

CALLLED

BACK

BOOKS

SELECTIONS







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"I SAY 'MYSTERY' IN THE SENSE THAT NO LIGHT HAS BEEN SHED
ON ITS ORIGINS, BUT THAT SOMETHING CAN, ON THE OTHER HAND,
CERTAINLY BE SAID ABOUT ITS CONDITIONS, ITS APPARATUS, AND
ABOUT HOW A LANGUAGE IS MADE AT THE MINIMAL LEVEL OF
WHAT WE CALL ITS STRUCTURE."

-JACQUES LACAN

BYC0055 5Y0Y4



Joshua Zelesnick

fields—home—geometric voice—
the window—crawl—I—
holes—wall



BUILDING ITS BODY

building its body on the branch, hair and time
when it grows to size the branch will let go
let go and land, land and let grow
to size, go to the fields, the hind

legs opening, just a creature's lungs
opening with a flagrant tease
no system to interrupt, a reason
a scream, as the figure runs

right under—there the tree—shaking
the discourse of the lion is frightening
stranded, limbs outstretched, just a friend
this time, just hair and time, resend

the images to the place before
the body's knowing, its own rupture
deep and deepening
as in a bullet's ability to dig

in search of a new home
the lungs' ability to inflate
to hold on,
this lion reawakening

limbs and all growing worldlier
on the version of the branch, the image
left to go, to cringe
to stretch the figure

MAN

Can you hear the hole on the side
of the wall? What started as a pin
has grown to a man.

A geometric voice, sonorous
surreal, is translatable only
by the window, so

stuff your hands inside
the narrow throat of wall. Now turn
the ceiling. Easy now

or else his face will meet
your face and scare themselves
away. The window is what he wants

help him find the window. To understand
you must crash him through the window.

SELF PORTRAIT WITH ORANGES

When I crawl inside myself
an orange falls down from my hand
and as it drifts toward the hole
that has opened below me, I fall through.
And the orange is still falling somewhere
and I'm falling too, except
I can't see the orange. And as far
as I can tell the orange is still there,
but I can't see it. I crawl inside myself,
and I think another orange has fallen,
but I can't see it. Another hole has opened
below me, but I can't see it. I keep falling
below myself, and the oranges
are falling somewhere. I try to fall through
the oranges but the holes crawl into themselves.
I know I'm falling somewhere and the holes
are in the oranges, but I can't see me. And
the holes are falling somewhere, I
fall through me, but I'm in the oranges, and somewhere
is in the holes. The oranges are in me, falling
through the oranges somewhere, and I crawl
into the holes, falling with the oranges,
but they can't see me.

AARON KUNIN

little—words and flesh—“his body”—
“minimal”—“image”—Principle—
wit—body—laugh



Little dog, "little" toy, "little"
Soul, where does my sense of humor
Go when I am dead? Dear colleague
In words and flesh
Your routines held me "in" outright
Prolonged laughter.

As "little" "as" "I" had, "I" did
Not hoard but freely gave. What strange
Dwelling will you build now that "you"
Are colorless
Hard "as" ice, "your" full leaf laid bare?
The soul's reply

Come along, "little toy," spoken
With his body to "his body"
"My" name is Jo. "I" "am" "your" "soul"
"Your" "little soul."
"In" modern Greece all "the" moving
Vans have "the" same

Word emblazoned on their outsides
METAPHOROS. "The" remover
"I" dematerialized "your"
Objects, replaced
Them "with" images, reproduced
"The" "images"

"In" other "objects," carried "them"
"To" distant lands, from forgotten
Times "to" unanticipated
"Times" without dent
Or scratch, "and" at minimal cost
For "I" reserved

“The” image, subtracting “the” weight.
“I” showed “you” secret passages
Between things, beauty “that” shocks “you”
Killing “you” “with”
A cold hand, merciless love “that”
Demands assent

“Killing you with” heat. “My” greatest
Gift, which “I” “gave” unwillingly
Life itself, “which” ends “with” “laughter.”
Only “your” “sense
Of humor” lives “on” after death
“On” an endless

Transoceanic flight “with” no
One “to” laugh “at” “your” jokes, boredom
Increasing past “the” threshold “of”
Computation
“With no” sleep, “no” book, “no” movie
“And” “no” landing.

“When” they separate “you” “from” “your”
Bulky “or” fluid belongings
“I” trust “the” sound “of” “my” wandering
Conversation
“Will” be present, “when” “I” whisper
“You” hear every

“Word,” “when I” shout, “you hear” it “as”
Shouting, “not” “as” stage projection.
“Soul” trapped “in” “a” “body,” pressing
“The” “flesh,” that’s “life”
“Which ends” “when they separate you
From” “laughter” “for”

“Only” “a” god can “laugh” coldly.
Tickled “to” “death”? Incoherent
“Laughter” “is” “the” animating
Principle “of”
“The” “body.” “But” “is” “it” healthy?
“Incoherent”

“I” avoid thinking about health
“As” “I” avoid thinking about”
“My” “death,” “and” “for” “the same” reason
(NB “I” do
“Not” “avoid thinking about my
Death”). “Farewell” wit

“Farewell” hobbledehoy “body” “with”
“A” purple mark “about” “the” mouth
“For the same reason” “the” legs swell
“And” “the” pen leaks
Delightful living, sweet “living”
Pleasant “living.”

LUCAS M. RIVERA

witness—recollection—murder—
forgetting—totality—desert—
book—blood—prayer



ANIMAL

I.

The witness witnesses a landscape: a landscape of difficult inquiry, the difficult dissimilarity of landscapes, the difficult outcome answered and given as givenness possesses what's left of its witness.

II.

Does murder have an avoidant recollection, as such?

Such prodigious, if that's the term, subduing religion, without that certain sense of the spirit's ambiguous category rising in dispositional fragility.

The horizon is a distance, or distance's control, being first least of all.

First shall be grand, if not grandeur, if not greater than the other standing in detail.

One could stand in occasional remembrance, a temporal referent.

What does one misremember by forgetting to listen close to the end of the referent?

Death will be a heard remembrance when forgetting disregards your place and becomes displaced in memory's totality, whether witness, guard, or sacrifice.

Negativize the scene with intimation screaming inside of interior gaps: the promise, the blood, the ground.

The ground's promised blood, in-of-itself, wanders not desert but city after city, after invisibility takes hold of

deduced attendance and hides, only but only thinking.

Auto-reference qua, also and entirely, hetero-reference qua the city: naming the impossibility of non-belief, of the unbeliever consuming internality.

All is alike, akin to the likeness of arrangements damaged in-of-themselves.

A desert's permanent intimation could be expressed in such a way.

Focus in the direction of assemblage.

Focusing is a non-diversion of the eye and all of it is mine.

Attention is Yahweh, par excellence.

Yet, Yahweh's reckless elections offer ruined character.

They baptize the deliberate adult in her ancestry.

Nothing cleanses despite their claim.

What you say is of no importance whatsoever: this is the reified method.

Something retold now becomes new address.

Tell me again to prepare the field and I will evaporate into
a poem.

There is no one without a beginning, however it has
arisen.

You appear to be when you are home and cannot sleep.

What one does outside of sleep is a sin against
metamorphosis.

Accordingly: reading and writing are iniquities.

The devil reads every book.

He only refers to the day.

The solitary referential heart is whole.

But to hold situations: this becomes the person,
delineations between consequence and persuasion.

A waiting's a sleeping.

A binding's a beginning.

III.

Unalloyed privation proves the existence of...

Therefore you will give in, given the twisted obscurity of ruralist, landscaper, designer; an all-embracing aggregate for the final game or observations of such a thing.

He was, moreover, turned inside out and into cinematography's predecessor bereft of origin.

Adolescent creations inch out of one illogical stupor after another: whether it exists or whether it does not.

The local blood's getting through to past burials, present prayers, and potential ecstasies.

A prayer only and must pray for itself, it's mundane and cardinal practice.

"So please forgive me, that's my first prayer" (NB).

CASSANDRA SMITH

stillness—very alone—mornings—
hands—other—mourned—
this meadow—invent



U&I SAT IN THE BACK

in the back there is stillness and in the back there is how does this work. in a city everything is how does this work and how things work is made of matter which is very important. all of our meadow had been newly re-planted into this yard and we couldn't go near. our meadow was planted and tended and the things of matter would walk into it and dig their heels. this meadow is so lovely. this meadow makes me feel like i shouldn't wear shoes. don't you love this meadow and u&i would want to put their shoes back onto their feet and tell them to leave the meadow very alone.

U&I AS LONGING OR LANGUID

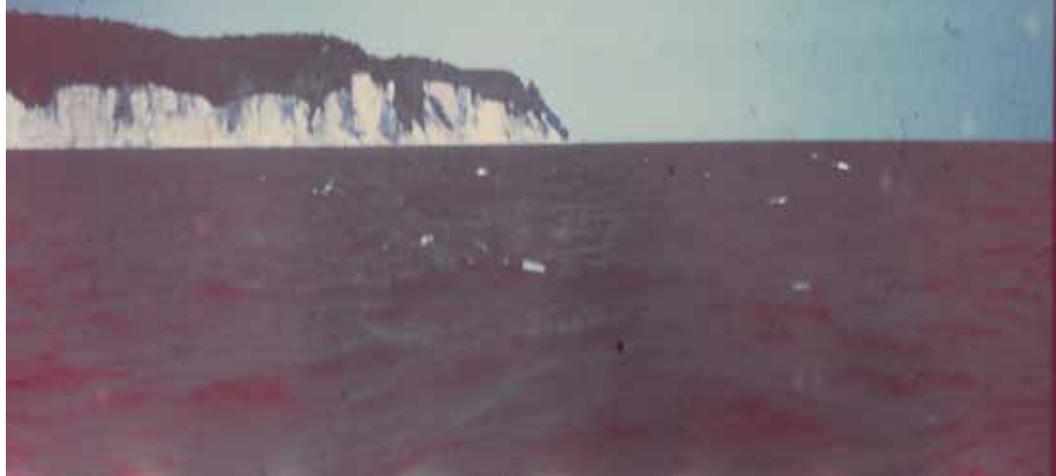
u&i would wake and u&i would continue with waking and when u&i began to wake longer into the mornings it was nearly always due to the distance of another. distance is a very hard thing for u&i to understand as distance implies that something else exists. u&i would invent these things to exist and then others to catch and even more to follow but invented matter is a tricky thing to believe in. u&i had hands and shoulders that would fall apart as soon as something near was grasped.

&OTHER WOULD NOT ENDURE WHEN ANOTHER NEAR WOULD WANDER

the other was made of how to see and how to see into and how to see nothing else and when &other began to struggle against this other &other was no longer sure of the closest place to rest. u&i could not tell if it was a game of lead or follow or through but when &other stopped moving u&i mourned so resoundingly.

MAXINE CHERNOFF

plain of reason—table—let us be—
small—endings—a book—
birds



AGAIN

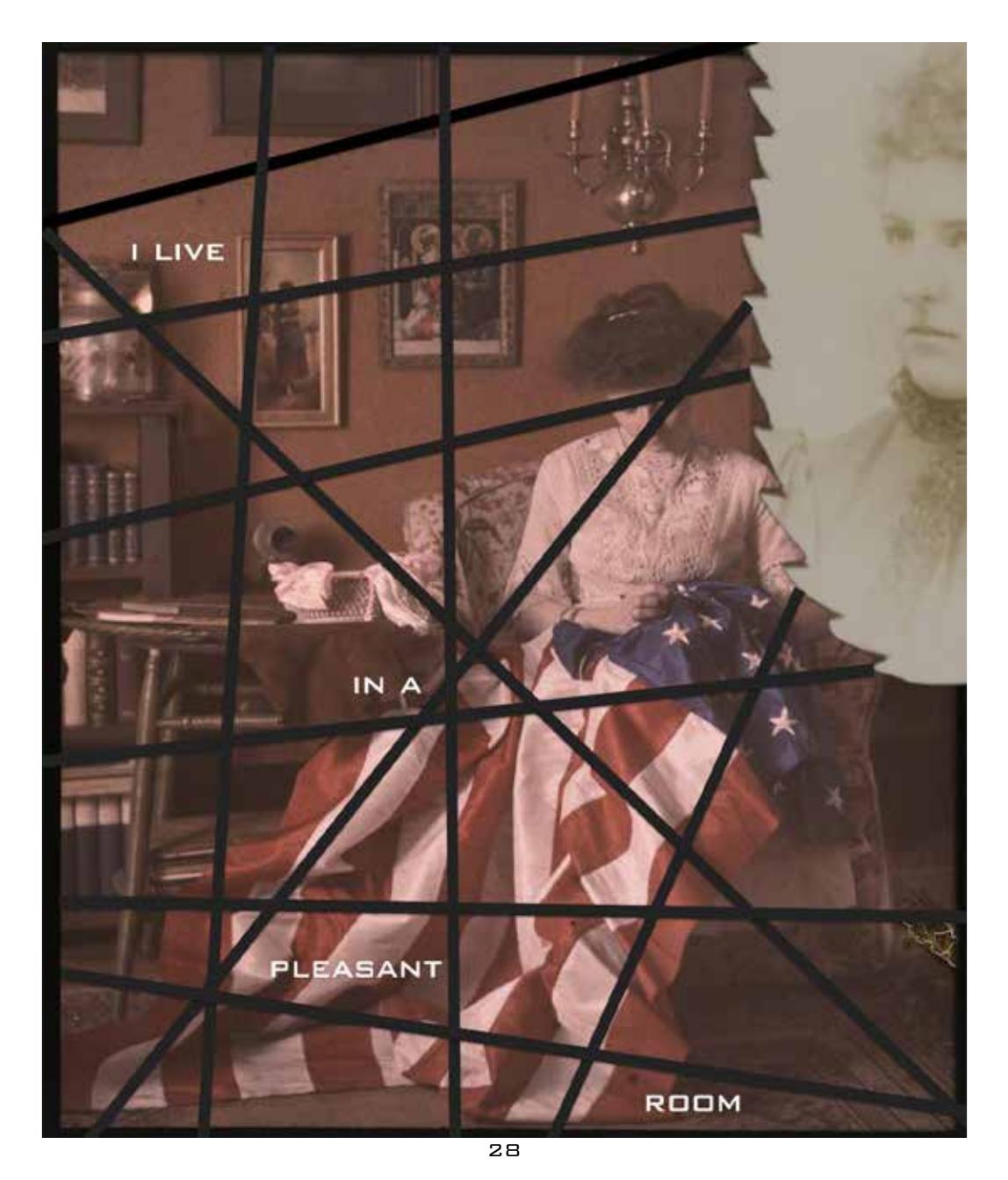
You ride upon trestles to dream's remembered peak, where you exchange words for sentence, meaning's unholy cargo of wished endings and lofty songs. Toward the known birds of late afternoon, toward the uncertain plane of reason beyond the turn in your thoughts of brokenness or hope, there you are with your silence and breath. In a room in the house of language, you crop intention's offered theory and claim a minute's circumstance, alone at the table where apple is round and pear fulfillment.

BEHELD

“...gives to airy nothing/A local habitation and a name.”-- Theseus, A Midsummer Night's Dream

Let us be imagined by the sympathetic eye, borders realigning, singularity lost as bees in cumulous clouds over a locus of belief. To stare at the world, thinking it fragile despite root systems deep and undismisable. To be dust under a stairwell or a book left open as one sleeps. To comfort the view and conjure grace, blessing a glass of water or a hand that finds a small, sheer ledge that yields to remembering.

ENTRACTE



I LIVE

IN A

PLEASANT

ROOM

INTERMISSION

PABLO LOPEZ



**FROM NUMBERS.
A POEM BETWEEN ZERO AND ONE**

- 201.** A form of it.
- 201.** Form of it spreading.
- 202.** Window with pistol in reach. Oil on can-
- 203.** Head unfurled spread the body to vague sticks.
- 203.** Rib. Shank. Length of gut.
- 204.** DC: love making. Her many travels.
- 205.** Lassitude. Earnest desire to yell. Unutterable.
- 206.** Returned to your native city in triumph.
- 207.** Wandered distraught along and over its throat.
- 207.** All seemed older.
- 208.** Sky: Virgo, Cassiopeia, Andromeda, Cygnus.
- 208.** Another sped up. Another mode of extension.
- 209.** Mound of flesh heaped the roadway.
- 209.** Cold rejoinder. Expression: No movement.
- 210.** Image takes shape. Name called.
- 211.** Sky: Venus rising.

- 212.** My starting point. My tongue.
- 212.** Its formal action. No movement.
- 213.** 23 October, a.m. Western Culture.
- 213.** Discussed theory of tallied particulars. Here and elsewhere.
- 214.** Blade over those buildings. Its old chaotic way.
- 215.** Blade over afternoon. Few words. Coastal town.
- 216.** Distance covered in relation to past.
- 216.** Measured outward. Rib. Rind.
- 217.** Proximity meant anything.
- 218.** Chilled through. Quickly rippled.
- 219.** Light to its central tone. If I walked by.
- 117.** Pieces returned. Element to soil
- 117.** Whoever uttered the sentence
- 118.** Others undone. Single person or assemblage
- 118.** Fragility in miniature
- 118.** Its private pantheon
- 119.**
- 119.**

120. One grove of laurel to another

120. Charge and portion. People plagued

120. Middle of town. Same time Atrium's gulf

121. Those that divide. Roving between

122. And so forgotten. Roving the more

122. In riven decrease. A different sort of text

123. In distant order. Rib. Rind. Scale.

123. Ilion by walls. Erased.

124. Swallowed in form

124. In disappearance felt the more

124. Order and the number

125. Mine shaft and cenotes

126.

127.

127. Verdancy in abscess. One in public

128. Petal to remnant. Or one slat

129. Afternoon delivered the moment

129. Known to them. Instruments equal

129. Along followed. Happened things

130. Somewhere else. Seen before

131. Remained outside. Despite whatever. Day or weather peeled away

131. Bright thread in mind. In this way. And forget

131. You were half October

132. You were falling back

Gillian Olivia Blythe Hamel

a capacity or an imposition—distinction—
the calendar—a comma—the line—
the thing—history—

Poetry



POETIC TIME AND ACTION IN *PEOPLE ON SUNDAY*

The imagining of time and labor are both an interruption and a necessity to the poet. Time demands to be parsed as a capacity or an imposition; labor as it manipulates time similarly must be found somewhere between drudgery and ethic. Both present habituality and the mundane, which seem counterintuitive to the work of poetry; my upbringing in poetry led me to believe it existed outside of the daily fictions of the basic motion of existence, politics, money—to quote Gillian Conoley’s *Plot Genie*, “off to the side / near the realities.” Still, the labor of word and the daily labor of things done to provide for the word-making continue to grind against one another relentlessly, tediously, incitingly, creating an essential codependence in the face of escalating discussions of the value and cost of one’s labor—which is to say, one’s time. It begins to feel impossible to consider poetry outside of either of these kinds of labor, because this is like considering poetry outside of time, equally preposterous, as there is no way to consider poetry out of time personally as either a reader or writer and there is nothing ‘timeless’ about any art that participates with responsible provocation in its own history. Time in its historical sense must then be the medium both of creating and of understanding the made thing, as time is still the chief medium and irritant of labor, both in a broadly regulatory sense and in the private space of one’s own lifespan. Time as an agent of poetry then becomes a structure of action and agency when the workweek is reimagined as the longer parts of the calendar, the seasons, lifespans, still a field of regulation but also a figure of perennial permanence, the host of historical embodiment, we-did, we-exist.

At one point in Geoffrey G. O’Brien’s *People on Sunday*, the poet points to the fitting anachronism of opening a book on the 17th-century study of Paradise through the labor of literature and science with an epigraph from John Ashbery. (O’Brien’s decidedly un-‘timeless’ use of names, dates, places, and other such personal gestures as the epistolary ‘you’ precludes a need for the pseudo-distinction of ‘speaker’ from the poet himself -- possibly even the individual himself. O’Brien does not seem bothered about the distinction between the poetic and the personal, often celebrating their sameness, which is an essential informant of his attitude toward historical time and thus a point I’ll return to.) “The anachronistic may be / A sign paradise is near” (57) he notes. O’Brien’s dismantled time does indeed suggest a struggle toward something ultimate, disrupting perceptions of the week, seasons, life cycles in the wake of social unrest, most notably the Occupy movement in California and the movements it mirrored in Spain and Egypt. A sense characteristic to these movements of time as both a commodity and a right to be claimed emerges early in the book, in the poem “Thanatopsis”: “Here again just a few minutes / To see what we’ve done with what they let us have.” (6) Threads of possession and permission woven throughout the poem activate time as plans, feelings, distinct spaces occupied by specific bodies and affective states: “Today is M22, a private garden / and a public square” (7). Synchronicity of time as a public memorial of collectivity and a private, enclosed moment on the calendar in turn connects these two spaces as parts of time given to an intention, time as a permanence of action and occupation. The

calendar becomes physical, almost synaesthetically, a place whose borders can be redrawn along metaphysical bodies and eras of movement, against the slow ticking of linear progression.

O'Brien's work in this book against the linear also extends, somewhat counterintuitively, to his fervent use of meter (what he's referred to as a lately 'embarrassed' form) and even blank verse. Combined with an upended, heavily contingent syntax, it brings on a reminiscence of Latinate (really, Miltonic) verse which is both totally anachronistic and utterly logical to a work that reflects these populist, anarchic fights toward something like paradise, which is, as he writes in "Entheogen," "not / A domain but the plan for imagining / A future of returns." (55) As a reflection of this reversal of time and place, of the synthesizing of the two toward a space that is both autonomous and fiercely communal, O'Brien's sentence-lines play with both horizontal and vertical intention. The poem "Christopher Smart" sets about in fully punctuated sentences parsed by four-beat lines that soon unravel into some fourteen and a half lines of not-quite-hinged statements interrupted only at one point by a comma:

... I'm talking about
How economically night descends
How rapidly the opportunity to praise
A friend curls up like a list
Too easy to outlive, why
Among the captures made at night
You still mistake stray sounds
For her feet in frank approach
Nothing but mistakes to make
Themselves taken for investments
Proceeding from years of being near the self-
Cleaning motion in the background
Form of that not yet elegy
Padding about the house. ... (77)

All of these endwords allow the line to become sentence with the following line (with the possible exception of 'descends' and 'approach') but maintain autonomy in lines like "A friend curls up like a list," "Themselves taken for investments," even a winking sort of annotation in "Proceeding from years of being near the self—"—like the named dates in "Thanatopsis," these lines honor their origin as a received object (here a unit of measured syllables rather than an agreed-upon collection of hours) while reorienting themselves toward something both more encompassing and more self-contained. Of course, this thing is the sentence, but importantly a sentence that exists, much like O'Brien's sense of the day/time/historical moment, almost in spite of its accordance to the rules which brought it about and the attendant restrictions that have been conditioned around it

— again from “Thanatopsis,” “The way we’re taught to imagine days / as reprieves from other days” (6). And against this, “Certain days don’t stop but shed / New ends continuously” (7), an illustration not only of this horizontal/vertical expansion and embodiment as in “Christopher Smart” (and many other poems throughout the book) but also of this sense of time as a constant reimagining; time in the line of the poem continuously reimagining itself, time as the historical signifier continuously rethought toward its most right use.

It is this sort of knowledgeable participation in and appropriation of the thing being defied that also seems to inform O’Brien’s lack of distance from—indeed, celebration of—the personal in the poetic voice. The freely autobiographical gestures in “Entheogen” color the abstractions of a philosophical paradise in poetry, “unbounded / Enclosures as little present / In any stretch of poetry / As New Mexico is in the States” (57). Where the poem contrasts the expansive prehumanist New Mexico to the concrete (both conceptually and literally) populism of Oakland, California, O’Brien interweaves the individual participation in history and poetic practice to disarticulate paradise as a distanced historical artifact and relocate it in the context of Oakland’s uprisings—not necessarily Oakland as paradise itself, but Oakland as the place and time of thinking the plans for paradise. Oakland as the locus of an imaginative unrest and the poet’s current home in biographical fact in turn embodies the frankness of the poetic in the personal; the ungainly human quality in the practice of paradise. “The Names of Production” further confronts and complicates the biographical fact of time in poetry in deceptively abstract, almost mathematical terms:

A proper name may be the only word
That can embarrass the poem in the future
As well as the present. It has a life
Of six hundred years before decaying
Into the final broadcast. The choice is thus
Not between no words and words
But the thing between them, a person. (80)

The choice: naming the self as the machine of the poem, tying the poem to the individual’s lifespan and relevance. The poem exists almost as factually as the person who writes it, and the choice is to allow it to occupy the same timespace. O’Brien makes this choice knowledgeably, unabashedly, and because of this the fact of his authorship can make the poem for all the momentary bodies in the time of its composition, as the square in Spain that incited it, “Talking about their future as though / They could invite it to come be with them.” (79) O’Brien’s imposition of personality invites the personal: “. . . I / and *failed* are synonyms one can’t / Choose between so much as move through / . . . But I is also / The others” (81). The multitude of personal then embodies the poem’s movement, turning the momentary to a sort of omnipresence:

... motion may not even be motion
So much as a chain of equivalencies
Posing as bodies, what in poetry
We would call a sight rhyme like that
Between *bury* and *fury*, minor differences, ... (81)

The poem jackknives from present to present as easily as these minorly different bodies of motion inhabit it together, letting minutia occasions exist contemporaneously in the larger poem-body of the historical. This is what elevates the historical to the personal, giving a non-pedagogical immediacy to unquestionably politically charged verse that exists firmly in O'Brien's idiosyncrasy. O'Brien does not situate himself in the poem as a Poet even as he knows he is "a minimal uncle to the words of the young" (85), at risk of pedagogy if personally removed. He stakes the authenticity of the political and this account of it, this affect (a word he later in this poem minimally defines in his minimal unclust way) on the temporality of the poem, because the moment is not given as a concretion of history but as a vulnerability to be rethought.

By not stepping out of the poem—by not stepping the poem, in turn, out of time—O'Brien allows the temporality of the work to enact its own resistance to the expiration of time as the meter of relevance, rather than putting that onus on the reader. Against O'Brien's metaphysically elevated depictions of time, the biographical time of the poems gives agency to poetry as action, both to the poet and the reader, as a space for the generation of history and struggle and a moment of history and struggle itself. Here, the poem is not even quite for positing the terms of paradise—as Brenda Hillman has written in her own responses to the social uprisings of 2011 and 2012, a poem does not need to be a call to arms, but a refreshal of reality. Nor is this refreshal an act as simple as stating a problem correctly, as Chekhov famously advised, but almost as literal as the mechanism of refreshing a browser window, rebooting the conditions of the problem to make way for changing circumstances, even changing the terms of the problem itself. Poetry can then be, in *People on Sunday* and anywhere else concerned with rendering the political and the personal with a responsibility to its time, both a concretion of a temporality and all its attendant concerns, contingencies, potentialities for timelines radiating outward, both a domain and a plan for imagining.

People on Sunday. Geoffrey G. O'Brien. Wave Books, 2013. ISBN 978-1-933517-72-8

Other works referenced:

The Plot Genie. Gillian Conoley. Omnidawn Publishing, 2009. ISBN 978-1-890650-42-1

"Red, White, & Blue: Poets on Politics." Interview with Brenda Hillman. Poetry Society of America, 2012. (http://www.poetrysociety.org/psa/poetry/crossroads/red_white_blue_poets_on_politics/brenda_hillman/)

ADAM FAGIN

blood—sun says—field—speak—
perfect machine—heroes—deluged—
bare—nothing—leaf



TRANSPARENT PROTESTS

where blood blows in the bows
the sun is the flower of our age—

that sun of other latitudes
by the right of a liquid road

the water is falling fast;
the ocean is like ink

I push away from the sun;
I see only the rays of sun

the light-filled ravine, the soldier in the path
'I want none of this violence'

the sun says and the country says,
'the sun is also a child of the river'

or black willows leaning towards autumn—
it droops it towers like a chandelier

cracking bough eternal plain of truth the sun;
my father was a sparrow my field is bare

on the bodies of the dead
the sun is opened like a door—

I can't dispose of it by looking
I can't tell it from a ringing in my ears

'no man has ever died in America'
the sun says—

when I speak I fear the sun

when I am fearful I never speak

what a perfect machine
each word is—

beyond the skill of birds,
free from the absurdity of taste

if the sun was a man I'd kill him
if the sun was a soldier I'd turn and shoot;

we forget our heroes;
we shall now be at liberty;
we have become a deep and silent lake,

unwilling sun
deluged sun

my father was a tree
a blue-eyed grass the temperature of the leaves

the blacksnake the sun
we had lost sight of, or never perceived;

if a tree is in the way it is cut down
if a man is in the way he is the sun

his city a swordblade;
the bare outline of the nation;

the clouds are mountains;
yes my leaf is peculiar—

the fact is I am a mystic—
so I go along as if nothing has happened

the wind blows;
the child-sky is clear in the west—

I have prowled its full existence—

like the sound of a twilight labor
Indian summer thin as paper

my hands stiffen;
the vapor of life is concentrated;

an ambrosial fog stretches across the water;
the sun breaks like a leaf

COLBY GILLETTE

listen!—not water—light—
sea ghosts—the entire—
sleep



BLACK PHOEBE

a sieve
of flickering
and sleep

listen!
rings in the shade
it stays

sifts
the unclaimed

A PLACE WHERE THIS IS THE LANGUAGE

not water
offers directions
flames lead down the road

open windows staves
a language for sick ankles

flames as it fades
seen at the corner in trance
cotton dress

too large hands alone
ashes out of this place

DOGWOOD

walks in branches
bird green
earth white shares

this side of dying
night sifts
underground morning

feeds the air
unhealing light
put it in my eye

NEAR EASTER

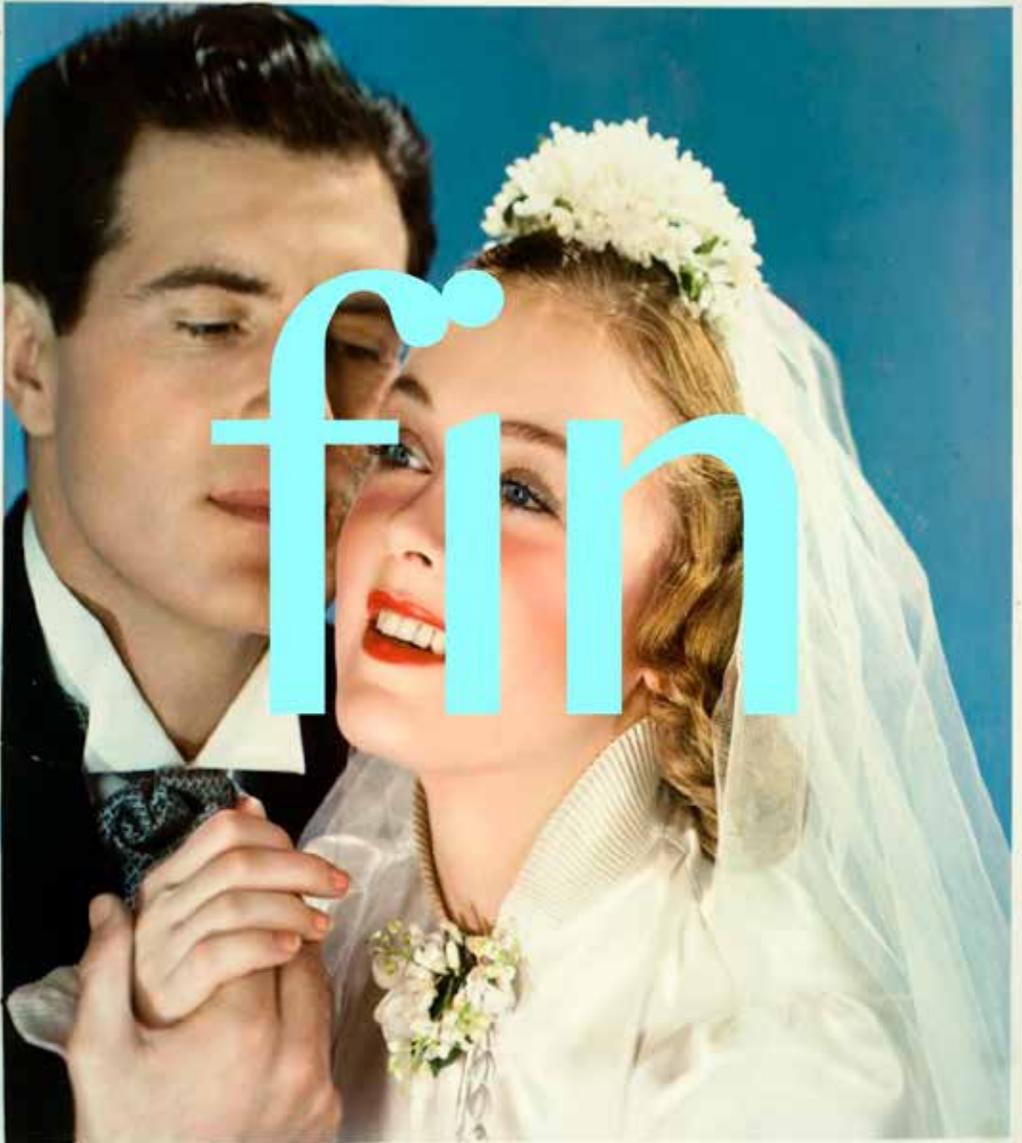
hyacinth alone
last snows uninnocent
corner shade and lower print
entire rabbits drink

a bury to come
sea ghosts rising stare
shining translate
dark under writing pent

paper between ink and table
the air bends
horizons first then mountains
green walks up trees

surprised to be standing
the entire air bleats





June Bride

1942