angels
who strangled me with thoughts
that swarmed through my mind like angry locusts, hornets, or wasps.

& five times you circle
in the brimming swarms of Bardo
in the great throng of a hundred
thousand buzzing electric voices
which are meat
& teeth
amidst the insect-spraw
of conspirators
who would devour
the crumbs of your birth
& bathe in the perfume
of your sex.

I learned to scream in the circle of the unknown.
Where words sat like hungry ghosts
at the back of my throat. I jangled keys
& coins before the mouth of the angel of the void.

& you scream before
the corpses which hang
in the windows
the writhing serpents
which orbit the sun
& you eat bitter ashes
from the world
consumed in fire
the bitter ashes
of books, of friends
of thought
of philosophical flesh

& I fed the rats with my hands.
& I abandoned my shoes to the water
& swam in the river of ice
praising the three goddesses of death
who returned to me their promise
of embittered love. & I opened
doors with the keys of my tongue,
of my mind, of my sex,
& my sex opened to the spiteful angels
& my mouth opened filled with the words
of the cruel daemons
& my mind opened



like the pages of a book of flies
& the flies swarmed around my flesh
like the rats I had fed with my hands.

& when the door closes
& leaves you in darkness
you know you really know
& the scream stifles inward
& the creak will not flag
the creak of darkness
of hole of wasted skin
that peals & strips itself like
layers of an onion
the nudity of your innocence
that howls like the sociality
of siamangs
that scrapes across the bone
& grinds its jism
into the blood which pulses
beneath your eye
& you know you really know
that language is ruined
that earth is ash & rust
that memory sucks toothless
on the stone of swollen
nothingness.

& each word I spoke turned to stone.
& each stone hung frozen in silent space.
& the silences rotted like meat
fit only for carrion birds.
& the putrid stench of rotten meat
haunted my dreams with its laughter
of dark angels.

& when the door closes
you open your mouth
to scream
but the scream its stifled
& stopped by beings
who cram their word-bits
into your throat.

& the doors of the first gate slammed shut.
& the doors of the second gate slammed shut.
& the doors of the third gate slammed shut.
& the doors of the fourth gate slammed shut.
& the doors of the fifth gate slammed shut.
& the doors of the sixth gate slammed shut.
& the doors of the seventh gate slammed shut.

& the alcoves of the great room inside the room
suddenly grew dim in a way
that confused the possibilities of guilt & desire.

Flowering & sore-footed
you make your way
festooned with hooks
of rusted metal
to the Pont Mirabeau.



& you examine the eyes
of cruel animals
at the entrance of temples.
& you float willfully
over the horrors of war
of the light ground by
the saboteur into grains
of pain that grasp the stillness
of rejection with the ink-venom
of their fine spittle.

I wandered through the daylight
of crows.
At night the owl
screeched over my head.
The queen of delusion
tore the harp from my hand.
& the riddle extended its
narrative
beyond the throne
of the cocoon's memory--
beyond the slit
of the wound that
danced & shook
its tongue its eye-
full of blood.

To you all the names.
To you it came.
To you the years, the fingers torn in the wheel.
To you, the blossom of eyeless dreams.
To you, the yellow mouth
of a thousand lost islands.
To you, the leprous scabs of gathering.
To you, the shattered recitation of prayers.
To you, the language of mankind thrown
to the whirling furrow of empty embrace.
To you, the outline of nothing
& the king it stands behind.

I drove around unhinged
through the guzzle of comets
by which I gained & lost altitude
wandering in the collapse
of complementary worlds.
& the names of the women
I met in hell filled the desert
of assorted things whose
nonsense of white light
sucked at its fingertips,
inviting me to the steps of the parapet
where inverted time
fathered its first child.
& I picked scabs
from the backs of nightingales.
& I sang the ode in the black mass
of jellyfish. I sung with zither
& phantasmal & protean climb.
& I sung until the names
for madness bore the tears



of the green turtle & the slow worm
was consumed alive.

& the words you meet there
turn to stone
& the women's voices
converge in outlines of scrawl
like hideous machines
& the birds there
fester gnashing in caverns
of ash yellow unending
rotating the oars in the boat
of unmoving- shackled
galley slaves who grunt & creak
with driving eyes-- &
the drum beats up again
for those on their last legs.
& the stagnant light finds you there
in the corner of the walled-in tower.
& angry clocks splay their blisters
over the raw meat of the wild rose.
& you dream of the star's steady bone
of the monkey's paw which barter
your fee across the river of mad beginnings
& eternal returns.
& the grind of too many voices
leaves you there
in the scream inside of the scream--
the eye scream of frozen grey-black
shadowswarm & shadowscreech.



The Book of Stones

You speak of stones with both eyes closed.
You stutter in the yellow void beyond
what is graspable.
Uninterrupted by the pricking stretch
of alien daylight.
Sealed into a house of flesh
& bound by blue delusions
by fits & starts both drab & sublime.
From a premeditation of enduring
prenatal darkness
at the edge of immured
& excremental dawn.
From a bitter memory
of the mulberry tree
which blossoms without fruit.
Of stones you speak
without tongue, teeth, or lips.
Of the wounds of stone
that do not bleed
that do not weep
that will not heal.

No more meaning, no more imposition
of the inside out on the outside in,
no more daddy and mummy
pulled from the Oedipal cry
no more swimming remembrance
no more lip-petal of embrace
no more reality of blood no more facts of death
no more telos of thing no more analysis of soul
no more no no more yes
no more. Only
stones.

I imposed I offered & resisted
the spectered mesh of
this concentric web of darkness
letting it seep
sloth-like
into the room
through the spaces left
at the brittle green edges
of my closed door. I
was surrounded by stones.

Words failed me. & through
their glory of shattered detail
I strove grey-wards
into the after channels of pre-
remembrance or ur-sprache,
some word which came
into my head like a worm
devouring the flesh of the dead.

& you remember that
the drowned poet Orpheus
could charm



the white & black
of stones
with the music he made
by counting his fingers
& toes.
That he brought tears
to the eyes
of the dead
with the words
he drew in the sand
with the handle of a broken
lantern & the stick
that once held his tattered
flag.

But for you, the bright eyes
of language itself
have turned to stone.

I lay in a vast frozen empty space
of pale yellow trees, gray roses,
& undefined mildew blues.
A place where storm tore
at the hair of the sky,
its knucklebones encrusted in horn.
A place of word shadows
covered with gray milk-naked stones
laid by carrion birds without names.
The nearer I drew to each of them
the larger they appeared--
a Milky Way of silent stones.
The flatter, sharper, heavier they became,
the more resistant to this
& that thought.
Glacial stones embedded
in the blind frost of underearth
from which they could not be undone.
The act of thinking was
the act of uncovering stones.
But a stone could not be a thought.

& you have no thoughts
of whirlwinds, of hair, of the sword
that burns in the blacksmith's hands.
& you have no words
of hope, of thought, of skin
or leaves, fur, cloud form, or searoar.

I was surrounded by stones,
clustered, raying, kidney-shaped,
& heart-spun.
I thought I could make
a thought come into being,
whether simple, complex,
oblong or obtuse.
To conceive a blue action would bring
a blue thought
into being. If I could have unearthed
just one blue stone,
drawn black blood from my hands,

I could have brought a thought
 like a sky flower
 into this world of dry bones.
 I could have written a chalk word.
 I could have carved a white name
 on its fractured surface of noir.
 I could have inscribed a meaning
 & dissolved the tears of pitch
 that descended like snow from the
 walled-in sky.

& you cannot affix stone to stone.
 Knife-stone which carves on
 a skin of stone.
 A finger of stone
 drawing craters of homecoming
 in the sand.

I dug at stones with fingers
 that tore meaning from sign.
 Megaliths which defied the assault
 of my hands. Glacial stones
 that advanced over the compass
 of worlds, that covered the burnt
 wings of angels, that buried Edens
 & anti-Edens in mists of granite.

My hopes my desires were devoured
 by hungry birds with fiery amethyst
 & rubied eyes.
 Each stone
 resisted the terrible work of my hands.
 It was bitter, painful work.
 On all sides I was surrounded by doubt.

& your tongue fails
 in the song of stones.
 & your eyes fail
 in the vision of stones.
 & your ears fail
 in the gathering echo of stones.

I gathered stones.
 Some broken, some smooth.
 Some heavy & too large for my hands.
 Some that rolled across my palms,
 light as a microbe or feather.
 Some hard & sturdy, others brittle,
 eager to crumble into grains of sand,
 form clouds of dust.
 Some warm, soft, & smooth as clay,
 Separate prayers created from flesh of living earth.
 Some cold & gray & dead as ash.
 Some I brought, like hamburgers, to my mouth.

I gathered stones.
 I put stone to stone.
 Pebble beside pebble.
 Mingled clay with ash.
 & drew dangling earthworm from frozen tundra.

I scooped dried grass from cold ground
 up to my knuckles
 & drew my nails across the hard skin of blocks of ice.
 I covered my face with red, yellow, black, brown, & green dirt.
 I boiled roots & mud in stone soup.
 I collected the shells of insects,
 the bones of reptiles, birds, & small mammals.
 & planted seeds where some would grow & others wouldn't.

You sing in the language of stones
 because you know no other language,
 you have no other way of speaking.
 Your tongue is heavy in your mouth.
 Your feet are spoiled in the isolation of desire.

I gathered stones.
 I learned to say that the skipping of a pebble
 across the surface of the stream
 was an obsidian butterfly in flight in the boiled light of summer sky.
 I learned to say that the sparks made
 from pounding two pieces of flint
 were the notes of the lonely nightingale
 in the autumnal evening of love's
 flowering litany of loss.
 I learned to say the texture of a moss-covered rock
 was the velveteen felt
 on the neck of a sad-eyed doe
 whose hide was spread across the table of Pentecost.
 That the dry astringency of lime
 was the collective memory of
 a burdened & oppressed people
 spoiled by the angel of discontent.
 That the mushroom-brown silt
 flowing between my fingers
 was the cry of a Niobid mother
 mourning the loss of her anorexic child.
 That the light inside a crystal of quartz
 was the glow of a cylinder of madness.
 But my tongue was still heavy
 with the weight of stones
 & where others could dance and sing
 lightly from thought to thought
 I struggled to lift one thing to the next.
 Stone would not adhere to stone.
 The dust of the butterfly's wing
 would not color the neck of the fawn.
 Whether I mixed its paint with a mother's tears
 or the sweat which poured from my palms.

& where the others mingle
 dance with song & affix thing to thing
 you cannot even affix white stone to black stone
 but hold them together in your tired arms.

I gathered stones.
 & because white stone would not congeal to black stone,
 & because one gray stone would not hold fast to the next,
 I learned to balance day stone upon night stone.
 Sometimes a piece of bone-honeyed chalk
 resting on a slate of porous & speckled granite.



Sometimes a bit of broken obsidian
to support a fiery column of marble.
& I learned to say that this flake of shimmering feldspar
supporting the grotesque head of an amethyst geode
was the work of a fractured mind
sustaining the dream of utopia.
That a lump of red clay
wrapped around a few fine grains of sand
was the arm of a loved one embracing
someone in pain.

I gathered stones.



The Words

Say there is a word
resting on the pages of the book
of labyrinthine visions--
whose magnitude once filled the void
of the walled-in shadow.
Starlight shines affectionately
within its gaps & spirals.
Dandelions fill its eyes.

& the shape of that word
is called
light within light.
& its sound:
a constellation of memory
bathed in a whirlpool of flight.

& say there is a word
molding in the sunlight
of unpronounceable names
whose emptiness speaks
of the riddles of the mad.
Naked moonlight bathes
in the blood-rustle of its leaves.
Ashes fill its mouth.

& the contour of that word
is called
darkness within darkness.
& its meaning:
a black cyprus branch
burnt in the palm
of the survivor's hand.

& between these words
there is an empty space.

& within the spaces
between words
there is
an impure silence
which speaks through the tongue
of brimstone, mandrake root,
& the paroxysm of flame.



The Measure of Noeisis

Say the path of murmured meaning
has not been carved in advance,
that you walk on pristine snow,
gathering silence in arms too tired
to bear the weight of word or wood.

Say that snow abides
in the chronic rage of your unanswered questions.
That silence is a distant hill
of occult deception.
Say that the bundle of sticks
you carry on your back
is the Sisyphian stone.
That your aperture of Pythagorean geometry
is a passage in filthy newspapers whose folds
you paw through clumsily, searching for the light
of blue-green or yellow moons.

I wandered at night
in search of a star that would
fulfill the madness of my dreams.
I confused the sighs of words
with the ideas that wandered
wordless inside my mind.
Time became indiscreet.
Matter swarmed in & out
of corporeal ideas. Tense &
voice were split in twain. I
could not find my way through the past
nor enter the future. & the moment
of now grew dim through lapses
of consciousness, through starts &
stops in the movement of thought.

Say that your meaning is a metaphor
carried through actual journey.
That your feet are covered in shoes.
& that those shoes betray the promise
of an utopian dream.
That you speak & walk by candlelight
through a silver cavern
which is mind, stomach, & sex.

A dart in my mind was torn
from the social fabric of
collective struggle.
It was destined to emerge
through impressions, experience,
& affect
from the sorrow of red fields
tilled with sweat & blood,
from the corridors of stifling
hospitals in which our cries
go unheard, suspended by time,
doubt, fear, & the infliction of desire.
I sought refuge there-- in sleep,
in galleries of sweat & blood,
in drawings of roots & trees,



in the pattern of fish
swimming through lakes & streams.
Their meaning was a seed I crushed
on the wheel of apocalyptic sign,
hazard & repair. Their voices ashes
in the jetstream of distant & encompassing
madness. Their fingers studs in the arms
of golden & procrustean thrones.
Their mouths scissors of the poisonous
sepals of dead time. Their tongues
one single stone.

Say that stone is the sixth house
of the eclipsed star.
Say that star is the hairy underbelly
of a mammal whose sex glitters
in the bright & vacant fire of mania
& unknowing.
& say that fire is a purple beacon
of prophetic horrors.

I found myself sick
with the company of swordbearing angels.
I tossed & turned in the sleep
of violent, raging visitors from the dark mines.

Say that there is no noema,
no moment, nor mind.
Say that suspension is all that you feel,
in the motion of the cradle,
in the flutter of wings,
in now & elsewhere,
in nail & glue,
in cup, crown, & thorn.

Say that within that word
lies the meaning behind the veil of your silence.
That Isis the goddess gathers the torn pieces of your signs
in which symbol & flesh once laughed as one
& love & death clung together in insoluble idea
of God.

The Eternity of Suspended Becoming

Say the poem is chrysalis
 or cocoon suspended
 at the origin of turn,
 twist, & change.
 Say it is suspended
 by a gossamer thread
 sightlessly spun to a silence of silk
 prior to the final metamorphosis
 & glacially frozen in time like a fossilized leaf
 or the millennial journey
 of the still resplendent light of a burnt out star.

Say it is suspended
 from that important moment
 in which inner essence
 materializes into outward form,
 in which flower, fruit, & flesh
 emerge from idea,
 in which the eye opens up
 like a fresh wound.

Suspended in waiting rooms
 of shadowy & unworthy desires.

Suspended in the baptism
 by fire.

& sometime in the middle of life
 I found myself
 separated from the heard
 & seen like an adolescent trapped
 within a rite of passage without end.

A lost wanderer, watching birds awaiting the crumbs left
 upon a picnic's abandoned blanket.
 A silent playgoer, watching Vladimir & Estragon
 waiting for Godot.
 Blindly, I sought to see myself, as if eyes
 that had yet to come into being could open to the world
 by sheer act of will.
 But the bulbs of my will would not blossom in sand
 while I sat awaiting the senile painter's next brushstroke
 on the blank canvass that raised its tired eyes
 to the waiting lips of the sky.
 & in the mad theater of waiting I waited
 until it was time to begin waiting again in earnest.

Say that a dream surrounds you,
 as large as the universe
 dreaming itself to sleep.

Say that a sleep enfolds you,
 a self-devouring serpent
 which gnaws in circles
 upon your dreams.

& I no longer advanced upon the blue-black mulberry branch
 inch by inch



but in inverted time which unraveled moment to moment
like the threads of Penelope's promised tapestry.

& say that you find yourself
confronted by the imperfection of your form
in the scene of two facing mirrors reflected to infinity.

Gourmand of the autumnal leaf garden,
you find yourself
still too young after your time.

Suspended in your gnawing hunger
which turns sustenance into deeper desire,
passion into longing greener than the sky is blue,
longing into bitterness as desperate as a day without the dawn.

My ancestors, Children of the Sunflower,
had all passed away,
drained by their thirst
for earth, air, & water,
ever hidden from the flickering stars.

Yet I dreamed within this dream
a dream of awakening
to an alternative history

of golden, ochre, orange, red, yellow, & cobalt wings

which carried me up into the cloudless skies.

Lord of Light,
you
Caterpillar of Fire.



The Darkness of In-Between

You twist & turn
torn in tenderness
in & out of the maze of visions
from the subjects of those who cannot heal
to the objects that litter the course of the journey
through labyrinth.

I stood among the ghosts of asylum,
a stranger lost in the poem of madness
of visions
alone amidst the waste of worlds;

unchanged & ever changing,
though the rest of creation faded
& Khepura's swift suns
forgot to roll through the sky.

I sung inside the microcephalic god's
little smile, my mouth filled with baby teeth.
I babbled & drooled
in the wide circle of wilderness
eager to emerge into any shape or shade
of possibility.

You point to a dream
with finger outstretched.
You cannot exist
in the blue corona
of unpronounceable words
& unbearable signs.

I knew that even before
turning to ash
this book of words, of skin, & bone
had forgotten how to speak.

It is true that I was mad
but walked
one foot at a time,
read while others drank,

& slept with both eyes closed.

It is true that the pages of your books
are seeped in blood.

It is true that you cannot speak of love.

It is true that sometimes a word came
into my head
& I recited this word
backwards, forwards,
& slantwise in-between.

In the mirror you find
a picture of yourself
in reverse they say
but you know it no other way,



distrusting photographs
which are said to possess the power
of stealing your soul,
of replacing memory with image.

I died in July in the month before
my birth & in December
before the new year

& again in June
just some time ago.

You say the years are not important.

I kept on dying
because there was so much
I had yet to become--

beautiful creature that I was.



The Muteness of Dim Memories

I've forgotten where
I was going with all this.

We were wandering in the desert.

It was cold.

Either that, or we suddenly
became aware
of our own nakedness.

Eden was something like
a dim memory,

only things became worse.

Strangers harmed us while whispering
their names in our ears.

Sleep became strained.

Night grew fangs
& bit into the neck of our dreams.

It all sounds funny in retrospect,
but it was deadly serious while
it was happening.

Then one day we arrived in a city
torn apart by love.

Morpheus or Anteros
lulled us to sleep with
the powerful image of death.

& so we danced
in the deathly season
without fruit.

God was absent
in the sky,
in horizon,
in the pages of the book,
the faces of the crowd,
in absence itself.

& so we danced
in the deathly season
without fruit.

Still, we refused to remain unchanged.
Though memory was a savage thing
whose claws threatened to tear us
limb from limb
to shred the pages of our books
to scratch out the eyes
which groped darkly through the corridors
that beckoned to or beyond
the slim edge of meaning.



The Wound of Transfigured Becoming

Imperfect in my bilateral symmetry
& transient by wounds of birth,
I came & became

though not in an Hegelian way
the way it reads in the papers.

I raced the continual circle
without start or finish.

& you move
ever towards in front & away behind from this
teary eyed night filled with baroque stars,
beings of sound & light,
wings without body
still rooted in longing
to merge with the flesh of others.

An insect babe embraced me
but not in the way I would have desired--

with teeth, tongue, nipple, pubis, & thigh.

& at midnight by the stream you rave,
forget the form of love you have
neglected without a second glance.

I rebelled against the paradise
of seers,
returning their acts of kindness
& giving
back to my belly, lips, & sex.

& you startle from the sleep
in which you have celibated yourself
to serenity.

My fingers slipped through
the rainbow
& I took back the promises I had made,
rebaptizing myself
in the sweat which flowed
from beneath my arms.

& in your dreams you indulge in the debauchery
of drinking to drunkenness.

I waited for a day of miracles
as I ran in the wilderness
with the wolves,
my howl
filling the caverns
of the tireless bear
beneath the menstrual glow of moonlight.



The Wall of Broken Mirrors

A broken mirror
blocks your access
to the realm of the symbolic,

& the literal suicides itself
with the razor it finds
beneath your sleeve.

Outside the gates of infinity's fire,
I conversed with baboons
in the idle chatter of the banal.

Attendants with straightjackets
vulvated me with their admiring smiles.

You hide in grottos,
gathering questions
you are unwilling to share.

I knew for a fact
that nothing could phase me,
except the wasps
which planted their ferocious larva beneath my skin.

You have watched laughter parade from your mouth
when you least expected it,
when history pranced its girth
around the emptiness of your name,
when your lover revealed her crime
& squirmed in guilt & shame,
when day turned to night
& night again to day.

I simply stared into heaven,
only it was a dark tunnel
I had passed through
by train.

From the side of your insight
you have given birth
to fools & magicians,
exploiters who transformed
gardens into gold.

You have trained pupils who mistook
the white wings of the dove,
the love of the loam,
the purpose of the vagabond's shoes,
preferring the sexual shape of pears
to the awkward acidity
of the persimmon's flesh.

You have carved anti-heroes
in wax,
baked unglazed clay
in kilns of iron.

Still, I spilled my regrets



through holes drilled
into the floor of forgetting
by bees who would have done better
than build mansions of honey.

& still your love grows
for those who resist
reading each of your thoughts
upside down backwards
& in reverse order.



The Misery of False Dreams

An alchemical daydream of spectral moons
& bartered spiritual enchantments
shudders across the chalkboard
upon which you find yourself drawing figures
of elapse, passage, & return.

& you chart the turns
in your perverse desires, the stops
& pauses in the storm of your broken speech,
the sound of breaking glass,
the loneliness of cul-de-sacs,
the walls within the waiting room,
the confession made to panoptical inquisitors,
& the secrets revealed
through the mouths of dark angels.

& I saw that one of the daemons
of the seven closed gates
was called "half-spoken"
& the others I still could not
make out, my vision failing me
as I neared the climax of something
as obscure as sorrow
in the apogee of plot.

A handful of friends
who remained calm
in the face of death
danced around an orange
I had stolen from another risk-taker's poem.

Your thoughts form
in the shapes of imaginary creatures overhead,
transfiguring your desire
into something concrete
like torture, mercy, or the sea anemone.
& you map the designs
of apocalyptic accountants
who pace celestial hallways cradling
armfuls of broken birds
& the charred remains of newborn lambs.
& the smell of rotten starlight fills your nostrils.
& the sound of toads emerging from the mud
of wet & watery hells echoes endlessly
through the chamber of your cloistered skull.

Another angel
dressed as a pascola clown
said something happened to me,
I was unsatisfied,
there was something I wanted to become.

He kept searching
his pockets for the missing keys
but could not separate his fingers--
a sign that I would
find myself alone for the length
of my journey through hell.



& you abide in the solitude
of the poem's unutterable darkness,
in the alcoves of the dream
in which you find yourself
lost amongst the minotaurs
at the center of the immense maze of mind
& emptiness.

In the absence of others
I went mad.

I tried to introduce their scent
into my nostrils
with images & words
but failed
& floundered
like a fish
on dry sand.

I made offerings
of porridge
to the Great Bear of pleasure,
dried my hands on rusty scrap metal,
rearranged the furniture
in the room of my mind.

I held lifeless matter
in the cradle of my arms,
contemplating the day
I would give birth
to the amoeba, the leopard
or the slippery serpent of discourse.

With images in place of hands,
I touched sorrow
beneath the brilliant sunbeams
which had set aside their golden robes
forgetting I was ever their daughter.

I was tired
of my animal being
& called on foxes & demons
to dig a hole
for my grave.

I took a knife
& cut off my nose
to fish with
in the ponds of hell
amongst the bodhisattvas of infirmity.

Turning, I waited
for the intercession of the skies.



The Dream of Resurrection

& I was born again like the light of a thousand angels
glowing upon the head of a pin.

& you are born again
against this mossy stone
& again you dream
of death lying asleep
inside the dream at your side.

Sometimes a shadow clanked in the dark
like a thought startled
from its sleep,
haunting me with the undaunted
laughter of the real.

Outside the house of the dead
the stars are falling
one by one
to remind you
of the unforeseen
future of those you love
& have loved
in the days filled with dandelions
and the nights of the new moon.

I wanted my desire to speak
to me in tongues, fur, & sex.
I was silent really
though blood red words poured endlessly
through the cup of my heart.

Two thousand years ago
you suffered these wounds
which heal by day
& which vultures pick at night.

Yesterday I stole a black flower
from a garden kept by one
of the guardians of a dark corner
of my mind.

Perhaps he meant it for me.
Perhaps he meant it to be
this poem.



The Book of Hidden Meanings

Beneath each of these things
wordless, speechless,
darkness swells within
the walls of the poem's asylum.

My words could not explain the journey,
the doorway, the wall, or the gate
any more than
the octopus, amoeba, or lemming
can explain the terrible transparency of silence.

While the world
flickers in darkness
you continue until you realize
the luminous silence inside of silence.

So as I continued, I plunged my arm through
the cold wind which issues from
the wings of the angels.

Beneath each of these things
the light of blindness falls far away,
& the darkness of the poem
reveals itself in the clarity of its naked vision.

To enter its eyes is to love again,
all that may be disclosed within
the feathery remains of that which blossoms.

But the feather opened,
& I felt
the feather of transparency's eyes
in which both eye & feather
turn to stone on the shore of lost time.

In the feather fire cutting
the silent dark, I felt the sky burning its claws
in a maniacal scale.

Beneath each of these things
you have felt that the form of life
is a great well of mystery
whose waters turn oblivion
into a journey taken with friends.



The Language of Strangers

Still, a stranger arose within
a fear of my own language.
That stranger had hands for eyes,
lips for skin. His tongue
was fashioned from the burnt flesh
of the martyr on the pyre.
His hair held the scent of rotting meat
in the sewers of hell. His words
were brittle and uneasy obsidian, bone,
stale bread, rusting fishhook, & wire.

In the domain of the shadow
you elegize the bottomless pit,
search for the equation
which foretells
the day you will go mad,
sing through the darkness
as the darkness sings through you.

I wondered at the color of the sky
in nirvana. Voices filled & purgated my ears
with the ache of shattered cadence & blood.
& the tree could not bear the weight of wood.
& the splinter could not bear the weight of flesh.

& when you come to rest
you find yourself
covered in mud
drawn from the banks
of the river Styx.

I gorged upon the bitter coins
placed in my mouth. I
felt the weight of their mad
panoptical eyes upon my wriggling tongue.

Your tears are ash,
the spit in your mouth
the melting wax of a candle
which burns through the sleep
of the dead.

Beneath the midnight rain
under the mystifying moon
I made a motion of mourning
which disappointed my God.
I stretched my arms
& raised my fingers to the darkest part of the sky,
muttering gray & unclean words
through my clenched teeth.

Strangers repeat & by repeating
cancel the mantra of your cries.

The indocrinants
of babelaboration
spoke half-truths
through the gaps



in the wall
while I excommunicated
to excess
the rites of their journey's
first, second, & third
reversal.

& the gaps in the wall
grew claws which tore at my eyes.
& the holes in my eyes
filled with teeth
that chattered out a language of broken syllables,
voodoo & dream.

The obstructionists
of periphrasis-at-slant-angles
spoke in partition
while the ice water
which flowed
through their veins
carved its caverns
beneath the surface
of Neptune,
seeking the cipher
of Ocean, the noisemaker,
in mythos & heuthonymym.

The tongues of those strangers
are a chameleon's eyes,
& move in two directions at once.
Their eyes are taproots
of the stars
intoned by the howler
monkey's call.

They sought the path
of no-place
& yet not,
miscomprehending
the binding obstacles
between this
& that, forgoing
the distance
between what is
& isn't

in the tertiary longing
of emergent meaning.



The Words of the Deaf, Dumb, & Blind Angel of the Void

Deaf, dumb, & blind
you beat your pink wings
against the iron bars
of a cage you cannot see.

The blood red wine of this fleeting world
gives you a headache which
you can only treat
with the liquor of this world lost.

I spun & shook
like the intermezzo
of a lovesick nightingale
abandoned by its mate.

Rats swarm around your feet
in the house of love,

baboons & parrots
vomit back your words,
in the zoo of desire,

dogs gnaw on the transparency
of your bones
in the kennel of being.

I was immured
in lengthy passages
which led to nowhere,
at odds with lyricism
& perplexing geometry
which undid the perfect
symmetry of the circle...

Each day you search for a radius
with which to map
the stars,
a color
with which to paint
the rising sun...

but all I discovered
were loud sounds
in the Prussian blue
of mortality.

Each day you climb
& re-climb the sky,
counting the sparks
that tingle along your spine,
disclosing the secrets of hematology.

I carried a little red flag
which signified
something concrete
about the dream of history.

Tomorrow you will



open a fearful box
designed in braille.

You will
watch it move,
watch it grow

into a tree or a memory.

I wouldn't admit
that the bee I killed
on the street of scissors

was actually
an eye.

My silence was an obscure
fragment set against
a gate beside
the knowledge of a harp,
abandoned house, or book.

You keep looking
for a perfect circle
at the side of
the divided highway.

I kept finding
the same mirror
which burned
the palms of my hands.

In the forest of signs
you are drifter-king
& own a hawk with instincts
that beckons
towards a palace outside the law.

I made a dirty sound
to defend myself
against the guardians of normativity
who advanced on all sides
alarmed by my capacity
to discern the depth of water.

You solve three riddles
in a row
on a path
beside a stream
marked with the bones
of a dear friend.

My reward was a perfect drug
which dissolved in ice & honey
& reunited my body
with my soul.

You make a note
of the shapes of clouds
for further reference



in the process of divination.

The gatekeeper of Eden
offered me a special gift
which he told me not to open
until I reached the chasm
designating the peripetia
of my destiny.

Finally, senses restored, you enter
the ineffable forest of fantasy.

Naked, I bathed in the spring
which revived me from death.

Silent, you breathe in the air
which fixes flight
to the eagle's wings.

Alone, I wrestled those shadows
whose duty it was to vanquish pleasure.

Twelve labors await you
within a corridor
containing eleven closed doors.

I had owls for eyes,
wary wolves for ears.

My arms were long leafless branches
whose sap dripped down upon my knees.

At the toll of midnight
you will turn to stone
& hence hurry
in the work of returning bees
back from the depths of Hades.

My bones were fat & strong
enough to defeat the evil emanations
of those subtle demons
that raised gooseflesh
on the nape of the neck.

Your wits are keen
enough to seek the delicate victory
of laughter.

Through cunning
I learned to bargain with the lot
I was dealt on the day the universe began
in the origin of the one, the other, & the same.

You are today,
tomorrow,
yesterday.

The Venus de Milo
in her eternal imperfection,



the blind harpist of Cuzco,
the seeker of visions
within the walls
of the asylum.

I was, certainly,
but what exactly
I didn't care to know.

At play in the backgammon
of the heavens,
you lose friends & memories,
accumulate malaise, misapprehension
& miscellany.

I consumed my own hands
as the stakes of this game
rose & vanished
in the lustral euphony
of dead stars.

A glorious host
whose soul sits on opalescent ice
beckons you toward
a caring creator
God
who will act as the lodestone
to the metal inside your brain.

Your head resounds with hazardous cries
of staggering fear
& laughter.

One by one
I removed the elements of my body
until only the etymology of my name remained,
a talisman at the edge of the forest
of terrifying creatures.

Masked, you spill stars
across the expanse of the milky way.

I sung, danced
& shook my nimble wings
which itched
under the negligent light of the moon
like a hungry hyena in heat.

You suffer in the frailty
of your inhuman body,
your lips which live on borrowed time,
the slope of your shoulders
which bear the weight of lead,
your hands which struggle
with the modesty
of prostituted love,
your eye whose glance
undresses the virginity
of first caress.



Masked, I peeled the raw flesh
from my bones
until there was nothing left
but the semblance of a single sign.

You habituate in the capital of pain
hammering at the gate
in whose mouth grow the seeds
of consolation.

Intuitively, I resorted to kinematics
& described the arc of a circle,
untying the cords & knots
that bind
the reign of dust
to the correspondences of my heart.

Into the wind
of nothing
but this waking dream
you are tossed, turned
on the spokes of the wheel--

a stranger,
stranger indeed
than the rest.



The Dance of Contraries

Angels, seekers, seers, you are empty
& echo through hollow caverns
a sound
which shakes the leaves
of the tree of self-knowledge
into cosmic frenzy.

You are full
& pour out your flood
of being
through rivers
which wend their way
to the sea of self-annihilation.

Within your twilight,
black snakes awaken the aurora,
comets appear before dawn,

the sun burns out & the Ganges spills
its silt over the expanse of distant galaxies
yet to come into being.

Your dance
goes on
in silence
until it reaches
the ears of the one beyond,
through the Milky Way,
in utter darkness,
replacing memories
with that shining light
which is to be
our guide,
teacher, & muse.

We know you in doubt & terror.
We know you in love, source, spirit,
& sea.

Destroyers of order, silence, & the unfailing wind,
you mar the perfect dream
which dies unshamed
of its ocean's heart,

deep with unmoving
as a compass
untouched by the breeze.

Pale roses touched with the spring,
tall corn in summer,
fruits rich with autumn, & frail winter blossoms,
reaping, still reaping.



The Sleep of Sacrifice

I heard a fly buzz
when I lied,
degrading the simple clothes
I adorned
to ward off the famine of sleep.

The snores of the victims
of some awful devotion
informed me that I was
still missing something of great importance.

Blindness felt faster
than the rocking chair
in which I had grown old
& young again.

When evening grows close
you chew at your hands,
shave the hair from your head,
pace endlessly
the length of the room
in which each door is a separate sense.

The green assassin passed over me,
entering through the pores
which opened on the surface of my skin.

Your shell tightens,
colors cease.

My mind swirled
under the impact
of the clock
which went on ticking
in agonizing terms
of the solitary night,

leaking black pitch
into image, meaning, & memory,
lucent as when
daylight strikes sideways through a cat's eyes.

Darkness surrounded me
with its well of slack water.

In it you wade in absence,
a savior of the drowned
who has not himself learned to swim.

In it I drifted in the invidious sea
of noble gesture,
haunted by the unseen & unheard
fractals of fate,

forgotten among the lilies,
forgotten outside the walls of the city,
forgotten among friends & strangers.



In it I was condemned to wait there,
in autumn turning the secret life of the green leaf
into rust,

in winter under the refraction of light
bent with the weight of snow.

In it I watched for the bird with waxen wings
who wanted to climb higher
into the encircling emptiness
of the sky.

Something burdensome
& mathematical
tightens in your chest.

Something jagged
like a piece of wood
choked me
with uncertain longing,

lodged in the confusion of love & desire.

In it I spun around the axis
of human frailty,
inaudible anxiety,
the destiny of the compass.

Your madness
as dark as the black milk of midday
drunk from dusk until dawn,
when the scared moon dips,
& the hardy sun shudders in the sky.

My madness
with its head
filled with fractured pictures
pages torn from skin
& words forced to speak
against their will.

Your madness
sweeter than the blood-red fruit
of the unknown.



The Great Game of Outsiders

The sacrificial night in which
I found myself
swallowed in gratuitous laughter,
immured in desire,
lost in mysticism,
played itself out
like a game whose stakes
condemn the sanctity of excess.

Say you are a brittle cog
in the well-oiled machine,
a toxic liquor drunk in silence
among the restless,
a bit of thread spun into linen
under the influence of a dark secret
& a promise which cannot be kept.

My theories belonged to a class of interiority,
of objects merely hinted at,
of the convulsion of abstract thought
in a row of white flowering wisteria.

Say a gesture you make
defines a ridge or wall
appropriated to the longing
of a caress
soft as the stillness of the dunes.
In the evening you call the sky
into question,
assembling clouds
into a heap
of tentative interlocutors
while the tempo of the
diminishing assemblage
lags behind
the point of reconciliation.

My blindness guaranteed
the width of a door
& my darkness
betrayed the virginity of youth.



The Rapture of Immutable Belonging

At the birth of the rapturous sun
that tastes of a charioteer's blood,
you enter the circle of immutable belonging
& pass through the shadow-gate
of its day-lit dream
into the garden of origin.

The fibers of your flesh flicker,
the web & woof of the world respire,
& time undoes its narrative
of unfulfilled desire.

I made greeting
to the processions of Anubis
adorning the ladder
linking the depths of the underworld
to the heights of the celestial sphere.

The golden dawn caresses your skin
as you climb
rung by rung
this eternal path
of light.

Beneath the sidereal fire
of this enchanted garden
I experienced the naked rebirth
of the music of the spheres.

Crying out to Eden,
you raise a flag which will
let the dead live again.

In this nightflight
I broke through
to the instincts
of impossible love.

The glimmering moon
is your secret humanity,
the call of the stars
throughout the eras
is your rebirth
within the ancient vision's dance.



The Story of Stars

O terrible star!

Once upon a time
your caressing truth came searching after me.
It is all that is left
of the embers of pure light
which now swim blindly through the sea of tired time.

I hear you
in sea light, or in a pulsar,
in the dance of the waves.

Look,
there, you can see it in everything!
Enlivened with singing!

You conjure me the way life
beats in spurts.
I hear & see this loss of self
wander through a truly human form.

My brother, the wolf, howls in the middle of your night.

O stars, o creator
of stars, creator of light
how have you
become so dark?

Lest by dark star power inside
of your mind.

Come, let us have
a scorching
thirst for life.

I am splitting wood,

splitting stars,

splitting hairs,

splitting my mind.

Starlight. My song.
& I hear it, hear it dance, intone
the will to life.

Snatch it up now, the song of life.
Falling through &
through the infinite
sparkling of beings.

O star, brighten your heart to countries near &
far. To rivers, oceans, & seas.
I intone you with the earthen drum
Be everything! Light! shining far
in the distance,
hear your own voice in mine,
see yourself in my eyes.



The Mystery of Calculated Longing

Celestial magic invaded my music
like the landing of a spaceship
filled with Trojan horses.

Exultation rode on the back of planets
some nameless power had festooned
with equestrian livery.

The superessential light
of my arsenal
was only a theory
composed
of hungry birds,

only a letter
addressed to the ninth part of God.

Nothing ravished me
beyond ravishing.

Say there is this distance between
you and what is part of you.

Where stars overturned the spirits
which crowded together
below the arc of the divine.

Say that you long for
the ghosts of the ether.

How I longed for the intellectual delinquency
which passes through the vortex
of the mind.

& that what you long for is the nameless,
nothing, this silence between flesh & thought.

I broke my head
as one breaks bread.

I slept, woke, took a few notes.
Still, here was this distance between me
& what I had been,
what I would become,
what I had had,
& what I still wanted.



The Star of Apotheosis

In becoming star
among the others,
I encountered brethren
all linked in that they had suffered
no more than I.

Dances at night
reach you.

Maps & rivers
spoke to me.

Numbers haunt you with their paradise.

To those who lacked time,
each of those here appeared fixed in place
as if a part of portico, sculpture, or painting.

Disaster did not suit us.

You are eyes
in light to light,
shining one to fading another.

In eternity's hour
grains of sand washed my hair
& there I watched my wound
dry.



The Voices of the Muse

I spoke of dead kings
at the end of the world without sound.

You are the voice
the voices that speak through you.

& announced the ages of the moon.

You are the tongue of the poet,
the hands of the painter,
the heart of the divine muse
which passes through the other.

& threw light into the deepest reaches of space.

You are the symbol of the circle.

The round dance is yours.

You are a shape blown in glass,
a note plucked on a string,
a word carved into stone.

I met prophets on the mountain of sky-driven stone.

You are a fish with a woman's sex,
a tigress with the heart of a centaur.

You are the first figure of infinity.

You are the second sign of the cross,
the second birth of eternity.

You are the third moon in the month of June,
the third sex of the hermaphrodite,
the third charm of time

& taught the others in the bedroom of the Sun.

You are the iris of the mind's eye.

& you read
& reread the blank pages
of this book
multiplied through the fearsome infinite facets
of a prism which you twirl before your ocular being.

I saw sand fall upward
from the hourglass
which slipped from my hand,
as if time were fleeing
in the opposite direction that I stepped,
skipped, stumbled, & ran.

You are our angel, seer, healer, guide, machinist & elf.

I fashioned technologies of light
to the cup of wounds



we shared over lost time,

boiled cabbages & kings
in the stone soup
we shared over conversations concerning economic justice.

Never mind that
my works all dissembled & dissipated in disrepair.

Never mind the story you tell
is one that we memorized as children.

Never mind that
the shadow of my steed
spread under the brilliant rays of the noonday sun.

It too played music which awakened the wanderer
from the night inside the mare.



The Vision of Animals

I had a vision in which
hungry tigers roamed the streets
of the village in which I lived.
Outside of this village
lay the emptiness of the void
to which I played the part of ambassador--
perhaps because I was born with a lust
for accumulating loss.

You are the slave to an invisible desire
which sounds a terrible noise
in the heart of your universe,
like a multitude of giant insects
frozen in the flames of a fire
which has burned for a thousand years.

When I tried to speak of it
my tongue stiffened between my teeth,
a haze descended over my eyes,
covering my memory,
& I forgot that I was wearing clothes.

Still, you have no cares in the universe,
for you are the child of a living God
who has no name.

When I spoke the angels sang.
When something buzzed in my ear
I was torn between the madness of signs
& the ecstasy of belonging.

You contradict yourself,
say yes for no,
do when you meant don't.
You oscillate between the poles.
You sing yourself
through the voices of others.
Your mind is split because you have lost yourself
in the drifts of silent snow
& found the moment
when something much more ineffable than snow
falls from the sky.

I contemplated the canvass
I would never finish.
I fished in waters beyond
the horizon of possibility.
I found that I could integrate X & not X
on the planes of being & becoming.

Today,
a panther paces swiftly
to & fro
in the moonlit cage of your swollen thoughts,
its mouth damp with sweltered longing
as sweet as sugar
& sour as lemons.



Crowds gathered to watch the results
of my fever,
wondering if
odontology would reveal
my secret life as bee.

I panted & palpated
like a motif of mothlight
cast by a theme of flame.

I was baptized in fire
in the year
of the world's demise
by an angel who challenged my flesh
& then returned to the sea.

Thinking of zones
beyond the border of obsession
& bridges across brooks
in infinity's far-flung forests,
you pick up a pen
to record the experience of eternity,
a broken clock
to undo time,
& a key
to gnaw upon
in your dreams.

Yesterday,
a black shape fluttered before my eyes.
It was the raven of longing
that lead me along
the path from the sea
to the shadow palace
of winter solstice
where I sat
counting stones,
waiting
for the end of time.

A distant voice
welcomes you
to the realm
of the mad.

Obedient & obscene
I planted the heart
of an animal,
perhaps a sea-horse,
at the entrance of
a garden of lichens.

A mark in your passport
reveals that you have ceased
believing in God.

Between clean & unclean
I suffered a pain in my side
where spirit spilled out
like albumen from a cracked egg.



Through the incontrovertible depth
of its secrets
the wound astonishes you,
as you pass through a forest,
uncovering leaves,
anticipating mushrooms
with the desire
of a lost child
caught in the brambles
between reality
and the fairy tales
which intrude upon your dreams.

There was no hesitation
to pause or turn back.
The wind urged me on
like a distant voice
whispering in my ears,
past the plain of delights
with its profusion of flowers.

It is the black winged
raven of longing
which draws you home
and yet leaves you,
staring furiously
at the sun,
more lost
than you were ever lost before.

When I closed my eyes
I pictured a dial
corroded by time.

You hurry to comprehend
this machine, its master,
perception perceiving perception itself
since the hours pass forward
& never back.

Hearing was difficult,
the darkness tasted of orange,
my pointing finger
possessed the force
of a buried secret.

You would be self-sufficient
as the silent sky,
a changeling lying in wait
of the breakthrough of primal song.



The Arc of Prophecy

I heard the sweet hesitations
of the builder of stone labyrinths,
the pure heart of the wanderer
through the deep woods,
the state of endless nonexistence
through which bravery is tested
& life erased. It was
really no big deal.

Still, the prophetess's marvelous becoming
flows beyond your grasp,
night tosses giddy doves
in arcs wider & freer
than the spaces between words,
broader than the gaps between dreams
& restless omens. The ones
that appear in the night sky or
issue from the beaks of crazy birds.

Yesterday something stirred
in my eye.

A nail or fishhook
that you pull through
to the vision on the other side.

I prophesied
in layer upon layer
of whispered witness
like the beads of pearl
which form around a grain of sand
in the moist center of the oyster.

You see that the dead will rise
in the laughter of those who endure.

I saw that the mystery of light
would dance in the prism of glass
through which we once imbibed wine.

You see that new myths will grow
wings & soar above
the husks & cocoons of old.

Yesterday something emerged
from my eye,
a lens
with opalescent iris
that I looked through
& through
to the vision on the other side.



The River of Failures

Yesterday, when I drowned
once again in the Seine,
my sanity was a star
pinned to another poet's lapel.
I forgot everything I learned
beneath the black sun.

You never learned
to spell, an oarsman set adrift
on a rotting piece of wood.

I bore visions with low birth weight
due to the habit of my disease.

Today, you put your cards on the table,
each one a word
whose play of sound, sense, gap, & silence
forms the figure of some pitiable chimera.

I could never put them together entirely,
though the pattern of their cabalistic oblation
was composed in infinite repetitions
of shapes which lay just beneath my fingertips.

The angel of absolute freedom
has burned the arcane maps of the constellations,
imbibed the intoxicating fumes
of the voice of the stars
which burn the form of their caress
on the retina of the eye,
lost the capacity to perceive
in the dimension of the five senses
in the midst of carnival.

Beneath the etudes of my chaos
lay the surety of some banal or primeval order
which twisted & writhed
into the opposite of meaning,
both beautiful & sublime.

Though you cannot see it
having sleep too long
in the terrible forest,
having grow fat on the eggs
of sickly vultures & wrens,
having forgotten entire alphabets
& family recipes for borscht,
having become bloated & ruddy
from fingering smut,
having fallen into fences
& where there were no fences
having run into walls.



The Book of Answered Questions

You feel it that it speaks,
the tragedy there
in the secret language
that all order has
in the center of its world.

Also that everyone exists.

You feel it
the way that language
falls in love with its mirror,
sign, heart, hearse, & window.

That the secret has existed.
That it endures.

In the rub with ashes.
In root & syllable.

Through its shining being.
Through the middle of silence.

Of this water.
This Ocean.
The imperishable names.

& you feel that tragedy advances more secretly
than earth, air, or sun.
More secretly than nameless God.

It gives resistance
to the named.
It feels. It loves.
Desires, craves
invents a machine
of existence in
the confines of fractured
story.

The History of the Islander

An orchid
in the queen of solitude's dream
left me stranded
on an island of strangers
afraid to return the salutation
of my darkest desires.

Together we built barks
from the flesh of living lianas,
helpless in our common hegira
& hopeless longing to return home.

This one took the form
of a fish,
that one a whale
with the sad eyes of an eagle.

I inspired resentment
because my craft
most closely resembled
the lithe and nervous desperation
of the rhesus macaque

& by forgotten magic
squawked in laughter
throughout the night.

My island was a baked potato
on the sea of misfortune
with green grass growing
in place of sour cream.

In stormy weather that ocean was only
tossed in tiny white brushstrokes
whose arcs described
the restlessness
of my longing
to remain alone.

Rowers moved upon it
drawing nearer to the little red house
I called my home,

really pink
like a soft & subtle shade of lipstick.

I lived in the forever midnight
of a lonely child's drawing,

no sun ever depicted
in yellow crayon
between unthreatening clouds
in the boyishly blue sky.

Forever midnight,
I told you to say that,
& hence this lighthouse
with its six windows



resembling the air holes of a flute.

Some say the cliffs
evoked a longing
mimicking the signs of disrepair,
but in truth they had always been
the wide open hands
of greeting to me.

The Temple of Porifera

& say that you gained the power
 to divine the future in the breath of the air
 & the waxing, waning, or dark face of the moon.
 & that you made your home
 in a temple of Porifera,
 a grotto in the deep
 composed entirely of living sponges
 left to dry in the air when the waves receded
 & fill with brine at high tide
 when dolphins & other wet things
 returned their love to the sea.

Within this cavern, I felt
 the call of becoming,
 & the lure of return,
 the tug of amphibiotic memories
 of the umbilicus
 & the slippery tail of origin.

Say that, inside, you basked
 within the breath of the living walls,
 undulating with the medusa.
 Surely, the changes
 in atmospheric pressure exerted upon the tympanum
 & the resulting congestion of the inner ear
 distracted you from the wound which never heals.
 Surely, the crash of the breakers
 lulled your misery
 in the muted cavity
 like the hollow music
 of the conch
 which fascinates children
 with its mimetic echo of the waves.

The scent of sweaty moss and kelp
 left drying in the sand
 overwhelmed my nostrils
 with the infusion of its pelagic wine.
 Looking out through the mouth of my oceanic home
 which opened past & future
 to the transforming in-between,
 to the infinite actuality of possibility,
 to the vibrating being of eternity's hour,
 I felt that I had been
 reborn, remade, reformed, regiven,
 & regifted to the silver creatures
 of the vast deep blue stream.



The Book of Books

When past & present meet
they carve their untold thoughts
in the Book of Reincorporation,
where words lie together
making love & speaking falsehoods,

while on the horizon of the figurative
the Book of Broken Promise
gathers together its distant voices.

I opened the Book of Submergence
between longing & fulfilled desire
tearing the page of its eyelid
in the old worn folds that marked my place
on the passage of mouth, sense, & torrent.

Words flicker
in the candle flame of the Book of Half-Truth
wounding the alcoves
of its stubborn lexicon
that struggles in the embrace of luster,
shadow, & catastrophe.

Voices in the invidious Book of Signs
rippled through what was & wasn't spoken
spreading their ashes over this
imperishable century of doors & odors.
They swung open & shut, burning
my nostrils with what was left of meaning.

In the Book of Stars
hieroglyphs of light
fill the fire of ascent
through the deathly dark light
of the heart
casting ghostly shadows
on the snowy premonitions of your destiny,
melting like amber this melancholy music
of uncertainty.

& through the Book of the Gate
I drew pearly anticipation
unrestrained by the weighty stone
of self-doubt. It
blossomed in syllables
like the fragrant petals of lilacs
left to be discovered
by imaginary travelers
through the gardens of memory.
Those who found themselves
parched by the codex
& still speaking of love
grown older than the secret life
of the dizzy bees.
Those who saw themselves
through eyes
more intricate than the coil
of the cocoon of belonging.



The Mouth of the Thinker

I spoke,
therefore, I was
spoken to. At the outset
of the first day of being
I separated & merged
with the grace of an amoeba.
Against the siberian carcass
of the bloody ejaculations
of the black sun
I cast dice & shattered alembics--
eyespun in knots of
the shadowy undergrowth.

Distinction slips away from you
as you are
always slipping away from self.
Death's orgasm dances its mad polka
within the beer-garden of your delusions.
Blind light guarantees the weight
of your wagonload of stones.

From silence I formed a little machine
to unwind the structure of myth,
desire, & the game of knowing

but which dissolved
into a molecule
which danced
from here to there
between the synapses
of the matter inside my head.

Its syllables were the stones
I kneaded into bread
with spit mixed with
the dust & dander of my imagination.

Its meaning was a keyhole
in the door of a house in a city
of geometric clouds,
its breath the buzz
of an insect with wings
of impossible longing.

Today your hand is a letter
which experiences pain.

Your brain is a fire
which burns inside the mind
of an invisible spirit--
& vise-versa,
as it is with the nesting dolls
of being & becoming.



The Vision of the Seeker

You will praise the poikilotherm
which lets the outside in.
You look for roots & berries
to be like him,
practice catharsis in reverse.
Yet every ray of sunlight
you sip
dribbles from your lips.
Your beard grows white overnight
in anticipation of winter.
Strangers seem to know
who you are & greet you
in the grammatical form of the pluperfect.
You are a credulous waif
in search of a polestar
which will guide your becoming.

Once when I was still alone
I encountered my father on a road of stone.
His arms were ropes about which
I could easily write a paragraph.
His lips were the cement upon which
I scraped my nails & dried my purple hair.
I wondered & reeled at the insanity
of the old man's effort to solve riddles
by untying knots,
at how he ground the glass of mirrors
into elixirs said to heal
with the force
of unrestrained horses.
& when this figure turned to clay,
or some say it was salt,
I was struck dumb
in the act of negation,
my tongue wagging with the ambivalent
desire to know & unknow
within the simultaneity of doubt & certainty,
faith & disbelief.

Afterwards everything stopped spinning
& I found a place to relieve my thirst
among the blind fishes
in the heart of a cave.
Stalactites & stalagmites
became my friends.
Now when their voices crowd the interior
recesses of my soul,
I recall the secret pleasures
of the solitary chameleon.

You are an offspring of the race of in-betweens,
neither horse nor rider,
neither animal nor man,
neither human nor divine,
neither either nor or.
Frogs leap inside of your head.
Caterpillars spin cocoons about your tongue.
Mercury boils within your veins.



Sirens & mermaids sing
through the mouth of your woodland cave.
You create heroes from
the leavings of lecherous unions.
Liars and assassins.

I live on air & healed
with mud & the blood
of my own wound
mixed in bowls from which I have spilt
water & wine.
Dark horses follow the trail
I have carved with my nails.
Gardens grow where I plant green thorns
caressed with the character
of death & rebirth.
When it rains the perfection of my form
increases.
The bow of my heart,
the arrows of my sex,
are false figures in the book of mythos.

Stolid in theory,
you choose your sign, symbol, & shape.
You smile once removed from speaking.
You sense that it is in the anticipation of water
or the pleasure of repeal
that your image forms from a grain of sand
embedded in the pupil of an eye.
You feel that your desire is inverted
as resistance
& that your memory seeks a meaning
in the residuum of trace elements.
You fear that art is imitation
& the sounds in poetry
arbitrary.

I suspect that the expanse of dried lakes
in which I spend the continuum of my days counting coins
represents an absence of justice
& that the spaces between words
convey the impossibility of touching.
I know that a series of numbers
reenforces the opaque surface
of authority
& that order crystalizes & swells outward,
a seam binding form to wall, comma to dust,
& idea to distance.

I am uncertain
though present
in uncertainty
forming a point on a line
inscribed on the plane of silence.

Within that silence resounds
the feng shui of your words.
You are the hiragana
to which sacrifice
serves as recipe, map, & shadow.



You are a plane which opens space,
dispersing those voices whose singularity
converges with the spectrum
of unnamable heliotropes.

I am a series of lines
drawn on the other side
of time.
I am the process of form,
the journey of structure,
the triple helix of the imagination.
I am the place
in which darkness was born,
between hunger
& the smooth surface of stones.
I am red, yellow, orange, brown,
& blue-green day
in black night.

I smoke calmly in the garden
in the face of death.
I love everything which exists
& does not exist.
I pray when I felt like it,
opening my mouth
to become ash
amidst lightning.
I make noise
& move among numbers
to the laughter
of the resonant & unreal.
Among golden stars I sensuate refulgent,
threatening the polynomial expression
of the scorpion with bended bow.

You habituate in the hubris
of the hedonistic alphabet of being.

I am the abstraction
of the architect in action,
albatross & angel.
I reside in the arc of the aurora borealis,
admiring the astronomical assertion of the acanthus.
I am the blind blackbird
beneath the blurry light of the blue moon.
I am the calligraphic calendar of Chiron in Cancer,
the collaboration of the cross & the crescent,
the curtain of the credulous.
I am the diary designed as directed
by the dance of death,
the double negative of the dragon's dream,
the dynamic decomposition of drunken devilry.
I am the experience of the eagle's eye,
the experiment of the extragalactic.
I am the flight of fire in the fusion of the fourfold.
I am the fountain of the folk,
the florescence of final form,
the fantastic flower of the fern.
I am the ghost of God's grace,
the gypsy of the grievous grotesque,

the grass grazing gazelle,
 the gyre & the gate.
 I am the heavens' breath
 on he who is hidden,
 the hands of the homesick,
 the heart of the helpless.
 I am the imbalance of the inkblot,
 the inchoate inevitability of the ineluctable & the irrepressible,
 ictus, ibis, id, & idea.
 I am a jack-of-all-trades
 carving the rungs of Jacob's ladder.
 I am the web of jewels,
 the jutting jaw bone of the jackass,
 the jaunty figure of Janus
 crowned with a garland of jasmine,
 carved jade & raw jasper.
 I am the Khlebnikovian King of Time,
 the kite that crashes against the clouds.
 I am the kind eyes of a woman in love,
 the shrill chirp of the katydid,
 the fundament of the keystone.
 I am the light & love of a lonely spirit.
 I am lodestar & locus solus.
 I am a little mandala.
 A madonna & mahatma
 amongst malnourished mammals.
 I am makeshift & malleable,
 munificent, marvelous,
 a monster of malachite,
 a machine of make-believe molecules,
 a marigold meditating upon materialism,
 a madman at home in the marvelous.
 I am the milestone of mysticism.
 I am the natural history of the nightingale to the nth power.
 I am Oedipus at rest in the organic order,
 the premonition of Prometheus's prayers,
 the false promise of Proteus the prophet,
 the quirky quarrel of quietude & quartet.
 I am the raw flesh of resentment,
 the sleep of the sandman,
 the scintillated sex of the unclean spirit.
 I am the satyr who drowns his sorrows
 in the stone soup of sublimation.
 I am the silken skin spun from the shape-shifter.
 I am the imperfect symmetry of the sunflower.
 I am the scorned synthesis of shaman & schizophrenic.
 I am the tantric testament to the tactile.
 I am the uvular unconscious of utopia.
 I am vicissitude & vicinity,
 violence & vestal virgin,
 vice & versa.
 I am the word wafted by the wind of the world.
 I am Xenos in the land of Yahweh,
 with teeth yellow as yarrow & egg yolk.
 I am yesterday, today, & not yet,
 zephyr, zeitgeist, & zodiac.

You know yourself better
 than you understand the journey of ants.



I seek infinitude
in the paroxysm of hallucinations
as everyday as idle chatter,
burying my muzzle
in the caverns of witness
that sound & resound
their mutable mantras
within the hollow space
between my ears.

I cannot resist the whisper
of rushing water,
the emotivity of lonely crustaceans,
the islands of gray ash,
the wall within the wall.

I cannot evade the vicissitudes
of the cold sun,
the material life of pearls
awakening from their shells,
the waxy fingers
of the yarn painter
grazing the patina
of the clouds.

My speech is muffled,
like words concerning the geometry of the dead.
My fingers make their way
to my mouth on their own.
I shiver in winter
because I have not outgrown my fear
of a punishing God.
With a mandrill's teeth I cut my trail
through epic, mountain, & stone.

You know yourself better than you comprehended
the Orphic mysteries,
the fealty of slaves,
the outflow of phosphorescence.

I shudder
when my lover
touches me.
My delusions are a canvass I carve
in crimson rose, lapis lazuli, & gold.
They record the vision
of telepathic angels
who speak to me in signs
stolen from the realm of the outer spheres.

I think & dream,
fill my lungs with smoke.
I shake & dance
in hallways late at night,
drink honey
mixed with the blood of a sage.
I move & I become.
A butterfly whose metamorphosis
is never done.

Ambiguous hemispheres tantalize me
with their endorphanic haze of uncertainty.



I wander, antennae-driven, without telos
amongst the hermetic magnitude of mammals
in Lascaux
swim with the blind fishes
at the bottom of the sea.
I abjure the clarity of vision
threaded through the needle's eye,
& seek the sleep of a hundred thousand years,
unlearning the names of geometric figures
& arachnoid shapes.
I dissolve the numerical definitude
of the first days of creation,
seek reflection in passageways,
discover portholes in mirrors,
reverse the magnetic conversation of sphere
& star.
I rewrite language
through the mouth-body of the amoeba
& the jawbone-mouth of the sunken dead,
undoing the segmentation
of membrane, veil, & longing to emerge.

I counsel
the opportunists of monism
in the art of tapestry & conundrum,
coruscating with the effulgence
of intergalactic metallurgy,
severing suns
with the precarious force
of the nomadic anti-gluon.
I diverge from the path
of the perfect circle
& bathe in the pulsating stream of heterotropes
amongst green amphibians, golden fishes
& variegated purple stones,
seeking the lissome rapture
of unrefined anarchy.
I displace the center
of being
with the kinetic dynamism
of the galloping multiverse,
replacing kings with yellow poppies,
order with micrology.
& the Phanerozoic
with the not yet
& the still to be seen.

The Names of the Labyrinth

I called it the labyrinth of stars
 the labyrinth that captures us,
 fire labyrinth & blooming labyrinth,
 spoken labyrinth
 the labyrinth that bears witness,
 blind labyrinth & dark labyrinth,
 the white labyrinth of bone,
 labyrinth of visions,
 labyrinth of the urn & labyrinth of memory,
 heart labyrinth, sepal labyrinth,
 labyrinth that draws us near,
 labyrinth that tears us asunder,
 labyrinth of outside, labyrinth of all-around,
 labyrinth of morning, sky labyrinth,
 red & blue moon labyrinth,
 the labyrinth of the wanderer through storm,
 carbon labyrinth, amethyst labyrinth
 labyrinth of the cat's eye,
 labyrinth of harps, of caves, of basalt mines,
 golden labyrinth, amber labyrinth,
 labyrinth of a thousand & one nights,
 labyrinth of iron bars & copper bells,
 coveted labyrinth, borrowed labyrinth,
 labyrinth stolen in darkness,
 black labyrinth, white labyrinth,
 labyrinth of meaning's eyes,
 labyrinth of hands, stone labyrinth,
 silent labyrinth, the scream of labyrinth,
 labyrinth of the chasm, the pink labyrinth of dawn,
 labyrinth of knowing & unknowing,
 labyrinth of light,
 labyrinth set apart, snow labyrinth,
 mountain labyrinth, desert labyrinth,
 earthy labyrinth, vegetal labyrinth,
 belated labyrinth, labyrinth of despair,
 the labyrinth that deceives,
 morning star labyrinth,
 alembic labyrinth, prism labyrinth,
 fractured labyrinth, oblique & pure labyrinth
 mollusk & sickle labyrinth,
 phantom labyrinth, almond labyrinth,
 the labyrinth of the moment,
 future & past labyrinth,
 carnal labyrinth & abstract labyrinth
 the labyrinth of trains,
 the labyrinth of lost meaning,
 scavenger labyrinth, the labyrinth inside the labyrinth,
 labyrinth of here & now, satori labyrinth,
 climbing labyrinth, descending labyrinth,
 the labyrinth of inverted time,
 meandering labyrinth, heavenly labyrinth,
 named & unnamed labyrinth,
 sad labyrinth & blue labyrinth,
 mesomorphic labyrinth, the labyrinth of fishes,
 decaying half-labyrinth of organic life,
 root labyrinth & magic labyrinth
 the labyrinth of silks & murmuring tongues,
 demon labyrinth & the labyrinth of hungry ghosts,



the labyrinth of secret desire,
Chiron's labyrinth, the labyrinth of emptiness,
cradling labyrinth, the crying labyrinth of loss,
the journey of labyrinth, the process of labyrinth,
ink labyrinth & mirror labyrinth,
the glowing labyrinth of embers,
the labyrinth of yesterday, today, & tomorrow,
blood labyrinth & wine labyrinth,
unripe labyrinth & molten labyrinth,
dark forest labyrinth, cavernous labyrinth,
deep purple labyrinth, sonorous labyrinth,
silent, silent labyrinth,
foreign labyrinth, alien labyrinth
familiar labyrinth, garden labyrinth,
mad labyrinth & transforming labyrinth,
the labyrinth of starfish, of oysters,
dung-beetle labyrinth, the labyrinth of being,
anarchy's labyrinth, the labyrinth of shells,
the tortoise & hare labyrinth,

the labyrinth of stammer, of sutra, of thumbnail, & paste.



Masako's Story (Kikuko Otake)

978-0-9781414-6-2

Kikuko (Kay) Otake was five years old when the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, August 6, 1945. In her book *Masako's Story* (forthcoming from Ahadada), she offers a survivor's perspective.. Professor Kikuko (Kay) Otake was born on February 22, 1940 in Osaka, Japan. She earned her B.A. from Tsuda College of Tokyo, Japan in 1962 in English Literature. In August of 1968, she came to the US and in September 1987 earned her M.A. in Education from California State University in Los Angeles. Professor Otake is an award-winning poet who regularly publishes tanka and haiku.

Oulipoems (Philip Terry)

978-0-978-1414-2-4

Philip Terry was born in Belfast in 1962 and has been working with Oulipian and related writing practices for over twenty years. His lipogrammatic novel *The Book of Bachelors* (1999), was highly praised by the Oulipo: "Enormous rigour, great virtuosity—but that's the least of it." Currently he is Director of Creative Writing at the University of Essex, where he teaches a graduate course on the poetics of constraint. His work has been published in *Panurge*, *PN Review*, *Oasis*, *North American Review*, and *Onedit*, and his books include the celebrated anthology of short stories *Ovid Metamorphosed* (2000) and *Fables of Aesop* (2006). His translation of Raymond Queneau's last book of poems, *Elementary Morality*, is forthcoming from Carcanet. *Oulipoems* is his first book of poetry.

The Impossibility of Dreams (David Axelrod)

978-0-9781414-3-1

Dr. David B. Axelrod has published hundreds of articles and poems as well as sixteen books of poetry. Among his many grants and awards, he is recipient of three Fulbright Awards including his being the first official Fulbright Poet-in-Residence in the People's Republic of China . He was featured in *Newsday* as a "Star in his academic galaxy," and characterized by the *New York Times* as "A Treat." He has shared the stage with such notables as Louis Simpson, X. J. Kennedy, William Stafford, Robert Bly, Allen Ginsburg, David Ignatow and Galway Kinnell, in performance for the U.N., the American Library Association, the Struga Festival, and hundreds more schools and public events. His poetry has been translated into fourteen languages and he is a frequent and celebrated master teacher.

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