

art tickle you late

by Michael F. Gill

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Pulled Away From Phantasos

When dreams rainbow-ray my enkindled facade,
the heart is sky-bound inscrutable fire-walking pulse.

Every sentence: a slipstream of ambulance sirens
that zipline across the abyss of time and fall
upon the outstretched hand of an arbitrary man
who lives three lifetimes away.

The nature of flying
is that it's always met with interruption.
I was always meant for the ground.
The sky, like anything else,
was made to be snatched
from those who cling.

The Sunset Resembles A Bullfight

Their sun-setting mind preoccupied
with the number of pages left
in their soon-to-be-bestselling memoir.

Their sun-setting body hung from a clothesline of bruises.

Their sun-setting song entitled “All endings are premature.”

Their sunseting voice: a smashed vinyl record.
A firm belief that when the skinny needle
hits the reconstructed groove, some of their
truth will spill out.

Someone told them that truth
is written on very thin leaves,
leaves which scatter when steps
approach the speed of wind.
But it's getting late. No one can
read what the leaves say without the light.

A sunset as an entrance to the powerlessness of memory,
a bullfight. It's happening now.

Eight-and-a-half seconds of fame
is trying to endure for centuries.

It can be done, they say. It *can* be done.

While I Was Waiting

I looked down at my carrot-noodle soup
and the hair caught inside it was furious at me
for I was spoiling its view of the sun.

At the rest stop, the narrative arc of my life
got off of the bus and intentionally boarded
another bus with an unmarked destination.

As the bus departed,
I stood there contemplating time.
Time is for the sober people of this world.
The intoxicated do not experience time.

I began to wish I was the hair caught inside the soup:
to be so indifferent yet confident, unwanted but unavoidable,
something that causes immediate reaction.
Something you just can't leave lying around.

The Morning After Purpose Was Shot Though My Head

2007.
I am sleeping
after having
the finest euphoria.

When she pulled the trigger
all I could see were
infatuated stripes.

At eight forty-four a.m.,
I deliver new mail
to each of the twelve floors
of my temp job.
I've never felt
so mentally clean,
so weightless
inside myself.
Why didn't
anyone notice?

Maybe they all knew
what I didn't:

that fire is brief,
and there's
a kind of inhumanity
in the way
every match dies—
automatic,
passive,
without any hope
of persistence.

Dear Arsonist

Can you pour some disinfectant on this sacrilegious scent of longing?
Can you seep a set of invisible genders inside my sweat?

Our coming together
was an alliance of fire
born from the lineage of sorrow.

I've yet to escape
this heritage of abandonment.

My brain is full of wet matches.

All I can think of
is how
I need a fire
to burn my past.

Please,

come back
and
finish me off.

Man-Made

1

We learn how to breathe spontaneously and let our tongues follow as honestly as they can. My honesty always disappoints me. It's so unsure of itself. I can not evaporate the invisible guillotine that's sitting above my head, so I watch a fountain spilling itself out, regurgitating its tears in a loop. This is a monument that humans have made in their own image.

2

The bottle rockets were filled with diplomas that had a unique set of directions to the moon scrawled on their back. They were dropped in the ocean as a time capsule. They were trained to become hieroglyphics.

When you keep everything the way it is, you end up with a foreign reflection. Sometimes you look in the mirror to see a pantry bulging with sealed cans of fruit. Do not open until everyone I know is dead.

3

I drank the entire waterbed, and I feel I am about to dissolve inside this mattress. Men built the water inside the bed. Men have now built the water that's in my body.

I am a canyon of bubble wrap who can not accept flatness as his final resting place. Relaxation is annoying. It keeps adding more and more years to my life. I don't feel human—I don't feel restless.

4

All the local businesses lay eggs that are wearing navy blue neckties. They toss them out the window of the 87th floor, expecting them to fly with only the clouds at their disposal. The eggshells become possessed with the vocation of being translucent.

When the eggshells land on the ground they get hired by large, publicly-traded companies. They are monuments that humans have made in their own image.

Mohawk

You cut all your outer hair off in the bathroom.
Your inner hair remains, running down the center
of your head like a spine. You've left your genetics
on the floor, and the air is sticky, with
brown strands feathering its skin.

After you've left to go on stage, I am washing
my hands and finding that most of the orphanages
that held your discarded hairs are now closed.
There's only one, hidden in the orange rug, that still has
a clump of hair for adoption. I caress it in my hands,
the DNA is still warm.

Wrapped in a tissue, I store this recipe of your living
body inside a book of my poems. I figured they would
get along well, as they share in common a backbone
made from sugars and phosphates joined by ester. As
they are both composed of repeating structural units,
datasets transcribed from those small sequential moments
surrounding their birth.

While I watch the thermodynamics of these two items
shift, your hairs give off low-frequency vibrations. My
book of poems grows dense with the throb of bass.

Low frequency signals follow the curvature of the earth.
They are called ground waves, and their strength is not
diluted by absorption. The tremoring of your DNA acts
as the bassline of this room.

You're in the theater with the rest of the cast now,
brushing, backcombing, and blow-drying what's
left of your hair, holding it in place with a combination
of egg whites, corn starch, and collagen.

I don't think you realize that the low-pitched vibrations
you give off are the hardest sounds to reproduce when
it comes to audio engineering. It takes a tremendous
amount of amplification just to be able to hear their
existence.

Your hairs quiver alongside seismic waves running
through the surface of the earth; they make geophysical
exploration possible in any poetry.

When you walk back in at 3 AM, you won't realize
how your fibers have made the precise rhythms of
nature audible to my ears.

You'll just be tired, and want to go to sleep, smothering
all the horizontal humming your body can handle by
lying flat on your back.

Fie A.M. Together

The skipping of a pulse falls from the yawning sun
as I swirl through your breath at 5 AM EST.

Your hand is stirring. It is growing a sixth sense
on my knee. Knife-shaped light presses
itself against our chest: crested, heated.

The shower is a mist garden that is full of whispers.
My memory flounders, clean.

All the nostalgia
for a morning spent together
drips upon the street,
becomes puddles.

Looking down, I am careful
not to stare at their reflection
for too long.

Pop

When you lie down wearing my oversized sweatshirt,
my eyes pop open on the pillow.

A momentary chill
curls across the mattress
with a drawing in of air
and a clench of taut limbs.

I wonder if we both realize
that this slight tightening
of a quadricep muscle
is really a telepathic shiver
of people pressing against each other
in the most subtle sense of CPR.

Resolution

After marveling
at the new year's eve interpreter
and the length of her long expression,

after sitting next to a white woman's
sermon about the unbelievable
lightness of her homophobia,

after schlepping through
Faneuil Hall's food court
with a techno mix of
"The Chanukah Song"
blasted above our hunger,

we arrive behind the aquarium
to watch the fire shoot out of us
and float high above the water.

April and Brenda
play duck duck goose
using penguins and polar bears.
Brenda feels a tinge of solitary
being confined to playing the latter,
but April states, *you are like
a coca-cola polar bear, you socialize,*
and then wraps her arms
all over Brenda's left leg.

Our conversation grows antsy.
We need to clear out our thoughts
before the birth of a year.
We know the inebriated train ride home
will offer little space for our hearts.

Government Center is an
army of marching hip-huggers
eager to follow the siren
of a midnight alarm,

but no one seems to have brought
the sexual revolution with them.

Over these sloped steps
are so much ill-fated footing;
a single breeze knocks
over a group of dominoes
wearing six-inch high heels.

I slip through my doorway at 1:30
to the sounds of my roommate
having vociferous sex
with her bedroom door
wide open.

I feel she is challenging me,
fastballing my resolution home.

Yes, I say,
*This **will** be the year
where we do bold things.*

Morning Commute In June

A set of red sneakers and brilliant periwinkle dresses
flutter on thirty-eight-year-old anxiety disorders.

Mammoth white tissue boxes
masquerade as souped-up sneakers.

Two extremely large ice cubes cover a set of matching pupils.

A green shirt composed of neon frogs
that read small journals filled with gluttonous thought.

A robotic voice over the P.A. stuttering
St- St- St- St- St- St- St- St- St- St- St- St- State Street Station.

Everyone on the train sipping their iced coffee at the same time,
and listening to the sound it makes in unison.

A mosaic of bricks built by rainbow red pen and silver-bound paper.

This sketch being crinkled by a slim meter of time.

Rainstorm / Headstorm

All the faces on the bus are written in a
cold Monday morning font, but I, I am
humid, sticky inside a set of phonetics.

1:30 lunch has woken me and my spice racks
from their silent meditation, so I, I am rainstorm,
inking in the swelter of an afternoon sun.

These notebooks speak 5:05 in the evening.
They are diaphanous pages, charcoal sides,
an erosion of spit and ferocity, and I, I am
the smattering of jest in the palimpsest.

At 8 pm the raw potatoes and I are awaiting
transformation. Piquant flavors are
unearthed in Kelvin and the calligraphy
of tongue, so I, I boil everything firm.

Midnight attempts to hammock
a thesis between these sheets, and I,
I can't resist, letting an image nation fill me
with the polyrhythmic pulse I need
to stir and stenograph this heart
onto Boston's red bricks.

Is there really an end to a dictionary,
to these bulbous expository organs I call my lungs?
From what I can tell, it's going to rain
an entirely new set of alphabets tomorrow.

The Highway of Order

Or, Why I Write So Much

To unload my doubt
To remove the indifference
resting against my breath
sitting in my sky

To parallel the geyser
To release
& erupt with purpose
acid from my tongue

To disrobe
To be set free
my brain ablaze
with improvisation

To stitch up
To know how to diffuse
my convoluted schisms with dadaism
the traffic, the congestion, the migraines

To create order
To travel down
with profuse articulation
expressways of photographic precision

To map my subterranean crawl
And lay it upon the cartography
towards the irrational
of rationality

Nothing Satisfies

nothing asiitfess but poetry
nothing satiesisf but poetry
nothing tsaisfies but poetry
nothing iastsfsei but poetry
nothing satisiefs but poetry
nothing tssaeiifs but poetry
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nothing safetiiss but poetry
nothing astiüfsse but poetry
nothing isaisftes but poetry
nothing stasiifes but poetry
nothing iatfsisse but poetry
nothing stiasiefs but poetry
nothing staiïsefs but poetry
nothing astiseisf but poetry
nothing sftiiasse but poetry
nothing sitaeisfs but poetry
nothing satiïsefs but poetry
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nothing atiesisfs but poetry
nothing astiïesfs but poetry
nothing isasfetis but poetry
nothing staissife but poetry
nothing tsaiïssie but poetry
nothing saitisesf but poetry

i express-expunge uncanny
ineffable details on pocket seashells /// i compose

unfinished symmetricrs unfinished mstyremisic unfinished mtymesrsic
unfinished mymsreitcs unfinished symmtercis unfinished ssmymirmetc
unfinished symemitcrs unfinished symtimcesr unfinished mymcsirset
unfinished smymetisrc unfinished ymsemtrcis unfinished tesymmcrsi
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Instructions For A Performing Body

Use solitude as a foundation for listening.
Use listening as a foundation for speaking.

Stare at your audience
like you stare at the deep silver
of a computer for hours unfettered.

Say something once and let it go.
Neurosis is fire.
If fire isn't fed, it burns out.
Climb into the mouth of fear
and dissolve its teeth.

Everything we feel is a bolt of lightning:
powerful, illuminating, and gone in a flash.
A one syllable symphony.

Keyhole

If love is a foreign substance inside your body,
an indomitable force of physics,
a door waiting to be unlocked,
then in poetry I have found its keyhole.
I have found my reasons.
I know what shapes I must become
in order to turn the locks.

I Am Living Beside You

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The Poet Next To Me

He sits next to what he says.
He sits next to me and my friends.
He writes a small pilot light that sits below an aging stove.
He holds malleable words, precious metals.
He goes to sit down and receives a standing ovation.
He sits next to compliments.
We are all so hungry to be fed by his words.
We're embarrassed by our poems.
He's embarrassed by our reaction.
He will dissolve into the far end of someone's face.
He sighs with the wet gray fabric of a November evening.
He does not know what to make of his own facility.
He will dissolve inside the solutions of a game he's mastered.
He stands on stage.
He has dried his face of compliments.
His falls into the dissolution of memory.
He is prone to vanishing acts.
He will dissolve into the end of his words.
He begins to start disappearing.

Text Messages From Whitney

You can buy cow tongues at the supermarket.

You're busy?

That's lame, Michael.

How's it going, Michael?

That sounds terrible.

Years of subconscious training you'll never know about.

Snide comments.

I need some motivation.

And a gigantic void.

You are ridiculous.

Snide comment.

Those are some illustrative words. Thank you for your note!

Omg it's nice out.

I always have ideas but am easily discouraged.

You were in a room soaked with bacon?

This sounds like a dream.

I have a tide chart on my wall that agrees.

Buy a car!

How about gripe? Can we do that?

I'm hungry now.

Snide comment.

Is she a lesbian for real, then? And yes, islands and beach.

This is a pretty good temperature we're having.

I just woke up. Insane.

I am considering using this rash I have and pretending it's contagious.

I smell kind of funny from working in the heat this morning. Just saying.

I will be sure to notify Twitter.

I'm going to an engagement party now. By a lake. With sort of a sweater on.

:

Sorry, accidentally sent you a colon.

You know me better than I know myself.

Melancholy breaks things up a bit.

I think I am adjusting to having an absence of chaos in my life.

What are you feeling melancholy about?

That too. I spend so much of my time just missing people.

He sat there for hours letting it go before we got there.

I love it there. It reminds me of who I really am.

For me, it's just nice to hear so many people tell the truth and love it.

I'm being incredibly melodramatic about my job today.

I'm making pizza from scratch again. The yeast is blooming!

No hiking for me. Bowling and henna, though.

Hey! You're awake!

I just got a call from an emergency room for someone else.

I love quickly and easily.

I want everything for about 10 minutes!

Dating is an easy way to distract yourself from yourself.

But I get to blame you if everyone gets the plague!

I have a pretty great bruise on my arm from your hug.

while country house-sitting for j.p. sartre's ghost, i receive an
inscrutable telegram that makes me smile when i read it out loud at a
slow pace

the bottleneck sword the heavenly no sarcastic rubble

empty tombs solar hum silent gumming static

distorted sunshine burn proof ice cream escalator slippers

necktie nibblers slowed-down sabotage horse-fish in bloom

english major mayonnaise unassuming marathon feet blisterfur street

a goose is as a goose as eschew shoehorn

the dirt shrugs itself on old mops bunions fall asleep on bumpers

you are a road wart just a hipostrophe

back at the sasquatch nothing was verified

in the trenches glue was found sleeping on tongues

each sense of restlessness was a vintage overnight headache

Thoughts Upon Watching "2001: A Space Odyssey" In A Bar With The Volume On Mute

Apes: They delineate Jupiter as the bones under their fluffy skin.

Cleaning: A sprinkler in space is watering the weightlessness.

Epidemic: A set of feline whimpers accompany the hiss of magnetic tape.

Cryogenic: The suspended flight of messenger doves.

Malfunction: A group of irate hawks start flying through the sewers.

Humans: A hurricane wind has dove into the open gash of a machine.

Radio: The crickets chirp as if they were the official sounds of silence.

Helmetless: The movie "Breathless" is overrated.

Daisy: A bicycle is sinking to the ocean floor.

Monolith: Life won't stop echoing inside this set of cells.

Stargate: The Earth is one giant dradle; it will stop spinning someday.

Deathbed: A woodpecker trapped in a jar pecks in rhythm to escape.

Fetus: Outside the jar, a woodpecker's beak is wet as it tattoos the ocean.

Music: Sound of piano spoils mood; too much human, not enough nature.

200 Motels

In Arctic Circles
In Boston
In Montreal
In Lima
In Shanghai
In Mumbai
In New York City
In Paris
In Naples
In Dublin
In Budapest
In Amsterdam
In Prague
In Cairo
In Madrid
In Istanbul
In Melbourne
In Berlin
In Zurich
In Nairobi
In Sydney
In Johannesburg
In Stockholm
In Copenhagen
In Krakow
In Barcelona
In Wellington
In Marseille
In Frankfurt
In Buenos Aires
In Brussels
In Glasgow
In Arctic Circles

I awaken

the music for two orphan instruments

a man is crying himself to sleep inside a bathroom stall

is he me

they're cleaning grease off my emotions

how I feel is always one dictionary page away

the honk and holler of a soda can as it opens

then the flattening of fizz

I start over

Two Courtroom Sketches Of My Dream Proceedings

Cracked knuckles
on the precipice of self-hatred

A north star with fallopian tubes
awaiting the thrust of a lascivious comet

Overheard

All These Poems

His house
around her moat.

A train pushing
through stone.

Flutes drawing
their high pitches.

Exhales in
the aftershave

of appetite.

t t t

h h h

e e e

r r r

a a a

p p p

y y y

f f f

o o o

r r r

t t t

h h h

e e e

d d d

e e e

s s s

p p p

e e e

r r r

a a a

t t t

e e e

l l l

y y y

s s s

i i i

n n n

g g g

l l l

e e e

Everything Else Can Wait

The laundry hasn't been done in a month.
The dishes are stacked high.
The bedroom is a landfill.
Dinner has been skipped once again.
All calls go unanswered.

But the poem is written.

When someone accidentally awakens
the vacancies in my life and the
rush of blood begins
to steal every other breath,
I seek comfort
in the most tangible
intangible thing.

My first instinct
is not to cry
or touch myself
or call someone
no,
I start to write

and hope
that the stanzas
will cradle me back.

Inseparable Blues

My **skin** is a hard wood desk

()

My **nerves** are an **aqueous** paint gun of sighs

()

I walk outside wearing **mismatched** blues

()

Me plus parentheses **minus** parentheses

()

The **rain** starts **stripping** off one hundred **fifty** cubic **inches** of me

()

I have 32 unnumbered feelings **under** my fingerprint

()

I think I am terrified that love is on the foreign **side** of my world

()

Pairs of Character Traits I Exhibit On First Dates

Enthusiastic & Powerless
Genderplural & Polyvocal
Disconnected & Fantastical
Unvalidated & Unverified
Sugary & Unintentional

Boring & Overwhelming
Cacophony & Melancholy
Performer & Squirmer
Witty & Lonesome
Smiling & Confused

Awkward Small Talk

The language where we walk has run out fast.

My words are only a small canvas of dust.

What are we looking for in each other?

The fondest feeling of inertia.

But silences are sometimes the only way home.

Saturday Night in August

In the morning, neighbors harass our landlord,
saying there's puke all over the yard.
It was actually just a string of brown wigs.

The Anonymous Woman & Her Dog Who Defecated Down Our Entire Block

We all wondered when she would notice. She didn't.

We studied her by shouting.

Every house honked its horn, crinkled its nose.

Soon we had a garbage strike.

We had to flush the sidewalk down the toilet by ourselves.

Marcel Duchamp would have been proud.

She kept walking. The dog kept walking.

Our eyes were left wavering, like anxious pendulums.

Time & The Bell

The six of us dropped the giant church bell inside the oval-shaped trench near Mary Cummings Park in Lexington.

We own sixty-two acres of land here at *Bell, Bury, & Beyond*. We own prairies that are now a massive graveyard for large instruments of time.

We dispose of malfunctioning clocks, calendars, metronomes, and hourglasses, but church bells are our biggest business.

The hourly chimes at churches across Massachusetts have long been recordings played through large speakers. Still, the sight of clocks, the vibration of alarms, the metered pulse of a gong on the hour—this is sustenance. I don't know if we're ever oriented without it.

It feels nourishing to bury these bells today under a red September sky. The six of us sweat a river off our backs in order to impregnate time below our feet. We tempt the awakening of a non-linear experience.

We are reminding the cosmos that time will be the one marker we leave charred across the earth after life ceases to be possible. We are burying a bell into the heart of a vibrating topography.

Now that you know this, don't be surprised if I start loving someone and you can hear a ringing coming from my chest. It's a reminder that the hour is right, the sun and moon are in perfect orientation, and time has become the sound of our biological clocks ticking in unison.

The Scientist & His Heart Are Roommates

The scientist has a frostbitten ear.
His heart speaks the mathematical sublime.
They sleep in twin beds.

The scientist longs for a smooth set of logic in his dreams.
The heart has woken him up and is saying:
We're going to slowly chew calculus until it brings answers.

Scientist says I am cold and my body kept growing today.
We can't help but stutter when trying to explain our existence.
Scientist tells his heart to go back to sleep.

The heart lies down,
gnawing on the geology
found deep in the scientist's voice.
The heart starts to analyze
the snoring of the voice,
and compares it to the noise a door makes
when it creaks open and close.

In milky light morrow,
Scientist says
Good Morning Heart.
The heart says I'm a pimple.
The heart says I'm a damp hole.
The heart says I'm on the ground.
The heart says I'm asleep when you need me.
The heart says no one listens to the hell that broke out of me.

The scientist goes to his lab and starts studying wind, calculus,
and why his frostbitten ear looks to be shaped like a cardioid.
There is so much he doesn't understand. His cranky heart starts to snore.

Double Jesus

Double Jesus
has two heads
that died for
your sins.
At mass, the
communion
of his body
tastes like Oreo:
two-faced with
sugary ideas
below the surface.

Double Jesus
loves to ride
his bike around
town. One
head looks
forward and
the other looks
back. You can
not sneak up
on the Messiah.

Double Jesus
preaches thick.
Left brain plays
the father while
right brain plays
the son. His
heart works hard
to prevent each
brain from developing
its own personality.

Double Jesus
was born of a
virgin that had
two sets of genitals.

His whole body
has never slept.
He has four shoulders
because two
were not enough
to carry the cross.
Judas is unsure
about kissing
the savior twice.
He just doesn't
swing that way.

Double Jesus
is hard to crucify
because he requires
two trials and
each verdict
must give out
the same ruling.
One of the heads
is always innocent,
and they both
answer to the
same first name.

Double Jesus
promises that his
resurrection
will be in full color.
Two noodles will
slowly rise in
the salty air
like elderly fireworks.

Protestants and
Catholics have
already drawn sides,
but only time will
tell which head
will be revered more.

Birth

Saturday morning
I woke up having
given birth to
eight kittens.
My body has
a funny idea
of combating
my solitary.
All those nights
I slept holding
a black cat planted
so many seeds.

One of the kittens
is very intelligent
and stubborn.
I dress him
in business clothes
and boxing gloves,
teach him how
to stand up on two legs.
He travels downtown,
strutting upright
with a briefcase
in his right paw.

I stay home in bed
curled up
as a croissant,
lips unpuckered,
sluggishly giving
myself a spit-shine.
Friday night I flinch,
and fuse absent children
back inside my body.
I snore while
going into labor
with equilibrium.
I only heed
the birthcall of kittens.

The He-Lizard & The She-Lizard With Little White Aprons

(Title taken from a poem by Federico García Lorca)

Scene: The kitchen with many boiling pots and pans

Said The He-Lizard: A crowded auditory sound hits my ear in this outrage of a kitchen. Could it be my beloved friend and the eloquent shape of her three-foot tongue ?

Said The She-Lizard: It is me and my satisfied shadow. Shall I postpone my urge to procreate with your belly, and trip on the sweet baskets of breeding around your lips?

Said The He-Lizard: That's not necessary my dear protective wormfence, who sprouts around me like uncut armor. I need your tenacity to interrogate the oxtail soup and the carnivals of jello and gravy. Can you negotiate me a flavor that's unrestrained by decorum, a flavor where twenty-six Greek gods have previously bathed in its broth?

The She Lizard Responds: I shall do so, my splendid clamdigger who furiously trembles away my anxiety. While I am taming this stew scatter, please lead the wild gander of malformed duck, quail, and turkeys into the eye of tandoori ovens. Mix in some unrumped umbrellas of broccoli and collie, and steam it next to the halibut from the North Pacific River.

Said The Lizards In Unison: The trill of a torch blossoms in our culinary craftsmanship, our kindred merge of hunger, our aprons of August weather. We will outstrip any modesty that we lay across our table. We will come together and eat!

Japanese Shoreline

across breaker-rinsed
beach

vivid thoughts
ready for sleep

midsummer sun
setting inside

an unmovable
sky

a small
mosquito net

filled
with strawberries

twenty-six fireflies
covered up

on a rickshaw
dappled pink

What?

Inspired by the Zen poems of Ko Un

1

Green frogs do not hear the cuckoo
when they open their mouth.
What a fine sound food makes!

2

Mind is making soup.
Go away, flying caterpillar.
You don't look like nature.

3

A mother stares at her son's prick
and tells him that she created it.
No wonder the crickets are in town.

4

What? A firecracker went off
in front of a mountain flower.
The river rippled for days.
Didn't you hear?

5

Are you sleeping? I've been stripped
like a pile of melted snow. It's going
to be hard to confine me to one space.

Letter To A Poet

You're trying too hard.
You're not looking anyone in the eye.

You're being defensive yet again.
People are just trying to help.
You are listening to your brain way, way too much.

You want so badly to be affectionate with everyone you meet.
Your love life is a scar that keeps getting harder to hide with clothes.

Did you feel like an alien the last time you held someone's hand?
Could you separate it from fiction?

Too many times you've listened
to the sounds of sex
bleed through apartment walls.
Try to realign that stupid
stupid stupid part of your brain
that equates love with sex.

You are getting younger in spirit.
Do not to beat yourself up about your lack of experience—
you were sheltered as a child. You kept
sheltering yourself throughout your education.

Don't whine that you never learned how to blow your nose.
That you wiped it on your sleeves until you turned 13.
You still are very comfortable picking your nose.

You can be so helpless, morose. It's not a badge of honor.
Everyone wants to see more confidence emanating from your body.
I wish you would stop deliberately acting like a loner.

You wonder why you can't get anything going on?
Why people are not attracted to the idea of you?

You're trying too hard.
You're not looking anyone in the eye.
You're getting too old for this.

Fewer People

If you are reading this, there is a good chance
I love you more than I should.
I'm sick of hiding this fact from you.

I'm embarrassed
but that's just because my brain
finds everything I do unacceptable.

I want to love fewer people.
I want to be concentrated.
But no, it's not happening.

Trilce, Eunoia, Boggle

When the Peruvian poet Ceasar Vallejo named his second book *Trilce*, he embedded his life inside the title – a word that he made up himself. Scholars have come to the conclusion that the word was a combination of the Spanish words Trillón (“Quintillion”) and Trece (“Thirteen”).

The prefixes of these words both signify "three," but when the stems and roots are chopped off to make “Trilce,” you end up with the indefinite "trill" from trillón, and the "teen" part of thirteen, which signifies "10."

So numerically written out, Trilce would look like:
1,000000000..... 10

A word made up of a milky way of zeroes with two ones stranded on each end. A number which evokes threeness without actually having a three in it.

It was this ghost of threeness that was haunting Vallejo in his life. He was struggling to believe in the Christian trinity of Father, Son, Holy Spirit, and attempting to smooth out the three-pronged relationship between himself, his mother, and his lovers.

Those two ones on the opposites ends of the number Trilce represented these poles of mother and lover, religion and blasphemy. The case can be made that Vallejo saw himself as the void of zeroes in between these poles.

I want to have a language as rich as the word Trilce. There's so much void at the heart of my life's experience, that the art of storytelling often looks unappealing, alienating. What is a story anyhow? Something we tell ourselves to make bridges. The history of what has happened to your body.

I remember saying out loud to myself a few years ago –
"I wish there was some short form of writing that was open to experimentation, contained lots of ideas, and used elevated language."
I had a bookshelf full of avant-garde novels and art, but no, no poetry...

The Canadian poet Christian Bök named his second book *Eunoia*, which is the shortest word in the English language that contains all five vowels. Each chapter in *Eunoia* is dedicated to one vowel. The A chapter only uses words with "A" in it, the E chapter only uses words with "E" in it, and so on.

The result is pure sonority, poems where every word is undeniably linked to each other no matter what kind of narrative takes place. Many sections remind me of the word lists you create when you play a game of Boggle: **Tit tat cat tap top pot cap sap**

There is a freedom that allows these words to sound nonsensical when you speak them in a row, but you can *hear* how they are related to each other.

This tonality in *Eunoia* and Boggle have been touchstones for my own vocabulary. Through them, I've found that the closest words to my heart have been words linked by sound and music, words not necessarily strung with meaning but with mutant forms of dadaist sound poetryyyyyyyhsdlj kh j l soioioiu!!!! drrrrrr drrrr doom fiiiiissssss

I know that that sounds like a cop out. Speaking gibberish as art can reveal how poor I am at articulation, but its the closest language I've got to describe the ineffable. I will make no apologies for rejhfowiejijiofjer, because apologies just get in the way of what I'm feeling.

My version of Trilce is out there, and my tongue has evolved from grunts and groans, to obscure phrases, to honing in on one term that could summarize all my fictional fantasias, inexperience, and imperfect precision.

As of now, the word I've sewn across my heart is “imperfiction.”