

Postindustrial Folktales



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David Huntsperger

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Postindustrial Folktales

1) “when the ghost begins to quicken”

In the first room the remnants of a city—open sewers and crumbling walls, winding streets. Next a music machine (pipes, cylinders, tubes, colors, vibration and tremor), a monkey and an organ grinder. Then a gallery with the sky as a ceiling, western sunlight casting curves on the wall, echoes, reverberations, lisps and auditory hallucinations. Someone plays back your words a split second later. This space is warmer than the rest. In the fourth room everything is covered in canvas. There is a hole in the floor the size of a grave. Down the stairs (billowing tapestries) the grave rips a hole in the sky. A hospital orderly walks by with a tray full of pills and a paper cup. In the last room images on a table—a face, a white rooster, an inferno. The sound of a knife, a

dragging in which the pitch keeps changing.

2) An Offramp

Passing out in damp places
they prop the back against a
tree and an arm rubs away
buildings. Sprout, flower and disappear.
Cars weave along the freeway
and a soldier rises
beside the drainage pipe, the body to
which it belongs
covered by dry shrubbery.
Usually they discover

crusted vomit from the corner of the
mouth.
Carefully gauging the distance
to the liquor store
a road crew might find the ditch
in country, as the vets like to
say and a leg twitching, beer
bottles and maybe a hubcap.
Summer they collect a fork,
three cans, assorted plastic.

3)

—a sequence including words by
William Blake

Mise-en-scène: The protests have devolved into street violence, despite the efforts of union members to clean up the mess from the previous day's rioting. The police administer indiscriminate beatings. William Blake meditates on the vicissitudes of moral and physical perspective. The poet regrets the passing of a counter-culture icon.

Scatterglass picket signs police a shoe
etc a horse a broken stilts whose wig
was this? Machinists longshoremen
carried trash a dance the sound of a boot
to the thunk! whump! thud! a quartet
laid hands on a man. "The tree which
moves some to tears of joy is in the Eyes
of others only a Green thing that stands
in the way."

Jails packed a woman in handcuffs
screamed "I love America" under the
elevated awkward and off-key bagpipes
blared an anarchist shoved a cop with
his zipper down it's hard to accept but
Jerry Garcia is dead
"And I know that This World Is a World
of Imagination & Vision I see Every
thing I paint in This World, but Every
body does not see alike."

4)

Calloused flesh rubbed red over
knuckles and palms.

A seed falls. The wind blows.
Radicalism ignites the street.
The diagram shows density
& compression, contraction.

Expansion.

Chlorophyll flames up the leaves, lights
red palms.

A foot.

A hobble. It smelled painful. They had
fired the janitors.

Mornings and evenings they boiled
oatmeal.
The cells possessed membranes, webs of
iron, women & men of the union.

Trees went from green to red. Pistons
pumped. Garbage glutted
dumpsters.

Work. Work. Think. Work. (Limping).

There were function and fluctuation
which with the strike,

which with the cold—it burned. It was a
problem.

5)

A chemical smell. Thick smoke. A crowd. A bridal party laughing its way to the waterfront. A saline wind blows over the bodies of old men under the pier. You turn to the left and to the right not knowing, wanting to erase the distance, not knowing, finding faces that are not your face, not knowing, words that you haven't heard, jokes misunderstood and you grin. A woman counts pills out of a pharmacy bottle. Our knees are touching under the table. Where is she, your wife? Where is she?

6)

An alarm, fixes eggs & toast, pain.

7)

Halfway there the rain stops. You dry your hair with a brown paper towel from the dispenser. A man in a blue sweater enters, pisses in the long trough full of ice, washes his hands. He dries his hair with a brown paper towel. The rain stops. There is a thickening of the heels and palms, a disease of the skin. I feel dampness through my clothing. The man in the blue sweater wonders what is going on behind his eye—present, unperceivable, absent. Something escaping. Where is she? You remember the smell of her hair. Cheekbones appear and disappear. My fingers have grown fat. I am losing weight. My belly is warm against a cotton undershirt. There is a dampness. It is yesterday and the man in the blue sweater hears two men speaking French in the basement. Green soap leaks onto the sink. It is

yesterday and the men are searching for
clothing in the basement, sunlight
falling through the stairwell, clothing
piled in the corners, hands folding the
clothing, eyes watching the hands.

warm & awake. Which was a broken
thread. Delirious
with revolutions, spun between two
trees, iron girder—

a wedge of blue. Wisp of white on
which wedge. This.

She had found a spider in the corner.
She had made soup.
With a twist the thermos, and veins
of forearms taught, spread

the harness. All those stairs.

Sirens, the morning air grapples, the
man had left the thermos
open,
the newspaper—ink on thumb & finger.

It spun a quarter turn over the old
trolley track. Spun

and broken. Rips. Spun. Suspense,

breaks.

9)

Mise-en-scène: Protestors block traffic by linking their arms in a human chain. The poet commemorates the untimely passing of a great pop artist. Someone puts a cigarette in the mouth of the Jimi Hendrix statue outside the community college. Despite the escalating street violence, McDonald's continues to serve hamburgers at its downtown location, where country music blares from under the awnings to keep the homeless from congregating near the entrance. William Blake personifies the English nation.

across the freeway a raveling of bodies,
breathing.

R.I.P. Keith Haring. Jugglers and crane-
climbers spewed fire

from the bridge. Protestors
Clap-clop-clop-clop-clop a horse on
stilts an anarchist w/

windwhispers, Jimi. R.I.P.
thick spectacles. All the taxi drivers on
strike. McDonald's ran

upended garbage cans. The statue
smoked
the Earth. The Earth beneath awakes at
the Lark's Voice."

the year of organic intellectuals.
Steelworkers debated the
Tower on a Cloud. The Dawn with her
dappled Horses arises

“Albion rose from where he laboured at
the Mill with Slaves Giving
himself for the Nations he danc’d the
dance of Eternal Death.”

From the back of a truck declared the
American
Spinning round the carousel a woman
through a bullhorn.

Anarchists pitched “an Angel on the
Wing. Dull Night starts
his Watch a holy land her teeth in a cup.

11)

Past (passed) the chickenwire and timber of a construction site, past (passt) the gas station (smell of petroleum), past the barbershop and the Vietnamese restaurant and the bar, you find a rhythmic thrumming, a light leering from the shutters of a souvenir stand. Are these the faces of the kings of Judah? Notice, if you will, this celestial artifice, this liquid swirl of night and light which is the sky, creeping up and out from other illuminations, the light of shop windows, the light above spindly lampposts papered with homemade posters and numbers and spread limbs and war protests. Leather utility belts shore up the bellies of two cops leaning against a cruiser. Think past (passed?) the surface of the buildings—clean lines and right angles, abutments of undifferentiated smoothness

(squareness) that splinter into jagged specters and gothic hauntings. Try to think beyond the surface and there is nothing. Around corners and up alleys the route always circles around in the end—self-consuming—so that the mind will have been the seedbed for an extravagant, instantaneous vegetation, something poorly imitated in floral marginalia or purplish marijuana grown under artificial lights. Suddenly at your door scraping your shoes, you are outside-in again.

12) Day Laborⁱ

Begin with planes caked in rubber, with wire

plastic and copper “where it is almost
impossible

for any mortal to speak with strict
propriety.”

The work was in the dirt. Filled the shoes.

Stuffed the nose.

Clogged the ears. He couldn't feel his
hands.

Two planes pressed to a spool of
plywood
coiled behind the trailer,

where “struck

with his power,

it is only necessary that we should open our
eyes,”

bent-backed in the ditch, bent-backed
with elbows.

The work paid by the day. The money came
from a machine.

The wire felt warm [radiates heat]—and felt
arranged—

and felt “a disregard
of every perishable object,” meaning by that
plywood planes—
“we rejoice with trembling.”

One night he slept in a kitchen chair, shoes full
of
feet and toes. Whiskers and elbows
threw themselves
around and in the air "a mixture of salutary
fear."

13)

Mise-en-scène: The poet juxtaposes William Blake's ideas on the production and marketing of art with his own Marxian belief that global capitalism spreads imperialism and exploitation without meaningfully improving the standard of living in postcolonial and Third World nations. Communication devolves into noise. Bicycle messengers function as a synecdoche for an alternative economy. The poet regrets that Ronald Reagan was twice elected to the White House.

a slogan, a
dog w/ three legs, a pile
smelled the 1980s.

"Broken & Broken &
are Equally
Subversive of the ."

sketchbooks of serial
killers.

demanding a purge
primitive crafts
assembled Bcycl
mssngrs

" talks of Acquiring
of learning how to produce

he must to be a Fool... His
Eye Or rather
Money."

Mltv passed
hatched w/
PVC and tape.

farmers anarchists old piano
of the working man's
insurance (a .45)

"Liberality! a Fair Price & Proportionate
& for Art."
the Chariot of Genius."

Handpicked morning,
sweated the sun.

14)

Hello to the angel of history.

15)

Mise-en-scène: Protestors at the waterfront confront police, who administer beatings. The poet considers the motivations of journalists who seem desensitized to the violence of the government against its own citizens, the use of military weaponry to disperse crowds, etc. William Blake intimates that the faculty of genius is essential to the artist. Believing the Sex Pistols, Ramones, and Clash to be inimitable, the poet polemically commemorates the death of punk rock.

R.I.P. punk. punk. The trolley Lurked
(big ship!) beneath
manhole covers "The Man who on
Examining his own
Mind finds nothing" On the waterfront,
the motives of the
media. A truck with thicker clubs.

Of Inspiration ought not to dare to be an
Artist he is a Fool
& a Cunning Knave suited to the
Purposes of different
versions of events. "This is All Self-
elements chance variance ramifications.
People wanted
Contradictory! Truth & Falsehood
Jumbled Together"
first hand accounts, truth. This was

called "raking." Others
hid in stairwells or under transports.

Still on time sold beef franks and
lemonade under a coated
seagull shit, a ship's horn. A big ship.
"Mechanical Excellence pounded the
drums of an old
drunk stained his fingers word by
fingers, finagling. "I do
not believe the tales of Anecdote writers
when they militate
is the Only Vehicle of Genius."

16) Meltdown

a disorder. go away. to breathe. in the woods.
cough syrup. soon.

soon. go away. if you could. give it back.
squeeze. skin.

squeeze. to explain. three cents. tongue.

skin. things (things)

17)

Clamors in the mud, a pig.

Shelf by shelf in the window rebuilt
his life's work, carburetors,
divertissement;

he had said, "If you always turn off the
machine
fingers." you keep your

Throttle plate, undulant shapes, iron, an
expanse of brown
in the trough and the sudden intake of
air
up throat & snout, at the big window.

Intake & orifice, expulsions of air & vapor jet
thru choke
circuit combustion a process of hoof & horn,
the difference between pig and swine.

Not good with a broom, turns a pilot screw or
two,

swept into an awkward stance,
broomhandle bangs counter,
cracks doorjamb

keeps carburetors clean, lift with two hands.

One morning in the big window a pig, pink
flecks
play the valves
inflect mechanism
and iron,
the not negligible height of building, a window
open
on the third floor sucks air, combustion,
explodes.

Hoof trailing thigh, whiskbroom.
Cobwebs in the big window; "If you
turn off
the machine."

18) Outside the Courthouse

& newly stitched
the thick-fingered boy belches into the wind.

A sky clogged by industrial excretions
in the seasick shifting of the grass.

The park stinks like piss.
An airconditioner-repairman arrives from Las
Cruces

where a rat gorges itself on bread crust.
There is a box labeled "WASTE"

stapled on drooping shoulders, whisker woven
of pigs rutting snout-heavy in the mud,

bursting at the rain of pigeon
shit.

19)

Gleams, a green lamp / In the fog:
Murmur, in almost / A dialogue.
Siren and signal / Siren to signal.

—Louis Zukofsky, from “Ferry”

A boat horn and the bridge flashing
barricades repetition (repetition)
horn light what color barricades split-
livered knee-quaking
what horn-blast a boat raises the bridge
(the bridge going up) as the
bridge—

goes up

—bolts & pins on the window sill first
the horn then warning bells folding
barricades up the bridge goes with
jagged teeth pried gap-fingered
black chasm higher (higher) and closer a
horizontal stomach churning

jagged teeth toward the sky.

20)

Tents at the far end of a lawn, railroad tracks, then docks define the landscape. Something is written on a tarp. Young women stroke the noses of the police horses. They call it a biospace. An angry man on a stage speaks through a microphone. You sit on a rock facing the water. A boat rolls in the brine. Sometimes when my wife is sleeping I listen to the train whistles. A neighbor boy told us kidnappers drove black vans and hid in the woods with hypodermic needles. Moss hung from fallen trees. Sometimes we dug traps and covered them with twigs and ferns. One of the horses has brown spots and a white mane. To this day you love to watch the spirals of wood falling away from a drill bit. They used to say you could drink cough syrup and see colors. There will be a white rooster at the

center of my cosmology. Careful where
you cut—the feathers are delicate.

21)

“florescent-orange-striped band outfits
and catchy cacophonous assortment of
deconstructed waltzes, jigs, and
sambas.”ⁱⁱ

22) Prophecy

Direct your attention to the wharf: a pattern of
scabs
a ham sandwich a bag of chips half a chocolate
bar
oil tankers rolling in bad weather.

Comfort his grizzled jawbone.

The moon drinks from a paper bag. I,
Jerusalem,
await the end times. The old man
has not been gently used.

23)

Mise-en-scène: The governor approves the use of military force against protestors, while black-clad anarchists from the mountains begin a campaign to destroy public and private property. The poet invokes a performance piece in which the artist is crucified upon a running Volkswagen. William Blake speaks prophetically of his four-fold mystical system and of the Almighty. The air is full of tear gas.

After candles pockets and surplus and
were taken up by. Some
snuffed in packs. Some puddles. the
embassy
a chain locked knuckle washed pepper
down storm drains.
palm to palm. is not a Mathematical
Diagram. is & exists
& we in him. Anarchists sprayed
Imagination God is
Guardsmen hitched hoses and took
Burden with full nails and
Volkswagen. waited daylight

packed off busses to the naval station.
glistened spilled oil. dog
sniffed a hand grenade. rained, and the
streets
The Four Senses Four Faces of Man &

Four Rivers No one
stomach symptoms—not even the. the
Water of Life.
double amputee spilled over the
sidewalk. eyes, fluid running
off. Some were cuffed A hollow noise
street lights. I will not
leave and I will little Children behold
the Heavenly manifest to you...

24) Concrete-ism

bolted to the wall the left wall a pipe to a
crossbeam

An assemblage of colors square to the brick

Is it revealing that the floor which slopes ends
in

the air in the shape of a.

which reproduce verticals and where itself
would be open air

vertical which replicates in pattern and various

a unified structure chance determined a crow
scatter pattern by thirds w/ no brick with brick
a crow

a man his hat scratches puts his hat on again.
swoops past and all blue lunar mural drips
over

25) Gin

"I doahngivuhhfuhkk." White light, a grizzled cheek passing on the sidewalk. The feeling you get when someone creeps up behind you and overtakes you and his shadow and your shadow intertwine, each absorbed in soft gray shade, a single silhouette under the streetlamp, and for a moment you doubt the solidity of your body. Beggars line the streets. Blurred images, the metallic snap of a lighter (begs, bellows) catch you down three drinks, fresh lime on the fingertips, guarding a sculptured suppleness, a tiger with wooden teeth. The gate opens and she drops her telephone. Sometimes animals slip through the bars. Angry Americans tearing brick from brick, closing streets in ancient cities.

26) Breakage

Stained glass from glass meandered slap-up
against. Meditations
upon the geometry of violence.

When sun shines more vivid the red, the red a
field of gray,
yesterday without fear.

Who cover the great part of their bodies with
cloth or the skin
of animals and speak in structures at certain
angles.

The stained glass was not smooth but textured
to touch
the plainness upon which shapes play,
geometry, the star.

Frequently angels, attracted to the collapse of a
dialectic—
beauty & terror—

angels in abstract space wave their hands or
climb ladders.
Outdoors does not feel. Attracted to the
collapse of angels.

27) Politics

Movement toward the docks. Nosebones, licorice whips, scarification, postpunk spittle-swigging anti-ironic eek. You are still not yourself. It is never too late to escape the Reagan era. We sat on the edge of his mattress. The planes would shake, he explained, and the bombing was immaculate. What? Inaccurate. They applied a device “free to rotate about one or both of two axes perpendicular to each other and to the axis of spin so that a rotation of one of the two mutually perpendicular axes results from application of torque.” [cut to special effects, explosions]

28)

Arrhythmic its, its three paws
thru the pulley frayed—the
leg

lost in the accident, underbelly
fur
the asphalt is warm.

29) Ten Years in the Life of a Libertarian Woodworker

Grizzled nights slept as he pleased,
worked the dark, a white bulb, hands,
gouges and knives, gouges and knives.
Mornings sprawled snoring, cement
sweet-smelling pine ribbon, etching
textured stubble caked in salt. At the
waterfront smoke-belching a tugboat,
drenched logs, boxcars, used their teeth
to carve fantastic shapes. The wharf
awkward, oozing.

30)

A carnival atmosphere accompanies the exuberant protestors, and the poet commemorates the passing of a great American musician and folklorist. Connections between Vietnam-era protestors and today's youth are invoked. Language riots, with the help of William Blake.

Volt. Volition. Revoke. Revolts. The crowd. Alive! Alive!
"without controls" "would cost a man his life" alive. Fire-eaters emerged. A trash can. Johnny Cash gone. Thru the belly of the clouds. Machines danced. Wings rustled. Alive.

"the Voice of God Our judgment" thru the arid states
on wooden sticks egg whites "The Beast & the Whore" danced
with mist gas all angles ecstatic ate
COLD WAR a
piracy of Ho Chi Minh throwing meat
riot elbows volt revolts.

31)

The poet begins his mediation on premillennial civil disobedience with a metonymic structure: A topless young woman wearing plastic butterfly wings represents an inexperienced but idealistic crowd of likeminded protestors. The poet institutes a rhyme scheme in an attempt to wrestle his language back from William Blake, but the structure fails. The final line summarizes the protests as a whole—drums serving as a rhythmical, variable call-to-arms in the face of brutality.

A “Phantasy” w/ masking tape w/
wings. A brick broke
anarchists in Los Angeles, broadcast
“Understanding or Thought”
grimaces, mutterings, wincings, squinting,
stubble—“is not
natural.” “by means of Suffering &
Distress”: riot gear. Rot.

“He who Loves feels love descend into
him & if” the strain
the hand of the camera was forced to
close. A thumping of bones.
McDonald’s. “wisdom may perceive it is
from the Poetic Genius”
wincings, squinting, an echo of drums.
Thump. Groans.

32)

Deep into woods and muscle past the
mine shaft,

quietly. Now close your eyes.

There was a voice. Hush, it said. Gather
up your coins.

An old woman spilled corn.

What I scratched
from the rock,

what caught in a fingernail or lay
clearing.

Trampled
brush, shell casings, bottles,

the crease of a palm, tambourine.

Whispers and squeals

formed the circle:
mandolin, harmonica, flute

drifted off and disappeared.

Fabrications and Mechanical Fictions

A grid arranged on the
points of the compass. East
of here, west of here,
socio-economic
distinctions, property
taxes, America, etc.

*

A chirping & chattering of
birds outside the window.
An airplane in the open
sky. Where the clouds and
the sky meet is neither
blue nor white. In real life
objects don't have
outlines.

*

The sign said "FREAK SHOW." People pulled up their shirts or took off their pants for the camera.

*

"Coils are hand wound with #24 cotton covered magnet wire." In prison they call them guns. "All metal parts are rust proof, and is [sic] set up and regulated the same as our other two machines."

*

The man worked at the axe until it was sliver-thin & razor-sharp. That was

what the peninsula was
like back then.

*

“EXPO(SED)”

*

Swooping, screaming
crows harassed a raccoon
exiting the nest. The sun
rose over the reflection
pool next to the chapel.
The crows swept down,
screaming.

*

He went wheeze (wheee)
(wheee) wheeze (wheee)

(wheee) as the emphysema
got worse.

*

Crows.

*

The world from behind the
blinds. The blinds open—

The blinds half-closed.
The world.

*

The light in the window
doubles the light over the
table. Two lights. Light of
the light. Blinds dissect the
light in the window.

Breath bisects the lush,
lyrical quiet.

*

Newspapers arranged in a
messy stack. A sketch of a
skull. A peacock made of
brass wire. The chirping of
birds punctuates the hum
of a wash machine. The
sound of a pigeon cooing.
The sound of a car passing
on the street. The sound of
the freeway in the distance
(dull), a natural force.
(Chirp. Chirp. Whist. Skee.
Skee. Skeet skeet skeet.
Whistle will.)

*

The reflection of this window in the glass of another window. The blinds of that window through the blinds of this window. The reflection of the blinds of this window imposed over the blinds of that window. Etc.

*

Crows. Screaming.

*

Dragging all the way to camp.

*

In real life objects have
reflections. It's time to take
pills.

*

Tape. Switch. Toothbrush.
Glue. Needle. Thread. Pen.
Pliers. Soldering iron.
Guitar String. Batteries.
Electric motor. Lighter.
Skin.

*

Language combines (n).

*

A white truck parks in the
street. Men unload pallets
in the rain. Young women

in rubber boots cross the street. Leafless branches vibrate in the wind. South of 11th and Pike in Seattle people live out of their cars. Under the freeway on James Street the city has installed basic sanitation for the homeless.

*

1) Sometimes. 2) Sometimes. 3) Often. 4) Sometimes. 5) Never. 6) Never. 7) Sometimes.

*

Rust, flaking paint, pigeons. The old man who owns the truck rental farts and talks to himself.

Clack-clack-clack-clack-
BANG the shop door
drops closed. Rats are
everywhere—the walls,
the attic, the trailer out
back. Crabapples rot in the
grass.

*

His bones pressed out
(bone ... bone ... bone)
against his skin, a walking
ribcage with safety pins,
holes in his jeans. "A" is
for anarchy.

*

The t-shirt in the window
says ACID IS FUN KILL
THE PIGS

*

At the construction site:
copper wire, iron girder,
asbestos, plywood, plastic
tarp, swirls of sawdust,
pipe.

*

On a sidewalk in
Minneapolis: snow, sand,
lipstick, a sandwich
wrapper, two scuffed
ceramic blue jays, a broken
bicycle chained to a
telephone pole, two men
waiting for the bus to the
warehouse district.

*

Spattered insects,
eruptions, jaggedness—
apples ooze in tire tracks.
With a wing-flutter
baroque music rises from
the 1970s to fill drive-in
chapels on the highway
east, to float upward in
wildfires' purple smoke.
Out back ash collects in a
barrel full of blackened
trash.

*

"They're flying into the
sun," she says, pointing to
the airplane, and you look
and they're flying into the
sun.

*

Halfway between Sioux Falls and Minneapolis on a rotisserie under a lamp at a gas station charred hotdogs go round and round. In Lake City duct-taped to the deck of a cheap flat, a plastic dandelion spins round and round in the wind. A rottweiler (salivating, thick-muscled) strains at his chain (ripples, antifreeze in a puddle, a tub of brown chemicals).

*

In chalk on the sidewalk:
"GIVE US FOOD."

*

Traffic in fits and starts
stutters down to the ferry
terminal, the exhaust
(crisp, white) framed by
white-capped waves and
blue-capped clouds,
speckled with light (pale
yellow, yellowish light).
Afternoon draws itself in
with incandescent orange
wisps, neon excretions.
Shoes shuffle from one
street corner to another,
filled with lank motion
pictures projected on the
windows.

*

Auto-propulsive death:
Your tire grabs in the
grating and you fly off the
bridge and break your
back on a tugboat. You're
run off the road by a Saab.
You're poisoned to death
by bus fumes. You get
gravel in your eye and end
up impaled on a lamppost.

*

The sky is purple. The
river is frozen. A half-
wrecked car leaks oil onto
the snow. A woman
carries a crying baby in a
brown grocery bag.

*

Ecstatically colors blush
blue gray gets grayer and
a brick façade emerges
from the curb—a rounded
curb with rolling ramps &
diamond-shaped ruts
down which water runs
and in the rain shoes grip
but today the sky is gray
and unrainy—a red neon
sign glows against a
yellow pallet latticework
weaves windows with
blue trim hedging in a
storefront full of flowers—
with plaid pancake hat &
orange glasses to teeter
upon a handsome nose a
man high on drugs with
graveled grumbles by spit
and stagger jumbles his
way toward a urinal—a

bulldog struts with chest
up-puffed up the ramp his
collar well-spiked the
shape of pediments on
pillars mounded in oval
relief with Byzantine
symbols tiny crosses Greek
& vaguely genital lumps
stuck (undulant) wave as
of rain over curbs while
children kick their mother
by turn in the shins she
watches the stonework
unmoved in the wind.

*

Fanatic structures tangle
tensioned wire with
bristles, tangle a tongue in
which long is thick, in
which one returns to

wheels gears the green
vibration of a thistle
through chickenwire, a
warp in glass through
which (un)spaced through
which, through fence posts
cloudtangledpine with
fingers, a less awkward, an
unrigid, and of each angle
a shape a shift unseen a
cone. Strange tree indeed.
In bark a skin, skin grown
thick, a (not)tree tied to the
shimmers and feathers,
the baroque structures for
which a hand trembles.
Breathe light Babyblue, the
stuff of who beyond one
thought to breathe.

*

A filter wrench lying on
the sidewalk, a potted
plant, rollerskates, tight
tushes, brown-bagged
bottles, peeling posters &
faded murals on brown
brick walls.

*

Dashing chin-first-scarf-
flapping eyes intent on the
brass grab-handles
attached to the trolley
(scarf trailing further still
whipping in the salt sky
reeling itself outward) a
man grabs the railing
lifting with a hop and a
thud and a dragging lurch
his feet—thanking his
luck.

*

Postindustrial America: A retired union man while talking leaks coffee onto his cowboy boots.

*

Gray industrial fabrication: panels approximately nineteen of 4' by four w/ brown rain-dripped and of two round hubcaps whitewalls as backdrop of three red radio towers skin red pustules where he hasn't shaved last year cloudofthe(18)garbageday in all the best films of the

1970s chinoiserie—the
very angular
pressrockashblow in (itch)
wind—

the inverted “L” which
reduction of other
sideways streetlight was
difficult for the birds at
that distance which into
fore and ground through
your blue eyes keep
walking bluewhiskershrill
(lust) is an emotion too
weathered obscured by
your phonebooth
(cigarette) a shade of
abstraction and to
remember the “M” in
marks.

*

Brake lights, brake lights.
A crushed styrofoam cup.

*

In brick by copper casing
stacked breath in spasms
(ssspuhh! ssspuhh!)
dumpster stuffed bags
under bulging gnawed
corncob cardboard heft of
automobiles erupts echoes
(echoes!) rust oiliness
where grease where
wetness inside I w/
strange hair & whiskers &
hands at the freeway on-
ramp yes w/ no luck in
love I wave.

*

Smells like cat food.

*

Leaf rot matches smother
charred filters speckled
when they listen
barelegged silverware w/
leaves of red & orange of
smoke & breath exhales
from nostrils in the wind
by rail of an abandoned
van by backhoe scoops
gravel lurch by lurch pile
to pile perpetual motion
ends in motion in motion.

*

Buildings leaning left and
right.

*

The place moans and
hisses, whizzes and
whirrs. Soon to be a
boarded-up machine shop.

*

A plastic sack over his
stilt-sprung-creaking-odd-
and-awkward-of-it
shoulder spills, seepage.

*

Rain breaks (rumbling
gutter-splatter dark
drainage of air etc.) turn
left: ironworks cogs &
fanblades welded to the

fence walk past the garage
a two-minute deluge wet
all through. Don't scratch
said the man w/ lesions
on his hands said to
himself ringing wet wire
rust apparatus metallic
sack springs ovals cones
equipage of a telephone
pole don't scratch oddly in
the table etched "TWIGS"
leather gloves w/ fingers
clipped smokes like this
["V"] and needs a wash.

*

A pool of rain forms over
the storm drain outside
the opera house. A man
sits on the steps and eats a
sandwich. Another mans

sells newspapers. A third
man watches.

*

Outstretched “V”
branching and branches
sprockets dark flowered
green texture volume by
foliation forks and forking
round growths & stretch
steps perceptually bud
engorged darker before
the waste of yellow the
exploitation of angles. A
movement of crossroads
and tires backwards
numbers writings with
mathematics and tall boots
hair of cats. Slice slice
splice the space forth &
forward the bricks

telephone lines two
windows wide and a third
a sliver of a smokestack
the reflection of the sky.
Pain or limitless. Stumps
of once trees, from
window to street a good
fifty, and no coat, cold.
Cold.

*

Scarring circumspection
ink erection eggs tattooed
along the wingspan lush
tendrils link wrist to wrist
via trapezius, piston &
pulp to metallic flesh by
the machinations of leaf &
sprocket.

*

Everyone's pants were
wet. We all went out to the
barn to see the printing
press. Click clack click
clack—a zippo or a
typewriter.

*

The slats of the slats of the
slats of the slats of the slats
of—stop fooling around
on the escalator.

*

Without a coat outside
quivers she rain outside
quivers blond down her
neck pelting runs down
the arms of the scarecrow

straight & spread wide
straw-gouge his eyes and
the Evangelical on the
bridge gouged out his
eyes. The leaves of cherry
trees the fluid leak from a
jalopy Joe and his
wrenches reaching having
reached opens the door
and tells her "you are my
sister" he says, "in the
arms of the great

/\

/ \

antenna."

*

The syntax of the man was
plain: jagged in love,
baroque in

his ways. Self-flagellating
from the tents he scurried
red-handed, scurried from
tent city with swollen
knees. The ravens couldn't
find him under the trees.

*

There was smoke and
steam. Everyone watched.
His ministry had been
hotly, hotly—as to
whether to love her or
leave her be, tragically to
the grinding cogs—
debated with shovels.
Worn to the bone. The
stain fixed in the firs. A
lone hat. Up and roll,
roll—up and over the
edge.

Pike Street Combines, 2005-07

“The kinds of ciphers ... are many, according to the nature or rule of the infolding, wheel-ciphers, key-ciphers, doubles, &c.”

—Francis Bacon

“There seems to be a sort of underground for graffiti writers.”

—*Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 1967

doorways
wet leaves welcome

newspaper (paper)
5

spliced
a(n)

event
coded etc.

randomly
fixed

branches
paranoia the

house split "Say
windows

street
medicine

and motion
Only

Blue
detritus

away from the man sitting
insistent whistle of the train

"to create"
starts w/ patterns of rust or gash

And
impermeability

w/o a
noise. Can't you for godssake

a stubbed out cigarette
my friend

arranged
6 red bricks. A staggered pattern of orange &
brown bricks

into
an authentic

expression

5)

red & reddish

coding and analysis

that

which is to say

images

which is

noise

by

coded

“writing

more interesting split open

a shape

pipes & rails

this

pattern of

bricks

may be

expressing

The

car alarm

The
Two zips (zips) down the brick

I
w/ cars passing

Justice!"
the

way of thinking
in

language is
to touch something

"ROAD WORK AHEAD"
&

the
photo-realist reflection of

poems
on the sidewalk

gray
angles

to be
Dis-joint

and
Assemblages

like allegory
a

mind
is a revolution w/

America, etc.
11)

on the sidewalk
w/ form

Dis-joint
w/ tattoos

w/
code

“like an algebraic sign”
Since

the
house is split open

pipes &
35 cents

suffered
in small-town America

silence
structures

thinking
of sound

“I”
imagine

the awkward & ugly
a form of

Draino
and turn up the stereo

“ALWAYS STERILE.”
Everyone is

on the corner of
“time.” And they’re

At the Comet Tavern
giving head

w/
art

which is ugly
and we shook hands and talked about

1XD37Z... a code
and depression

in the sunshine
not

who
brass balls

“vomited up the syr-” (up)
“sick sweating bodies”

speaking
of

“a horizontal structure”
“transformed”

“which”
asks for 35 cents

leather sleeves
sweat

pennies, nickels
old

pantaloon
“broke my heart”

“And vomited up”
whitish, purple

ashtrays
a mélange

a rigorous ethics
to be

22)
newspap-(er)

permutations
"structure"

"my head"
w/ his fist

and asks for some money to get
An experience that floats

& the vague
walking boneyard of "I love you"

tied to
the Angel of History

elaborate
hands & knees

"a friend in Jesus"
"objects"

paranoia
Draino

by
The brick community college

as in
"This train is bound for glory"

they are listening
sometimes

in the sunshine
in fire

“in this no-horse town”
that floats a few inches over its

connections
like shit on your shoe

hello to the Angel and his
“shining weapons”

“tattooed from head to heel with”
“words”

Only
off the regrade park by the

“Seattle waterfront”
“N- PARKING --- TIME”

(sea)gull wheeling
down the brick a pattern

of percep-
tion of oil drum and

a 12-step program

"How are you? Good. Good. Nice to meet
you."

sideways
"Apartments Furnished &"

smudges of
form

loves. A frame
branches

posters on a telephone (pole)
'cause

the Goodwill
long winter afternoons

brick & glass
between The

baby screaming
down Eastlake past the old Zoo tavern

in the dusk
Jack in the Box smells like

the hill
strikes the curb w/ his stick, keeps walking

"machine"
"events"

Headlights
The reflection of this painting

looks like this: !...?...fck...ck...k.... A
the

streetlights & poster paper, sky framed
Shoes sloshing through puddles

blue dumpsters
Two zips down the brick

w/ cars passing at regular intervals
but

“ROAD WORK AHEAD”
windows w/ grime

“USA”
Age spotted hands and hand-rolled cigarette

33)
sweat rolling down the windows

to keep him lit
what of it

98105
who would

Spill toilet cleaner
Asks for cigarettes

on the coldest night of November
you blunder toward

honesties after a glass of
bleach

relaxes
and practice safe sex w/ your

“life”
An old man muttering

Nose running
Rustle of paper

under the awning
yellow

they’ve hosed off
the

wires
“on a plane of”

reflection in the window
antacid

to breathe it in, the sky
form

coded; content
sunset behind the

glass façade of
the

cramped tables
a plastic bag

Roanoke Street
mouthful after mouthful

smells like
diesel

keeps walking
wet pavement

shoes dangling from the powerlines
unshaven

sweat-drenched
coat, psoriasis

on the windows
hairline fractures on the horizon

sticks her tongue out
stranger

“24 HOUR”
“lonely or depressed?”

An acoustic guitar
south of downtown

ears
chest, legs

a man hoarse & screaming and the next
morning
dis-

tance again
well well, hello to the

psychogeography
and

“uninterrupted circuit of life, production”
“Jesus.” An old man muttering

and
prowling the garbage cans

watching the
neighborhood

recycled
contributions or whatever is in the sack

lights
the gridwork of city streets

things
fire, sanitation, the

red face of the devil
as the church empties

knocks the baby onto the postoffice floor
beside me. Indigestion

Voices in the background
“the mad owe their internment but to”

asphalt
“a long drive for someone with nothing to
think about”

looks like this: !...?...fck...ck...k....
the parking garage

where last summer homeless slept beside
Strangers

tobacco
nerve

language
likes to

rush over the brick, along
Gleaming chrome

All night
44)

A cart, a devil, wingèd scissors
into the city

legless and begging by
the gangly legs of

a boy
in

A (transparent) plastic bag
under the

window. In the men's restroom a kid washes
waiting

Sobering up
nose running, waiting for the

fractures on the horizon
A scissors

the rain sideways
a fresh galloping blast

early afternoon sunset pink wisps
Rustle of paper

people under the awning laughing smoking
here

The man strikes the curb w/ his stick
antacid

barred windows
traffic backed up in both directions

coffee
ink, fried eggs and bacon

tongues of fire
rose heart flame

Oregon anarchists
shooting gallery

Hecho en Los Angeles
a dry mouth

the liquor store on Sunday morning
low down blues-soaked

dumpsters w/ white swirls
carried sideways across the sky. Another crow

A bag full of pennies
Asks for cigarettes

etc.
winter sky, soft gray, speckled

music
A matchbook, an empty glass

Train whistle south of downtown
over

squeals & whistles, blinking
Two bodies covered w/ packing blankets

gleaming steel
"Wooden Slats"

“2 parallel chalk lines”
woman w/ red hair rides the bus

a kid washes his hair in the sink
“LOLITA”

cartoon
shaping the

late summer w/
a cup of black coffee and a

whiskey hangover
burned fingers against the ice-cold glass

an autobody shop
55)

“Almighty God”
doing strange things

Underground
“I told him hell yeah”

the splinters (splinter)
Ice on the streets, post-lyrical. (the end)

A Fairytale

With bare, muscular arms and prison
tattoos
he hunkered down, mouth half open
(gentle eyes, gentle jaw)
smiling (squinting) at something
unseen.

The nights were quiet at the county jail.
In the mornings

small birds pecked at crumbs beside a
broken statue of St. Francis.

The photographs of the young men on
the walls were black and white.

The sky was black and grey. Someone
shit in the alley.

The telephone lines sagged beneath the
birds. Crows perched on the sides of
buildings.

William Blake wrote, "The Last
Judgment is not Fable or Allegory
But Vision."

I saw a black and grey sky.

I saw a crow alight on the side of a
building.

Everything the woman (red-eyed,
chapped hands) owned was in a
broken

shopping cart. Someone had strewn
rose petals over the sidewalk.

The owner of a sandwich shop got shot.

People left flowers.

The city suspended bus routes east-to-west. The west-to-east buses were empty. The coals in the trashcan were still hot.

I awoke from a dream drenched in sweat, had dreamt John Brown's body

shrouded in celestial light while hairdressers smoked cigarettes under an awning.

I dreamt of Joan of Arc, her face flushed, sighing and crying.

The coyotes came down from the hills.

White vapor escaped a smokestack, blowing north. There were rumors of a secret reactor, of genetic modifications gone awry.

Sometimes we fell asleep holding hands.

Sometimes the wind rattled the blinds.

Sometimes inmates refused to take their pills and tuberculosis spread to the outside.

The cherry blossoms were in full bloom, pink impressionistic blotches in the morning rain. After a storm the sidewalks pulsated a brilliant pink-white, and

crystalline droplets fell from the
branches.
Old men lived in sleeping bags under
the freeway.
Cops and social workers came from
time to time.
When the food banks ran out of food,
the fighting got ugly.
The cherry blossoms swirled to the
earth.
Ambulances split the streets, ripping
through intersections,
clipping curbs and setting the dogs to
howl.
The brick of the factory was blood red.

Dotted lines divided
architectural plans. Whole
neighborhoods were to be leveled.
Paramedics poured weak coffee into
styrofoam cups.
Vendors sold watery gas and caffeine
pills and purified water and liquor.
When the hospital finally closed, the
patients poured
out into the street. Hustlers hustled,
users used.
The southbound bus broke down and
no one went anywhere.
Chain-link fences went up overnight.
Neighbors complained
that all the yelling and screaming kept
them awake.

Someone left a laundry bag full of clean
clothes at the bus stop before the
warehouse district,
where abandoned warehouses slowly
collapsed on themselves
or were torn down by earthmovers and
bulldozers. New buildings
framed the sky with jagged verticals
and cockeyed horizontals.
A family from Idaho lived in a spray-
painted school bus on a street
full of biohazard bins overflowing. A
crow picked at the carcass
of a rat.
All the police at the waffle house leapt
out of their cars
and pulled their guns from their
holsters. No one saw anything
important.
Leafless branches trembled over men
unloading unmarked crates
from an unmarked truck. Behind the
dumpster a line cook smoked a
cigarette.
Each year during the parade the streets
reeked of chemical sanitation.
A spray-paint mural decorated the
window of the skate shop,
bark and blossom swirling around
demonic jaundiced eyes.
Bleeding fingers interlaced in the face of
the late spring sunset.
Occasionally the working class staged

protests. Men and dogs
drank straight from the reservoir.

Freeway Park crept off to the east,
concrete terraces tripping
down the hill toward the business
district, where none of the property
owners felt safe at night.

Moss overtook the flowerbeds and
benches, sprang up in cracks
and crevices, covered over the stone
(stained grey stone)
as buildings returned to ruin and
gridworks and maps and plans
fell into obsolescence.

The bars on Skid Road changed hands
after the carnival killings.

A hotdog cart started serving at
midnight.

Grey-haired men hunkered down in
doorways
and hung wet clothes on benches while
the smell of frying food
wafted onto the street from a Chinese
restaurant.

The sky spilled out a flame-red sunset. It
rained—hot tropical rain—

for weeks at a time, until gutters and
sewers ran in the streets.

The sun seemed to stagger in its orbit.

Gentle eyes, decaying teeth, tattooed

hands, he wore his orange jumpsuit
out into the world.

Notes

ⁱ With quotations from Edmund Burke's *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1759).

ⁱⁱ From a music review in *The Stranger* weekly newspaper.



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—Loretta Clodfelter

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