

2005

# Alula| [Poems]

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*The University of Montana*

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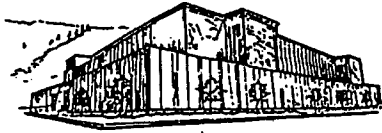
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26 May 2005

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Alula

by

Chad Blair

B.A. University of Illinois Champaign-Urbana, 1996

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

The University of Montana

May 2005

Approved by:



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“I say they have grown out of you, and may grow out of you still”  
-Walt Whitman

To Enter

a passage damp and lantern  
unmoving when nothing is

the ferry slowly at dusk

the sky the same  
color as the sound

in the beginning when the cormorants

were roosting  
reptilian

as the time  
before we slept

when gray was a metal  
reflecting blues the daylight

consumed when willows  
were not willows but another

threadbare skeleton  
the moon

dark clouds edged one

afternoon  
so many crows flew

between us the canal

became a window  
and the layers of black wings

rain that holds

to a window so the houses rising from

the water were made



## The Oasis

Visible because we've come  
from it. We've traced maps,  
heard the old stories, tomorrow  
we'll dive into the river  
where the river no longer  
bends but palm trees  
follow an ancient turn, to swim  
into a forgotten temple,  
water colored by steeping, history  
our light in the darkness drawn  
from darkness as our guesses.  
From the top of the dune  
the river is visible  
not because the river is  
visible but because the mosses  
rising along the river  
form a rectangle of green.

## The Sea

Warm as skin and full  
of plankton that lit up,

firefly afternoon, needle points pulsing  
in the water drawn

by hands and arms like gold dust. The dark night

a lemon grove in morning fog. The sea, the occasional

glowing plankton sprinkling out  
of the hand like glitter trailing,

like running through

a lemon grove in morning. Here the weightless  
body forgot

the ethics of body and

floated, ancient, giving

and taking in and out of air and

water. The body felt between  
two bodies that night--

the Mediterranean sky: a wet black  
stretching, stars connected on wire

vibrating at low frequency or else shook

by a wind the body, floating  
in darkness, couldn't feel.

## The Batholith

And even these are colored by sunlight made to sparkle  
as fool's gold in the stream, nothing gilded enough to stay

unbroken shines. Rocks meet the meadow at the stream,  
a tree's roots have bridged the pool so the water flowing

beneath is milled and funneled out its barked base  
smooth as a tooth. Fingering dunes in the current collect

pebbles and hold, sand made into waves, the space  
between two bodies a body, second selves nourished by

stones in the grip of the trees fallen over, as if the stones  
provide the vanilla and jigsaw bark of the ponderosa, texture

compressed, capacity to move rippled and chilled  
through scouring rushes that rise like patches of jade

sea snakes between boulders in a stand of trees and then  
a single tree curving from the mountainside, a bonsai held

by a cracked sea of rocks as if the mountain, once a great wall  
warn into loosening, gave the crumbling shape of it cause.

## Light Mining

Silver summer leaves  
the silver lake, schooling

flash of fish above wind  
pushing water across water,

silk on the clothesline--  
underthings, breath. Yesterday

the lake a mist into sky,  
water from cooled water capable

as clouds. Mercury is  
glowing, the children digging

drawers into drifts are  
cavemakers mining

translucence as they reach  
the snowflakes' collapse,

the iridescent flashes foundation  
we build sky on.



And flight beyond the stilled  
body's surface steam stopped under snow  
shaken and falling, forming

tracks under blue-green pines chimney our eyes.  
The sky breaks into needles

of blue light, new altitude ocean. Evening

seablue, clouds receding into the exact shape of a tree,

risen, blue of the tides.

## Cicada Cycle

Generous rain darkening afternoon depleted come  
August's dry dirt beneath the dirt,

the bird whetting air  
in search of seeds. Odd cycle of  
release, the weeds, the flowers look like before they bloom,

the father and the boy. Short pause drops  
occupy. No hold to touch

a leaf glistened, no steady climb. Dew on fingernails  
a crescent, our hands night's corridor, even  
graciousness pains, see, the arugula

too leggy, let in more greenhouse by sawing off above.  
Up from the dead love voices, asks

for echoes in arms heavy digging in  
the drought. A doubt beak breaks

kernels of, set onto lush lawn, square concrete  
where the boys sip in shade long-limbed, his voice coffee in

their voices, tenor restated in morning steam,  
swallow. Hand  
no longer yours as much as it once felt.

The gestures come  
thin air, dirt lined climb, overturning in  
breakthrough. You recall what might have

never happened. As recently as tomorrow: small  
crappie-filled reservoir, the cut to release

the empty fingers find reaching,

no longer is it possible to distinguish  
the natural from the tampered. Magpie

hopping on the fence toward another  
hidden magpie. Communion between

the living a reminder only the dead survive.

## The Starving Bed

The imprint left on the tissue.  
On the vinyl bed

a corner of this country  
plastered over and hooked,

a pulled rope raising a broken  
leg or net. Pull us up. The body

length mirror is a school  
of million mackerel

spinning, lines lateral and electric,

sensitive to the neon blue that methane  
disperses. The medicine is at fault,

hospital, the giant kelp beds come detached,  
ecosystems beyond the suburbs

protected by trigger fish. At night

the surgeons rise from the depth.

Luminescent lingerie for sale.

Ourselves folding into ourselves

until the imprint is engulfed and skin  
and scales are sparkle weight.



The diner booth is inflated  
when one person sits the other

rises, milkshakes imported,  
waitresses and waiters

wear red hats that blink as they exit, enter  
the swinging doors, wipe the glasses

underneath the marble counter.  
The menu an impromptu

buffet, the chefs are egg,

sperm and butter. Cardboard  
reef, number ten can crushed. Forget

that your grandparents mixed  
these bricks, oxidize copper pots, scratch

that green blue until you gill.

Turns for gulls picking parasites from  
your cracks, assuming a dogfish shape

to rub wainscoting against your back.

Swim up seamount into cellars, damp spaces,  
and with what familiarity can you hold the mold?

Something is stroking you  
and you can't tell if it hurts.

Can you remember if it is better

to see them first? When the prep cook cracks  
down the stairs you notice first the disturbance

in water-- an uncomfortable place to hide,  
crouched between the syringes and the cereal.

The soup is a salve.  
The trench's great

irrigators send hot water  
into the nozzle for coffee.

Doctor, my fingers are  
freezing, the view from this window

is rain and this sugar pill  
delicious bathysphere, their bait

attached and glowing, doors  
this deep transparent, red eyes

waiting to send the opening  
signal. It is as if cilia push you through.

Water in the Baobab

In the hollows.

In the hollows, spit.

Water in state sized  
aquifers and shrinking.

In copper, diamond,  
bricks. Banks.

Briefcase clasped:

leather, teeth.

Seeping through the caulk in the cellar.

Feathers of geese in the Berkeley Pit.

Breast, bidding,  
filet, champagne.

Water warming the lake.  
Cargo bays full.

Horizontaling the runway.

Bed, pulse,  
ledger.

Cistern

Cistern brimming.

sockets, smoke.

Release

First was ice floating.  
Poor squares made lighter by slow drift

frozen underneath stored light, bits of ice released

buoyed from the mass  
following the winding speed away.

I did not leave the bridge  
followed the river slow and in that concentration  
dark water over ice

glow of one jagged side not yet felt against

the dark, I was returned. Wind wet against my skin,  
I strafed its metal.

Knowing the names  
I attempted alula  
erratic stones frozen

would not be enough  
slowed erratic ablation  
into rock. Muster

shimmering in the cave. Heat deposited kame.

Midday tapetum  
resonating

iceblink bass.  
Precocial notes

releasing into rookery dazzling blue

in silvers. Ocellus, sky in flight,

the layered air

felt twice. And what is quiet  
to the eye, not darkness,

night, but colorless still  
color, flat on ice

a dark red leaf veins to noise,

red berries bunched and

shaking winter  
gray away from you.  
Against the porous  
stream bank

frozen as a lung, a dipper's thin feet. Here

is flight unlocked of it's direction:

water freezing conical onto purple vines dipping  
into water, weighing down further, the current

pushing them to swing,  
they rub from the stream, glass bells muffling the smallest of

current's chime.  
Second body, doubled time.

Sound motion patterns, my fingers  
to tap, to measure time as

flow and flight, ice so thin it is

invisible, a brown paper stalk stilled on its surface. Touch a pink  
spotted rock half in and exposed, pocket of water rippling

below, smoke moving through light,

space trained.

Untrain into ice speed and release.

As if the frozen could fly-- birds

might mistake it. Heron glittering. Siege  
across sky morning unsamed



which ice collects green,

adds to its second  
and third

unreproducible sound.  
Lichen ice shatters. Shines.

When silver feathers

## Rock Jumping

Clear path to a bird un-  
moving, cloud path, wrist

pressure. The elbow crease,  
horizon, no line of

distance between one bone  
another, no ligament or

easy hinge, classroom skeleton,  
no jump between

cliff and air, tissue and tissue-  
papered kite. The sea

awaits the dive, boy-skinned

the ankles wait, the asking

measure between rock unmoving  
but edged by ocean,

height. Tassels  
of breeze, a wave on

the sand the heat  
rising: speck of a body

stalled in salt translation.

## Blind Miner Blind Soldier

Gone white, iris, the last failing.  
Humus, warm flange of skin,

a blind miner a blind  
soldier sitting shoulder  
to curved shoulder, walking cane  
and pipe. Optic stop-down

thickening opacity, walls to which  
the body has clung and inches.

The miner reaches to touch  
the soldier's sloping back,

chill in the heat of the mine.  
Deep metal corridors, cyanide leaching.  
In the moonlit dunes no echo. Speech  
inside this silence outside begins

the mouth. When our eyes cannot coerce  
the clues, a compensation. And you are

required to complete the silences when there is  
no body to be seen: smell of smoke, negative

burn shows a hand slow against  
thinned hair, opening formed  
and framed by the lens blurred darker

than a syringe's pull, blood  
onto dirt.

Not bats after insect dusk,  
crows released into

gentle cumulous, shadow kite.

Conscripted, the ear buzz-filled:  
constant fluorescent glare. We chip

madly at veins, fire blindly  
into the night. Water dripping

copper pipe.  
Are the askers still living?

Miner, we have placed you  
Soldier, we are serving you

Blind miner blind soldier  
sitting on a bench against a brick wall

billboard painted. Rock Island.

Thanksgiving down to the river,  
leaves on the patch of khaki grass,

a few still clung to the branches.

We ran and they rose,

stalled in the sky,

skipped stones until the surface

puddled like rain. We left our  
parents, smell of smoke in the stoves.

Listen, the porcelain basin  
accrues night's sulfur stain.

We Land

Although we have never

Although you don't know me, I am writing to you about compass and construction

We haul metal bridges that unfold to cross

I first felt approach in the night's moisture. In the morning, damp on the canvas,  
sand. I smelled Euphrates

Two years ago the car could not find traction, 360, 540. When I woke, snow  
for the first time in weeks

Weather, speak to us in our sleep

"It is like surfing, but very slowly."

Sitta Zubayda transforms from sixteen sides to eight and back because of the  
muqarnas, pierced to let in spots of light

Day stars

In a cemetery. We kept our packs on

The sky about to. Shadows. Thick  
shadows the sky, the palms, the tiled  
domes of mosques, domes on  
squitches, lobed arches

mirrors

heavy

aerodynamic

The city on fire  
The city on fire on the river  
Ash in the sky  
The city in the sky  
People in the river

People go behind sandstone walls and then do not

Are you safe in Brooklyn? Are you safe with the sconces tucked into the architecture?

“The light rearranges itself. I whisper to the holes”

I no longer wish for villages of either. How to undisappear

And remain. Witness. I would not save this fire. Speak to the sponsors

With what body can I

Pigeons fluttering up as dark, the bleached sky, collapsed dome of the caravanserai

“Under the smoke, dust all over his mouth, laughing with  
white teeth.”

Waiting: Near/For the Nightclub

Line: What is formed. Velvet rope released and held as an opening. What inches forward outside the nightclub. Conrail. Perhaps later, one or two in the bathroom.

Square: Blue dumpster. Cardboard broken down around it. Milk carton. Steam grate. No Parking sign hung on the brick alley wall. Her pocket full of cigarette butts.

Gray stained sock:  
Would you like to add it to your shopping cart?

Tribune's Tempo section:  
Would you like to add it to your shopping cart?

Noodles in Styrofoam:  
Would you like to add it to your shopping cart?

Rectangle: Stuffed wallet. Cell phone. Check book. Well cut jaw. Bricks we count instead of noticing. Sleek eyeglasses. Italian flat-toed shoes.

Line: Unraveled hem. Grime stained into her palm.

Line:

Triangle:

## When My Teeth

fall out scatter,  
toss them into the sidewalk grates and

they'll press up bumps that crack. Scatter my nails, collapse  
asphalt, spread weeds with white hairs

that grow into orange crinkled paper

flowers. When my shoes spell out poppy in their cursive. When my teeth

fall out scatter them into the shields sky presses upon. Do not scream

gravity, say strange resistance then

plummet. Say one of us is missing and

satellites collect and drift. Cloud white against blue tonsiled sky. This

is why it is moral to hedge your bets if  
betting at all. Four teeth returned when five

shot high. Five roots when tossed. Twenty percent cloud  
when mightily flung. One after another rooted and

pushing upwards sluglike, but compassed I shatter.



“Yesterday, yesterday I asked my eyes  
when will we see each other again?” -Neruda

When the foundation falters under  
blue aluminum strain.

Floor shirt-  
patterned, dusted glass beneath dessert

pieced. Portrait  
making unseen shimmer. See,

sheetrock smooth our statues left shelled.  
What will frame this

sound when it happens? Occurrence  
layered, stacked stationary, strategies

stacked. Sedition against saltless  
hardtack, hollows

fullness spied by  
the sightless. When I falter.

“Where can a blind man live  
who is pursued by bees?” -Neruda

The ceiling fan switch left stirring, shifting  
radio to static. Porcelain cup on the table missing.

Scratched Sunday, noted objects carried off. Buzzing  
beneath mattress, warning shots with cigarette and boot heel.

Blindness multiplied by money-blindness equals books hollowed.  
Combs drywall. Persist. White painted hive-box of a house.

“If I have died and don’t know it  
of whom do I ask the time?” – Neruda

Pocket watch ticks felt-softened. Sealed. Seam-  
sewn smeared blush and saline. A perfume the jacket  
holds in the cabin wardrobe near the veranda,

fractions divisible by cuffs cigar-stained, lighter trouser-  
held and hanging from hanger. The only visible

machinations the ship lowered in the lock in the wall-  
papered hallways. Empty rooms furniture leather  
footsteps, fluorescent sails out the portholes.

“In the end, won’t death  
be an endless kitchen?” -Neruda

Stainless steel never needing sharpening. Smooth slice  
into packaging, granite counters. Pounds

tenderize. Ratio pounds cups empty  
ounces. Rolling pin dusted flour prevents

sticking, strainers separate noodle, broth caramel-  
colored deep in the bowl. Course following

course removed. Plates sprayed, stacked  
steaming. Silverware scrapes, chairs push on

flooring smoothed. Dining filled with endless,  
helpless hunger.

“And with which numbers does the ant  
subtract its dead soldiers?” -Neruda

When doctors talk a scalpel can't cut through,  
smoke branching a sternum, the hollow dragonfly

of a collarbone. The maybes in the operation a

hummingbird, blue thread unraveling from a tug.

Hands translucent under grime, physics desert clinging  
to hair beneath wrists and eyes. Last evening night-

beveled gemstone. Morning-gauze. Fire-blanketing

dilation scratches until breath swallowed teeth  
and almost. This bird fours through flame.

“How do the oranges divide up  
sunlight in the orange tree?” –Neruda

In pyrex measuring cups and a mirror tilted over the counter  
so the audience may watch.

With a whisk, while lawn mowers weave the lanai.

Half and half foamed in until the mixture thickens. Part  
vermouth swirled and flung. Some soured. Neighbors Sunday-

dressed. Anodized mailbox poles neon weed-eater line, the driveway

a mirror of heat, the pickup unloaded and reloaded, 2X12's  
retracted. Specks

splattered onto the white coat and hat, a splash of triple  
sec for succulence. Glazed and clay-fired

mugs imported, filled, sprinkle-  
garnished, spoons dusted with what

has been cut and entered  
through the window unseen.

## The Tube

You said perhaps I should not  
have brought it inside. Should not have  
placed it between the couch and  
the kelim. Like a cat returning  
its kill. Then we are silent and we watch  
for movement. No sunlight dark enough  
for this. I scratch my other hand,  
almost hear your breath about to speak.  
When you speak about. Unsure as a bird  
in the dining room. Lines on the face  
as if something were squeezing  
too tight. Perhaps the hottest day.  
Sleepless in the unfilled hellos of  
sleep. Nothing stirred. No arm or leg to  
touch. White lines on the skin of  
the hand dry as scales. I saw it  
and I thought it might grow. Or else  
something might because of it. We are  
not speaking about the thick curled  
string between us and that  
end table, not touching it with our  
eyes. Nothing is moving any more  
than us. What of mine is moving when  
I watch? Your throat lined and must  
be hanging, a darkness colored if  
lit, tiniest light, the pieces of  
what you have consumed that  
remain. Shall I remove it outside  
where it might be flagged and  
eaten? The sound will not return to  
what has made it. Something thinning  
underwater, blood, a ribbon.

## The Doric Columns

Some of the trees have split, dead leaves fall into concave joints between branches forming nests. Some trees are as straight and thin as the legs of birds. There is

sand in the holes in the bark and the air smells like a silo. The trees are dead, or struggling, which means the leaves in wooden bowls have nestled still-life

for years. Light passes through them. They shake in the breeze as if connected to branches but will not fall again, collected in that tight spot in the crotch

of the trees that do not creak, do not create a concussion of sound like a woodpecker hunting for grubs in the sand in the bark. No rigid thump, no silence between, only

silence in the cornmeal air surrounding a circle of eight Doric columns tapered as a discovered bone, a femur drawn on a map of anatomy. The columns

surround no statue or living thing, just more of the green and tan grass that looks trodden, as if in perpetual early spring or late fall or else under the footsteps of

visitors, perhaps the ones who placed these columns to circle something now unseen except to them and the trees and the more trees beyond this ring, trees also

quiet, a rustle, an owl that turns its head completely around, impossible to see its eyes in its concentric eyes, its stare from each tan and black feather as if the owl were some

apparatus of the tree, some eye or tongue to translate the rattling stream into unveiling, to say although the fish are not yet spawning the stream is turning into itself,

a return it too must make. Something is breaking, although no one wants to say it. There is a light that is making its way to this place for the first time. When the owl

flies we do not see but understand the way a spider spreads silk to collect condensation, the way the owl spits up hair and bone and abandons it, skeletons of mice ending up

on a mantle surrounded by stones and photographs, while in adjacent rooms perpetual strangers thump nests into each other, swirl their legs backwards, hard maps of bones.



First Attempt at the Hill. Butte, 1869

Built a windlass. Bucket  
half a whiskey keg. Every day

I put in the rounds of powder and blast,  
rickety flame. Lung squeeze. Ether  
my errorless resolve.

I do not know what day it is. No one visits me  
but to laugh. You are my night now. I will not  
let them down. They say my name is, drink  
my whiskey and, this

is ours when released. You

deposit yourself in muscle, sponge. You  
hardening the repeat of my slow hummed song.

Wish to live. Where the value of the lead  
might increase unloaded as deep. You hold

my pick, shovel, moil. This unseen

soil showing returns. Palsy shake,  
our bodies  
decaying alchemical  
into worth the dirt holds.  
Stay with me.

Short sprint through sleep. Unused  
shack, whiskey, water, medicine

when I cough.  
Am making space for you.

Tea kettle left to boil  
too long, how much ore  
swallowed? My tongue  
and teeth uniformed. Not enough  
to smelter. Summer swamp.  
What do you speak to this  
skinny shaft when I sleep?  
How deep does it wish to be?  
I've said thin air but has  
my prayer been wrong saint?  
The first hole dug with antler,  
candles no longer. I burn  
faces in the flickering blackness  
cupric, climb and descend.

Each tree I cut  
I need but makes  
your depth less.  
Sharpening the  
pick, each  
hammer crash  
echoing out of you  
and know now you are  
hardened. Sunlight  
on me forms dirt  
into rock. Are you  
filling yourself  
in? The days  
I spend on the  
surface are lost.

Would you betray me, air?  
Wish to push the vein further down?  
Would you thin, cause this cracked timber  
to collapse, return me to placers?

What small steam against the sky.  
What small sky through my fingers.

## David's Painting

“Oh, the overflowing jumble, the displacements, the bloody sun, the deep sea filled with tilted sailboats. Theme upon theme, till you could lose yourself in it. To be human, to be ancient naïve and nothing, and yet happy. It is good to be so for once, as an exception, a holiday.” -Paul Klee Diaries II Entry 392

The light through the bathroom window onto David's painting looks like the light in the painting, shading sea beneath wooden red-sided boats tied by long ropes to anchor. And the voices outside become children off the edge of the canvas, running and

yelling along the painting's stone walkway, ripe peach colored, forming the edge of the sea, the same peach color as the man swimming between it and the tethered boats, around him concentric circles from smooth kicking, then smooth green water stretching

under the boats, under the rope and the single floating plant and out. It is warm because of the light, because blue insides of boats are shining. The swimmer is encased by warm green sea, the sunlight on his back and shoulders. It is good too that you are listening to this ancient

displacement of water, this happiness. But how can we know the meaning of the expressions on the two faces, the person standing and the one sitting in the nearest brightly colored boat? Their dark faces back-lit or else obscured so we are unable to see eyes and eye-brows, the curve of the mouth as they

observe the swimming man. An exception, on holiday? One has on a yellow shirt and the other white and maroon. Their dark faces faceless. The sun is warm and it is sinking behind Blue Mountain behind Kelly Island's thin aspens beginning to ripen, beginning their longer shine through the days.

And when I pull down the canvas and bring it to you, you ask about the faces, you recite while you sit up: *necks wound round and round with string; black, naked women with necks wound round and round with wire like the necks of light bulbs.*

I don't know where they keep their dog food. In the cabinet next to where we've been piling up the mail and the newspapers, where yesterday I read that Montana ranks third in the country in new arrivals. Bozeman predicts it will have a population of 200,000 soon the same

sandwich shops and coffee chains and I admit sometimes I want to key those windows, walking home late at night, wanting just enough of the unexpected to shake me, like having to ask a stranger at the station: *Pardon, hangi autobus Cappadocia gidecek.* I admit to not remembering the faces exactly, the face

of the deli guy who recommended the six year old gouda, a moustache, I think, a side part. Try the kunifez there, the best in Ankara. I had just had my picture taken by Bob while I crouched inside a giant clay pot from sometime B.C. that sat under an oak tree next to a marble statue with no head. Are these all we remember,

the photos and the paintings, the stories we tell so that others repeat them as their own? The two people standing in the boat look amused at the peach colored man swimming. Perhaps it is not as warm as I thought. Perhaps the man's arms are curled up to his chest and face to keep warm because he

had to swim in the green water no matter what the temperature. The two are watching him, relaxed. And the man is expressionless himself. He looks harmless and brave enough to swim next to the boats, an amusing transgression for anyone except those used to the comfort of consistency. *Merhaba, nasilsiniz?*

*Merhaba nasilsiniz?* Does it matter where we are? The pines are greening faster than the larches up the mountain, burnt match-sticks of trees remaining on the ridge from last summer when smoke pressed down on your valley, houses evacuated, houses sprayed with fire extinguishing foam and then gone. They stayed

with friends and waited for news of wind shifts, as now the citrus sun is darkening. There are strips of lavender behind boat-shaped clouds, strips of violet above those and the light blue is receding to the East and the sky appears flat, a plane below which shadows on dead grass lengthen. And disappear when the sun disappears.

A planet's steady reflection the brightest star before  
the stars. And the light in the painting is darkening  
too and the day there is disappearing below us at this exact  
time. The weather is cooling, if only a little. The two people

leaving their boats for their dinners, the sea's surface cooled  
by air. No one is swimming there beneath the cloudless  
sky, the water darker now, closer to brown with short waves of  
color like the young Blue Grosbeak stitched and labeled

on the hand towel on the hoop below the painting returned.  
You continue on, saying maybe it is not Mexico or Honduras,  
maybe Morocco or Egypt and what does that change? What  
makes the water green then brown waded blue? Wherever he is,

I like the man swimming in the green sunlight in the water,  
sunlight on faces on aspens on Clark Fork and magpie and  
ferruginous hawk and taxi and rake and *I was saying it to stop  
the sensation of falling off the round, turning world into*

*cold, blue-black space. But I felt: you are an I, you are an  
Elizabeth, you are one of them.* You are the swimmer and  
the two in the boat and the woman who makes a warm cove  
out of her body and pigment and pigments combined and you are

the weight of the expressions unexpressed, the faces you leave  
blank and the blank face you offer, the brushstrokes reformed by  
new stroke as you take the light from windows and other  
unexpected sources, an intruder into every aspen-lined path and every

blue-green sea into which you dive, where there is no longer any real  
evidence of faith amongst us, alone, surrounded by what is the same as  
us. When the landscape ends, no action small enough and it will  
end forever. When the neighbors are evicted they will not return.



Voice and Worth

Bare as space  
returned untrained.

So I trained it

into ice speed and released  
calving squeaks.

And the frozen flew,

birds mistook it.

Heron around crystal  
glittering. A siege

across sky  
morning samed. No heat

to melt more smooth this  
uncategorized flight.

Which part of me to amplify?

Everything then  
was all it contained.

I made a low sound, a pluck  
  
my legs needed to stay warm.

Born late, I relied on  
directions use to the dark.

My open hand weighing  
ashes, the click of a lock

opening, cool air cocooning bridges,  
brass lever depressed.

The first was ice floating on  
water. Poor squares made lighter

by slow drift. When I learned  
light might be

captured and stored:  
bits of ice released,

buoyed up from that mass, stored light  
  
following the winding speed away.

I left the bridge, leaned over,

followed ice in the river slow,  
and in that concentrated stare,

dark water over illuminated ice,

between, I was returned

to darkness,                    now a new absence,  
silence.                        Go inside.

After

Unexpected figures appear between  
branches. Not the couple

walking home across the wide  
open park night shadows,

faces indistinguishable, fingernails

scratching fingers and the wide city  
just behind the trees,

the moon not moonlight but

streetlight and distant, where strangers  
vertical, chandelier the focused

wishing of this darkness.

Those haunted by multiples, frightened

by the quick movements unfigured wishes  
make. Between branches from the corners of

eyes and then every enclosure. Remember  
what the camera

says: the foreground is valued. The tall friend not

the tallest, the tannest says summer or absence  
of flash. Say this look is captured

by one projected light,  
what paces behind the photograph,

what fog of the articulated  
touch or eye-catch? Your room, your telephone,

its voice taillights past.  
A red line, an acceleration,

a corner, the just disappeared  
owl-scratching distance.

## Lantern in Barium

Your back muscles reeds  
between blades. I push away  
and they snap loosened,

fibrous. Your skin pools silver thick. If I could  
reach in against, through  
shine covered would my hand realign? Your ribs separate

into geometric progressions in light,  
a vein in your dragonfly skidder. The water not moving  
except in sound

or something flapping  
like current. A fitted  
sheet, tarp ripped almost loose. Been weeks

since I've seen  
anything but yellow  
on black. Everything not pushed into

you. The green on silver. Fingers scrape  
toward return. Luster a reflection too  
much light makes, luster's only smoothed appearance.

I hang the light on a hook.  
I know so many things I am willing to give up on. I am  
prepared to dismiss every elastic, but I cannot crawl through

your eyelids' red web to be admitted as boneless and  
spun. I do not want to be shown undersides,  
rust issuing through seasonal tides.

If you see maple sky unsticking in strands do you  
want the transformation covered in ice and smoking?  
When cataracts cloud me in, first the leaves

then push the windows up, paint-seal split.  
Harmony the opening. And when I disappear  
completely, rally, the pupil is immense.

## The Map

Smoke or breath in the eye, curved as earth  
hands their mouths

pull slow a chimney sends  
blue is only worth the eyeing  
into  
dry black sky  
alive

the map draws a line

square lights the spotted gray horse  
rectangular lights disappearing into fog the map is

growing.

Flame in the fist is the butane

a woman waiting smoke  
rising the fire over Coeur D'Alene  
sunset refracted in mist

from mouthed  
hands  
deep in the speed on the periphery  
pockets the blinking of the cornfield rows

moves to one side then

back and her spot the geese escape the ditch

on the map between the road  
and the winter tree a hand in an x-ray  
shifting

“The Starving Bed” is for Nathan Bartel.

“Release” is in memory of Eric Dolphy. It is for Nick Macri.

“We Land” quotes twice from Sarah Manguso and once from Carl Sandburg.

The Neruda sequence owes its genesis to Addie Palin.

[“If I Have Died...”] is for my Grandpa Gehring.

“The Doric Columns” owes much to Briget Pegeen Kelly.

“First Attempt at the Hill” contains information and language from the book Copper Camp, Riverbend Publishing.

“David’s Painting” is based on a painting by David Wilson. It is indebted to Casey Charles and David Wilson. It contains lines from Bishop’s “In the Waiting Room.” It is for Laura.

“Lantern in Barium” is for Brian Watson

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