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Machine

David N. Wright

A Thesis

in

The Department

of

English

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for the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

Machine

David N. Wright

This long poem combines a poetic narrative with citations from critical texts to create an environment in which the poem offers a theoretical and interpretive approach to its contents. Structured into eight books, the poem explores the isolation and alienation created in a world which is slowly enveloped by a machine. As well, it examines how the individual and the machine are alike when they must comment on their environment using the language and opinions of a specific culture. While attempting to find new space in the literary tradition, this poem breaks from conventional poetic modes by offering a style of poetics which reflects the automated media of the contemporary world.

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What succeeds is less what accords with abstract principle than what works on the reader: the art of poetry is the art of illusion, and the illusion that succeeds in delighting and illuminating the subtle and trained reader is what we want, no matter how many "rules" are violated or received idols shattered.

Paul Fussell.

Book I

Prologues of Place

1. BREATHE: (brēth), *v.i. & v.t.* [BREATHED (brēthd), BREATHING], [ME. *brethen* < *breth*; see BREATH], 1. to take (air) into the lungs and let it out again; alternately inhale and exhale. 2. to inhale. 3. to exhale. to live. 5. to give out (an odor). 6. to give out or come out from or as from the lungs; as, he *breathed* confidence into his followers. 7. to blow softly. 8. to speak or sink softly; whisper, murmur. 9. to give or take time to breathe; rest: as, *breathe* your horse. 10. to pant (with *hard*) or cause to pant, as from exertion. 11. in *phonetics*, to speak without voicing.

2. BREATH: (breth), *n.* [ME. *breth*; AS. *bræth*, odor, exhalation; akin to G. *brodem*, vapor; IE. base **bher-*, to boil up, foam up (of water, etc.), as also in L. *fer-mentum*; cf. BARM, FERMENT], 1. air or vapor given off from anything. 2. air carrying fragrance; odor. 3. air taken into and let out of the lungs. 4. breathing; respiration. 5. the capacity to breathe; power to breathe easily. 6. life; spirit. 7. a puff or whiff, as of air; slight breeze. 8. something produced by a breath, as moisture on a mirror. 9. a whisper; murmur; word or words. 10. the time taken by a single respiration; a moment. 11. a slight pause or rest. 12. in *phonetics*, a voiceless exhalation of air producing a hiss or puff, as in pronouncing *s* or *p*.

**

1.

Dogtown Road.

Named by an overheard
phrase in loose conversation,
it never suggested a place
and remained
something unfinished.

It existed as a patient waking from anesthesia,
waiting to come to, breathing cool,
aware of sounds, but unable to respond.

Its history made up the gravelstones,
well worn and slicked with repeated passes
of the oil truck wetting rocks
to keep them weighted, and prevent any rolling elsewhere.

Hedgerows bordered each side
reeking of crickets and raspberry bushes.
Greyrock covered by peat moss burst
through in places, the Canadian Shield

disturbing the Pythagorean exactness
with which the path had been constructed.

Its surface was littered with things half-buried,
a strange pair of coloured glasses, welding tools, a hammer,
pieces of ripped clothing hung as flags on thorns, slicing symmetry.

These impressions cut curves
in the stability of any wanderer;

and then there was the hum.

**

3.

She lay stomachdown on the carpet, knees bent,
heels to the sky, rocking back and forth,
and gestured unhappily toward the open textbook,

noting again its failure to speak in absolutes,
rendering its words as source material.

All these words of explanation,
disconnected from anything she knew,
seemed worthless in her desire
for an existence inside the abstract.

(a slow slight spin of the hand
and pencil graphite crushed
the weave of thinpulp, underlining
something to which she wished to return)

By taking the image away from the comicstrip
and isolating phrases in a bubble,
conclusions rang with more force.

After a pause, she looked again
and took note of the words she had underlined,
aware that disassociated from the breath,
the words provided a context for understanding.

She had discovered her earthworms,

the excavation began.

**

4.

Longwire might have thought
he was in love at the bookstore,
amazed at the find:

a waterstained Encyclopedia Brown
nestled tightly inbetween other bindings.

Interrupted by a hand reaching for the treasure
his brow split and he recoiled,
falling ungraciously into the shelves,
hung up on her giggle.

She offered him the book, sensing his loss.
Refusing, he offered a blue page
covered in figures and blueprints.

They spilled down the alleyway tearing pages,
exchanging dogeared corners with each other;
Longwire stuffing his suit pockets
with her notations, his jacket weighted with white leaves.

Their unstable footsteps crinkled
discarded papers
and they agreed to program things together.

Theirs was a history/ access for the machine.

**

5.

The house recalled the bitterness of raw cloves
that comes with so much having happened.

It stood uninhabited save for Longwire and the machine.
The frame badly in need of repair, footprints
in the mud of the drive arched by trees,
lined by white stone.

The glass of the windows had withstood
all they could
and now let air roam freely through
as the roof sagged dangerously.

The slanted grass grown about provided measurement for the lean.
If nothing else, it was shelter from the onset of seasons.

The discovery of its dislocated shape meant that people began
to wonder about the fellow who lived there
in the white crusted house
that looked like a library
surrounded as it was by discarded papers
(the remnants of programming).

Covered in yellow moss,
the preserve jars, fogged with age,
waited for the fullness of difficult farming,

the result of planting seeds
crushed in the shifting shieldrock.

The steel of the machine would outlast
the woodhouse,
solder instead of glue;
no glass--outside had become
internal, decay would be
something arrested by isolation.

The steel was brought and coaxed into shape with flame,
gears and levers greased, placed so as to enable
function without power,
insusceptible, through careful assessment of weights and measures,
to the available reality.

**

Book 2

The Structure of Mirage

[Ignatz the Mouse and Krazy Kat stand looking at a shape on the horizon.]

Ignatz: Of course, you're not seeing what you're looking at. Fool--it's all a "mirage"--.

Krazy: Do my eye dissive me, or do I dissive my eyes?

[If you see what we think you see, Ignatz is apparently telling Krazy Kat something.]

Ignatz: Pfit-t-t-t--now do you see it?

Krazy: How should I know if I dun't see it. Wen I din't know if I seen it wen I was looking at it? Huh, if I din't see wot I was looking at. How do I know I was hearing wot you was telling me?

Ignatz: Oh, you just think you do. But you don't--just as you don't but do.

[Ignatz walks away, leaving Krazy alone with himself.]

Krazy: Dagnabbit, I wunda if I saw Ignatz, am I me, am I here, or am I there?

(Herriman 23)

"As a first approximation, we may say that a structure is a system of transformations. Inasmuch as it is a system and not a mere collection of elements and their properties, these transformations involve laws: the structure is preserved or enriched by the interplay of its transformation laws, which never yield results external to the system nor employ elements that are external to it. In short, the notion of structure is comprised of three key ideas; the idea of wholeness, the idea of transformation, and the idea of self-regulation" (Piaget 5).

**

1.

On a hill, where Dogtown Road warped to horizon,
the structure was built by three.

Planted firmly in the whiteframe,
able to grow in all directions,
it could occupy the whole of its allowable space.

Metal spread from no recognizable center,
allowing it to constantly augment
the position in which it could be viewed

and the way in which the wanderer might peruse
the angles of its existence.

Nothing held itself here,

slipping from one thing to another,
the present moved constant
and the audience felt in the presence of something

uncontrollably removed.

Like seasons, they could not make distinctions
between joy and sadness.

There was nothing to prove
anything was really there
except the audience's belief.

**

2.

The silhouette made space
where none existed before.

Loading memories,
quotations,
building up the metal,

reinforcing . . . childhood and kitchens;
the table and the doll--their first kiss.

“Perhaps he kept changing his texts to show that he was not dead” (Stillinger 117).

Discarded toys, the yellow wallpaper, wanting to escape connections
and be of its own making.

Smoke discharged from the machine
covered the sky with white, and forced
light cast from the house to scream skyward,

signaling that work was progressing without delay.

**

3.

She hunched in front of the bookshelf
leafing through collections
fascinated by the depth of what remained unread.

(A crinkled Encyclopedia Brown.)

Crosslegged, pencil jammed in her mouth,
she scanned for quotations to be marked.

“ . . . yearns to make, since every sentence must begin somewhere and end
somewhere else (*abitus, transitus, aditus*, wrote Geulinx) and no choice of a
beginning or an ending can fail to exclude a thousand others” (Kenner, Beckett
188).

Falling to floor in the livingroom,
she arched forward over the pages,
telling herself to comment on what was important,
an isolation of sorts . . .

What a pretty life she had,
collected in blurred snapshot fragments,
in the tiny white dresses of her childhood;

little high notes, the top of the desk
unreachable.

. . . an attempt to underline her way out.

**

4.

She spent her days in the art gallery,
looking at innocent things,
invading picture with commentary.

Her eyes squinting hard through the white lights,
a search for the brushstroke and comment;

holding her books to her chest,
underlining explanations,

her pencil bitten awkwardly,
pointing out of her mouth.

Leaning toward the painting to observe fine lines of the brush,
she sometimes touched the canvass,

recoiling at the disturbance.

She organized her first series for the machine:
 comments on the art gallery
from all the great critics,
 all the great commentators,
 and slipped them together,

but the paperclip couldn't hold all her sheets,

the underlines became disorganized
and she couldn't remember the sense;

the quotes scattered through the gallery,
dismembered from where they had come.

Held in suspension
the papers seemed a perfect context,
completely disconnected from her own.

Just then,
the door of the bar opened
and the gang yelled:
 NORM!

**

5.

Tensions of sunlight pulled shadows over fields
where Longwire and the skeletal machine
lingered in lowfog, loading the day:

waiting for Halley's comet
to streak across the sky, a comment
at the soda bar, sipping longstraws
in a dark green Coca-Cola bottle

which fell carelessly;
its indecent
broken pieces sculpted
in patterns of descent
providing a blueprint for mechanism.

"Any critic who wishes to put the pieces together, producing this unity or that in the resulting interpretive construct, can take consolation in the fact that it was . . . after all, and not any later critic or theorist, who authored each one of those versions" (Stillinger 117).

Trenchcoat torn when caught on a branch,
head balancing an odd, widebrimmed tophat,

Longwire fed the machine with all the words he could.
Even those so removed from the language
they couldn't be counted among the missing.

Just as Les Nessman's yellow tape never indicated failure,
but rather, an interpretation of success,

the machine had names
for everything;
illusions no one understood but the maker.

**

6.

The cold,
a comfort on sudden delays

brought on in light blue sky
the morning after lost virginity.
Breath fog between inexperienced hands

and what might have been thought
was taken with waking.

Longwire's smooth body
removed itself gently
from any chance at comedy.

Sunlight on flakes of dust, cracked air
and created instability around the machine.
The papers from the last night of programming
fell out of Longwire's pockets
and remained unchanged from before,
collapsed from free evenings.

“Overinterpretation, which appeared to trouble him more than erroneous interpretation, arose from two main assumptions: that the writer is necessarily presenting some experience which he has had, and that he necessarily writes in order to affirm some general truth” (Kenner, Beckett 10).

The cold was simply cold,

but Longwire struggled with this simplicity,
finding the history of the word too consuming.

The dust settled.

**

7.

Tucked under his arm
a singularly huge book
which any person of his disposition would have found difficult to carry
--on the binding:

DICTIONARY.

Catching her glance, he didn't speak, but pointed to a keyboard on the machine
wherein he might have entered words, and closed his eyes slowly when she
realized she had put the connection together.

He seemed easily pleased.

The dictionary was afterall, his only data.
He was giving voice to the machine with an eternity converted into binary code.

After approaching and inquiring of the giant metal contraption,
she discovered finally, after all this, that his name was Longwire,
an inventor of mindful gadgets
and general preserver of all things.

The machine looked so lonely, she decided to come forth
and offered her notebooks as data.
Greatly appreciative Longwire, holding a hammer and some limp metal,
agreed that she should provide the machine with all possible context.

**

8.

Longwire squinted through the sunlight
watching as the machine sat, making noises,
merging with time,
a function

separate from the source.

A crowd had gathered.

The barbecue singed and laughing
could be heard on Dogtown Road.
The triangular flags, joined on a long rope, welcomed the event
and brought attention to the task.

She looked at Longwire, thinking of his cuteness,
chatting with the crowd,
attentive to signs of hysteria.

And looked through the Claude Lorrain glasses,
left discarded on the picnic table,
at the chromatic scales of view,
thinking of days before:

The Claude Glass held in hand, the viewer
looked, scanning horizon, the landscape
focused in the glass.

The Claude Glass created uniform colour,
a specifics of landscape, unity;
a way to see as the artist painted.

The viewer looked in a mirror
at the landscape behind
through filters which make
the world twotoned.

Longwire continued to load the season,
influenced by how others made
the world visible;

he backed off abruptly after a flutter from his trenchcoat
dripped old words from his pockets.
The sunlight relentlessly indicated
flaws in the smoothness of the machine.

They stood looking at each other,
the Claude glass heating the landscape in its mirror.

The crowd gone, and with it attention to detail.

“the language has changed, and each significant philological change projects us
into an altered metrical world in which the meters of the past can be understood
and appreciated but never again practiced” (Fussell 66).

For them and everyone else,
the moment of reality was a choice of words.

* *

9.

I become as I am now: commentary

separate from breath.

But I feel these words and worry that I do not use them correctly,
canceling the success of distance.

I write my own history,
what choice do I have,

faced as it is
with nothing but language
and the unity of two who became lovers.

Ted Baxter always had something important to say to Lou;
Mary and Rhoda seemed happy enough;

my community is
a household of others,
real,
accessible in syndication.

It is all about going back over
the same territory, recovering.

I can only imagine

eyes
hidden from me.

“What great issues, Watson,
might hang upon a bootlace!” (Kenner, Era 26).

While the house falls, I grow. The bleached
whiteness of its rotting pine replaced by numbers of description
and the specifics of training.

I calculate based on the binary of such things,
it is what I have to see:
the stories of others, the story of them;

figuring history by chipping at the stone.

Silence,
as if nothing ever happened before.
The snow falls for the first time again,
slowly, I am covered by it.

A television without a station to receive.

**

10.

I am what I cannot see.

Crunched by the abstract, I exist inside misunderstandings,
groping in the dark, in the constant refiguring of words.

Fragments of meaning join themselves over distances
and fix points, but never a center; I do not know

from where I have come,
but I am here, somehow.
A mirage created with
the emptiness of a language
disconnected from things as they are.

I become what I need.

**

Book III

The Personality of Language

[Krazy Kat and Ignatz the Mouse are sitting at a table.]

Krazy: Why is 'language' Ignatz?

Ignatz: 'Language' is, that we may understand one another.

Krazy: Can you unda-stend a Finn or a Leplender, or a Oshkosher, huh?

Ignatz: No--

Krazy: Can a Finn, or a Leplender, or an Oshkosher unda-stend you?

Ignatz: No.

Krazy: Then, I would say, language is that we may mis-unda-stend each-udda.

(Herriman 54)

"Personality, stripped of its contingencies, has become at length a point of light moving through possible worlds, a mode of consciousness capable of being put into an indefinite number of uses" (Kenner, Poetry 125).

**

1.

Collected in the vocabulary,
it spoke
words as it absorbed
inheritance.

Connected through wires and memories,
accidents sometimes provided it with a truth.

Pinned under concussion,
the bride undamaged by her suitors,
but broken by movers
who slipped on a pebble;

Duchamp's "Large Glass";
"The Bride Stripped Bare By Her Bachelors";
after being seven years in the doing, was dropped
by movers and cracked.
He is said to have liked it better after this accident occurred.

"Language comes from elsewhere" (Browne 118).

Everything became elsewhere
when space was fractured
by the introduction of personality.

Grass high, long in the early afternoon
and the fields spilled.
Trees turned, rescuing the colours of summer.

The stainless metal of machine,
a smoothness required of absence.

**

2.

To the acrobat, training was the key:

commit to the trick with utmost precision,
practice with a net,

perform without.

Gravity made landing from flight possible,
but balanced completion held
as a measure of success.

The costume glitter distracted from the indelicacies of a near miss.

Magicians too
slip their faith inside motions.
Like the acrobat,
timing and distractions were essential,
necessary to fool the audience
into believing what they were seeing.

Success was measured by the clarity of the hoax.

The acrobat and magician,
lovers of the mutual performance, controlled the audience
with the distraction of a useless gesture.

The magician and acrobat knew each other's secrets,
the ones practiced in the mirror
until the performer fools the performer
despite knowing the motions.

It spoke for itself when the functions
of its performance were hidden
even to reflection.

**

3.

Seen from behind, she could have been so many people.
Strangers in this way
responded to the face
rather than the gesture.

Elegantly,
her eyes halfclosed,
she greeted sunset halfdamaged by clouds.

Wind stretched afternoon acrossrock
past sound broken by the flagflap
of days gone from contact.

She thought of the car that once was:
the Chevy Impala on bricks in the driveway.

The enginehood spread infront as she flipped turn signals
moved by the change
from metal into rock.

Coasting over the pebbles of Dogtown Road,
airshocks smoothing heaves of contour,
absorbing dips, pushing her deep into the seat.

In the driveway, she went as far as the Impala would let her.

**

4.

Cornered by events of the day,
she grabbed her hips and thrust outward,
mindful of the dislocation.
She danced until nothing came of it
and turned face down to the floor unwilling to remit.

By unclasping herself from connections with the suitors
and the Encyclopedia Brown book
hanging out of her pocket, she escaped.

She looked at her hand
as though it were detached,
a simple thing of function.

We can never
see for ourselves.
It is before
always
someone else's thought.

The quotations guided her hand
and she underlined explanations,
head tilted,
thinking of other things;
her body wilted when words
framing externals revealed the core.

“The body, if we consider it without prejudice in the light of seventeenth-century connoisseurship of the simple machines, is distinguished from any machine, however complex, by being clumsy, sloppy, and unintelligible; the extreme of analytic ingenuity will resolve no[t] one of its functions, except inexactly, into lever, wedge, wheel, pulley, screw, inclined plane, or some combination of these” (Kenner, Beckett 121).

She stripped her authors down, as she did to herself
and revealed everything to the scrutiny of the mirror.

**

5.

Longwire found symmetry in the familiar,
and continued to peruse the dictionary for omitted definitions
so as not to lead the machine astray.

Something about change:

Longwire, like Gaudier-Brzeska, forged his metal for sculpting
in a stone kiln and created tools for cutting
personality into the inanimate.

Dust on the dirt floor of the house held footsteps
and so it could be sculpted
by the visitor--looking for significance in things--to mean more than bracing.

“What should we think, if it were given to one of us to see beauty undefiled,
pure, unmixed, not adulterated with human flesh and colours and much other
mortal rubbish, and if he could behold beauty in perfect simplicity? Do you think it
a mean life for a man to be looking thither and contemplating that and abiding with
it? Do you not reflect that there only it will be possible for him, when he sees the
beautiful of the mind, which alone can see it, to give birth not to likeness of virtue,
since he touches no likeness, but to realities, since he touches reality” (Plato 243).

**

6.

Longwire entered comparisons, finding similar in the same;

a table stood for a table

the moon = the moon,

but then he entered the equation for metaphor:
find the similar in the dissimilar, as follows:

a boat plows through the waves

Plow	=	Boat
Field	=	Waves

(*Field* is the variable not mentioned in comparison)

A	=	B	
X	=	B ²	-an equation for metaphor as below:

Book	=	Chest
Holds	=	Container

-or further as follows:

(A) Thing	=	Thing (B)
X	=	B's function or location in the world
A ^c	=	B
X	=	BL

-- A^c = noun (thing) which must be active
B = thing--inactive
BL = location or relevance of B
X = remaining relevance to BL--the metaphoric process.

Noting that the tricky part is finding the thing which is active,
he heard the crank of a bicycle's gear slip
and the machine cycled, reversing wildly.

Finding as it did, the personality of language.

**

7.

Between them, phrases collected
as exchanges in mutual meaning.

Repeated words were understood only in relationship
to one another.
So too, the laughter they shared
at the reminder of that moment where things connected.

Longwire slipped her hair back behind her ears,
reining the sharp blond locks that stuck out
further than he had earlier imagined
and she felt the bones of his fingers
resolved to do something about those nails.

At that moment, she thought of the comment
at the soda bar earlier in the day and giggled,
repeating only a fragment out loud for Longwire

who leaned back to refresh the air
with peals of laughter.

In this, they were together.

**

8.

Split in two by the argument,
they stared at each other,
unable to understand what the other meant.

It had been simple enough to start, but had gotten lost
in the circular logic of emotion.

Language suddenly connected
to the stonekiln, forged itself
into something loaded with insult.

Even the most commonplace expression of affection
was crippled by the deeper double meaning
brought to the surface by anger.

Longwire knew that she wanted to be touched,
but asked her instead if he was correct in the assumption,
unsure what the words would mean.

She leaned forward, frustrated.
He slipped on a pebble

and tripped, landing awkwardly
on what was left of misunderstanding.

**

9.

Discovering the masters by accidental pulls on the binding,

I come across the word "Literature"
and make connections, taking into account
the giggling brought about by the discovery of some long forgotten joke.

"We will bestow the name of literature only upon those texts that displace their
intention sufficiently to require exegesis" (Scholes 13).

I watch the workers pour out of the Lumière Factory
obsessed with what makes them look at the camera.

They wave to indicate an awareness
that they are being watched by someone.

"As Maritain puts it, 'If existence lies outside the field of the intelligence, it is the will alone that can bring them together.' A poem, that is, becomes a combining operation which some starry-eyed Johnny does because 'he feels like it'. Poetic form is *imposed* on conceptual materials; we have no longer to do with a way of seeing rooted in the intrinsic analogy of being. Maritain goes on, 'Si l'essence seule est le terme ultime de l'activité intellectuelle, sa réalisation dans une existence indépendante de la pensée devient pour celle-ci problématique, et finalement un non-sens.' When the meaning of the statement 'My love *is*' becomes 'problématique', that of the statement 'My love is a red, red rose', or even '... is like a red, red rose', is obviously not far from 'un non-sens'. M. Maritain reminds us of the Cartesian thinkers' hatred of things outside themselves: 'They imagine, or construe the object as a reified idea, as a bit of pure externality, passive and inert, an obstacle to the mind, something interposing itself between the mind and the world of existence, or real subjects. Consequently, they contend that only the actual experience of subjectivity could reach those subjects. They do not see that object and objectivity are the very life and salvation of the intellect.' Such a world is, precisely, the dead grey landscape inhabited by Picasso's lumpy giantesses" (Kenner, Poetry 96-7).

**

I rust with each invention,

recognized only by specifics,
left to gather dust.
What I need is a scene.

Sputtering through language awkwardly;
a corrupted gear change--spaces
defending against imprecisions and unity.

“all living is an illusion” (Kenner, Beckett 171), but might have said, all living in this case is allusion

to other things
words on the page;

I stall.

Learning destroys itself;
knowledge is complete only when it falls apart.
Once you know what to do, things are finished.

The métier is never safe.

“The decentralizing of ego is analogous to the attack on anthropomorphism that in turn reflects the dwindling importance of earth-centered consciousness. Such shifts in thought filter out into open-form poetry [. . .] which is partly energized by the de-humanization, re-inspiring belief that man has little more claim to being at the centre than any other object” (Dragland 199).

Book IV

Returning

[Krazy Kat and Offissa Pupp stand together and stare at a brick floating in the air.]

Krazy: Suspents eh?

Pupp: Yes Krazy that brick is in suspense, perfect suspense.

Krazy: But wy dun't it come at me. Like usual?

Pupp: A brick in suspense can't come at anything.

Krazy: Odee mee--now I am in a suspents.

Pupp: How nice.

[Krazy turns his back to the brick and watches Offissa Pupp go. The brick slams Krazy in the back of the head, as usual.]

(Herriman 45)

“Yet everything depends on whether it is the right and fruitful return. For the journey beyond self-consciousness is shadowed by cyclicity, by paralysis before the endlessness of introspection, and by the lure of false ultimates” (Hartman 54).

**

1.

The kids seemed oblivious
and pelted the houseframe with rocks,
quickenning its descent.

They stopped to touch the machine,
greyrock creeping in all directions from under its base,
moss dying from lack of sunlight and grease drippings.

Their palms caressed the rusting metal.

“We are all growing used to a world in which long chains of analysis have invaded the most commonplace experiences: motion study, communications theory, motivational research, astro-navigation, these specialisms begin to preempt the plane of behavior on which one makes a bed, talks to one’s neighbor, desires a hat, or moves from place to place” (Kenner, Beckett 85).

The kids moved on,
holding hockey sticks and candy bars,
screaming to the frozen lake.

Rank wheat fields covered the tripped,
bleaching wood of the house
while the Canadian Shield held its place in anticipation of footsteps.

In anticipation of the shifting of borrowed voices.

**

2.

The house stood still, crooked.
A pathway to the door twisted, overgrown with weeds,
covered with metal shards, an odd stone out of place.

The distances had led decay here,
again, this scene:

The house collapsed around the machine,
covering it from sight.

A stranger would have been puzzled
by the constant humming sound,
as if something were forever shifting gears,
smoothly, efficiently, but with some reluctance.

The watcher searched for the image/ the image searched for the watcher

““shadowed more and more darkly by a sense of invalidity, of inadequacy of existence at the expense of all that it includes, all that it blinds to.’ And so ‘the history of painting, here we go again, is the history of its attempts to escape from this sense of failure, by means of more authentic, more ample, less exclusive relations between representer and representee, in a kind of tropism towards a light of which the best opinions continue to vary, and with a kind of Pythagorean terror, as though the irrationality of Pi were an offense against the deity, not to mention his creature”” (Beckett qtd. in Kenner, Beckett 32).

The machine blended with the collapse of scenery around it
and slowly became part of the landscape,
even in the duskligh.

The scene searched where things were coming back.

**

3.

Confronted with Egyptian images, studying the ancient library,
she found herself deciphering hieroglyphs
to find solutions in stone.

Just as she had hinged
her glasses with a safety pin,
it was necessary to interpret these carvings carefully.
They were,
like so many things,
not hers.

She felt daunted by this detachment, redface inches from the rock,
reading with the closeness brought on by breath.

“Structuralism, it seems, must choose between structureless genesis on the one hand and ungenerated wholes or forms on the other; the former would make it revert to the automatic association to which empiricism has accustomed us; the latter constantly threaten to make it lapse into a theory of Husserlian essences, Platonic forms, or Kantian *a priori* forms of synthesis. Unless, of course, there is a way of passing between the horns of the dilemma” (Piaget 9).

A synthesis of touch came when she recalled
the harmony of their first dance and the singer’s breathfilled voice,
echoes again of love,
pulling books from shelves.

Who did she see when she saw herself in others?

Gently, she traced pages
with her fingers,
presenting a life recovered from error.

Outside,
the slaves built Pyramids without
understanding the implications
or their
discovery of Pi.

To this, she owed her intricacies.

**

4.

She recalled how her father narrated the occasion:

He would prepare for the telling with a shift from side to side, adjusting his pipe. He would then launch into the tale of Aunt June, who lived her entire life in Ireland.

The same story every time.

When she got a television, finally, in 1968,
she would watch and point out relatives
who had gone from Ireland to the United States
when they appeared in background shots of *Bonanza*.

Shrieking and rising out of her chair,
she gesticulated wildly, pointing
at the television and shouting:

That's Meredith, t'air she be, 'nd t'air is Jack!
Aye, god love 'em both--the salt of t'earth dey were!
Look at 'em all successful, living next door ta de Cartridges!

She snuck a moment away from underlines
and entered her father's accents into the machine.

**

5.

Longwire looked at leaves stemmed from branch
where thought led to thought, the image slightly changed,
recognized from root.

He leaned heavy on the rusted shell of a car,
hidden by branches
and crunchy leaves in the driveway,

and recalled playing in the rusted shell
of an another automobile
left discarded in the woods.
Going back, when his family

walked amidst the raspberry bushes in summer
and picked apples in the orchard.

His Great Uncle, always an aggressive sort,
built Dogtown Road with indiscriminate efficiency,
angering his father when the road appeared
across the lawn of the house one day

in the full-on sun of morning.

**

6.

Longwire came to no firm conclusions
having the chance to witness patterns of return.

But was satisfied with the return of autumn
and the constant transformation
of everything.

And this provided wholeness.

Love had never escaped his understanding,
although he understood it weakly,
couched as it was in his image of her.

But he saw where sharing had benefited.

He watched himself to learn of his own movement
through time, accountable to others.

Wrapping casually around language,
he knew communication dislocated the machine from center,
but he resolved to explain only what invented itself.

**

7.

Lost in the shelter of evening,
she waited for Longwire to reach for her hand
and confirm the chilliness.

They had not yet reached the moment where
the programming progressed without a snag.

This time the machine was hung up on the idea of love,
averse to the idea that it was possible.

They were trying to figure out
how the machine had gained such logic
working only with pure language;

there was nothing for it to consider unreasonable
and that was understandable,
but love seemed easily defined.

The moon a high halo reminded them
that everything had loved before,
pulled by tide to reveal what lay underneath,

a constant
push/pull
of abstracts
until someone gave in.

Longwire drew circles on her wrist
and the machine clicked into gear.

**

8.

They were, as so many others,
only standins.

They were of themselves
and relied on the consistency
of each other's emotions
to get them through

the irrationality of being together;
they needed to get away from this.

A moment separate from the context of the machine,
a break from the absolute
in favour of accepting what might come without connection.

Cupping the steam from warm coffee,
he watched the flameshadow spill over her face
as she read by the campfire

and gently pulled the book off her knees,
draped her shoulders with his trenchcoat,
stumbled slightly as he lifted her
and they wandered out of reach

of the machine's tentacular metal.

**

9.

I remember this just as they might have.

So it is with language, some words isolated, orbiting,
some landing, drawn to the discovery of unfamiliar territory.

Named for the first time, things become
idea/ object;
abstract/ concrete.

The initial thrust that guides us
back to the principle of love,

which is always a preparation for loss.

In the face of a limited moment, we must live
constantly in the context of having to leave suddenly.

I have no doubt of this, I exist.

**

10.

I progress as autumn

and grow colourful with tales as I age,
not so I may give colour to what has come before,
I have done that,

but to ponder my search
for connections with the infinite,
marking passage,

hugging the mortal.

I want to be
reminded
from where I have come.

Covered over, I await the return. Through portals better viewed,

the moon slightly

lights the absurdity
of life
hidden by darkness.

What does not stop/ is the will to stop.

**

Book V

Giacometti's Dog

[Offissa Pupp looks at the moon which has a circle around it. Krazy Kat arrives.]

Pupp: Nice circle around the l'il old moon tonight. Eh K.?

[Moon has a triangle around it.]

Krazy: Sakil?

Pupp: Yes, circle.

[Krazy turns and talks to the audience.]

Krazy: He mins a try-ankle.

[Ignatz the Mouse arrives. The moon has a square around it.]

Ignatz: H-heh.

[A strange dog arrives on the scene.]

Dog: What's up folks?

Pupp: A little matter of circle around moon--.

Krazy: Try-ankle.

Ignatz: Square.

[The moon is surrounded by a triangle, square and circle. The strange dog looks at the moon.]

Dog: Sure enough.

Pupp: Ah the moon, the magic of you...

Krazy: Honey.

Ignatz: Cheese.

(Herriman 77)

“The challenge posed by the poem, as it expanded outward like the developing universe, was more than ever to find a form of containment--a task approached in this stage, as [J.H.] Prynne accurately suggests, by means of a radical ‘mythography’ based on ‘the writing of where one is,’ the poet’s instinctive way of keeping the self securely at the gravitational center” (Clark 280).

**

1.

The dogs didn't see the substance: the shieldrock
spread up from fieldgrass,
its presence on the horizon
against the warp of the earth.

Or the shadow of an acrobat,
hands fluid waiting for applause,
weighting the performance.

A simple disfiguring of the body,
achieving the impossible, breaking
with the normal series of events;

flip/ toss, the juggle,
spinning,

the deed a good one.

The whiteframe of the house was overtaken with metal,
the jars fractured, crushed, strewn.

The day was the same, but the acrobat slipped
and the magician dropped a card.

The netless earth accepted
the performers and the audience learned more of itself
needing the illusion no longer.

**

2.

Then again, the dogs
crept unaware of the shifting,
remorse held everything in order.

They sauntered unleashed into the evening,
unconscious of anything but this predicament:

they had attached symbols to existence.

“thinking on the central formal questions posed by his long poem. How would the post-modern epic creator, swamped by a universe of boundless energy and motion, deal with the mass quantity of data before him? How, further, could he include history at all without succumbing to the hypermaterialistic supermarket culture of the present, image of the ‘exact death quantity does offer, if it is [merely] numbers, and extension, and the appetite of matter’?” (Clark 272).

The barking in the distance/ indications of others.
A means of location.

They sniffed wildly,
prancing,
whimsy tail curled
into a hook,
an audience

circling around itself
in search of agreement
as to what might have been there.

**

3.

Vanguard One,
a satellite polluting the sky,
calling home since 1975;
its trail marked by a continually recorded line of trajectory.

It turned to face the sun and gather energy
to allow for tracking; a way of saying:
I am not lost.

Armed with the dogs, she watched
Vanguard One trace consistent through the sky,
the only object in the darkness which did not fade,
moving evenly through the stars.

On the lawn, surrounded by lights from the house,
her cheeks coloured by the campfire
and reflections from the machine's armor,
she entered the quotations from papers held around her,
the books
covered in pencil,

but was always distracted by the satellite's steady reappearance.
She took note of its attempts to say:
This is where I have been

and this seemed more important than being found.

"Were it not for the idea of transformation, structures would lose all explanatory
import, since they would collapse into static forms" (Piaget 12).

The vehicle
an insolvency
for the fast disappearing
phosphorescent breath of a falling star.

**

4.

She laboured in specifics, tracing
development of the machine's poetics;

a poetics more of space,
something which was not . . .
her jeans, slightly torn at the knee, showed how decay had collapsed itself
upon the moment, but the calculations continued.

The machine struggled with binaries, one could hear it humming across the valley.
The aged house shook

with the figuring of its occupant.

The machine seemed to go on
indiscriminate,
its poetics joining everything with numbers.

No longer of interest, it became slow,
rusted with long greasing of the gears

and started to equate speech
with ink . . . sentences, confused
with other things

constantly reinvented its contexts,
dislocated,

static objects were altered, destructive.

She let things pass around her,
holding tight to her sense of place:
a moment without the friction of what had come before.

“Fiction is precisely like mathematics in this, that its normal processes handle nonexistent beings (points without magnitude, lines without breadth, persons without being), and that a knowing extension of its normal processes will generate beings that cannot be assimilated by the world of experience. The surds and the imaginary numbers are irrefutable productions of a system that finds it has no place for them” (Kenner, Beckett 202).

The machine invaded her space, spreading from nothing.

**

5.

Longwire searched the ground for spare parts,
but the machine needed no additions
from its maker.

It was all a matter of interpretation
and he moved away cautiously
so as not to imply desertion,
but he knew he was no longer needed.

““The advantage of a long poem is [that] like a pot au feu, it creates its own juice. Or put more formally: the long poem creates its own situation. Which is its gain over the small poem, which, each time, must make its own way, and thus loses, to itself, a character of reality which the long poem creates for itself--a continuity in time which is both massa confusa and the prolongation of life itself. When you got that meat stock the poem's got more to work with” (Olson qtd. in Clark 271).

His trenchcoat dangled on a stem of metal
which led somewhere he no longer recalled.

The brim of his tophat, ripped from its chimney.

He picked up stones from the road,
seeing in the grain that metal was infiltrating
the substance of things, adding silver to the dirt,
spreading to everything he had ever touched,

but coming from nowhere
he could accurately pinpoint.

**

6.

Longwire finally let loose
on what had been so long in coming.

He made no connections, he let the machine go,
and he danced so that the dogs barked wildly
and gave subject to an offhand comment
in a conversation overheard elsewhere.

After taking a quicklook at the sky,
a check of the equipment,
Longwire opened his book and leaned
back in a lawnchair, content for now
to wait it out.

Nothing progressed more efficiently
than Longwire in full flight.

**

7.

Maybe not much anymore
but still
as with heartbeats
thoughts collide.

The machine,
a mime,
only outlined the situation,
while refraining from opinion.

The mime guided them
hand
over
hand.

The audience provided context to fit the motions/
not motions to fit the context.

In this way,
the mime took up space and portrayed unification,
offering solutions to figure position.

The stage allowed for audience and object
to participate equally in putting things together,
but the scene was never wholly the same for each.

“The writer uses his ‘correspondents’ to calculate his audience, to regenerate his own discourse, and, in a moment of extraordinary license, to absorb the reader’s language into his own to produce a dialogic ‘way of speaking and thinking’ . . . In this surprising reversal, the writer not only does not fictionalize his audience; he ‘speaks’ it” (Klancher 21).

Sitting in the front row
Longwire reached
for her hand
and
gave
noise for the silence
that greets difficult emotions.

The mime onstage, headdown, face painted,
offered definitions for love.

**

8.

They kissed again upon setting out
as matter disturbed
the exact of time and space.

They had a way of walking toward the sun
on the snaking pebblestoned road,
crooked teeth smiles, language gestures,

bargaining for the salted meat hung from wood.
Vegetables too, lay disjointed.
A simple method of touch,
needing nothing of other places,
in possession as they were with essentials of nourishment.

Take note of utterance,
keep one's own counsel
and grow comfortable with fear.

Comfortable with conversation in a language
rich in lies and folklore.

**

9.

I am here:

The reel spins out, rotating backward without restriction
and two disappear into the darkness amidst an audience of seats.

The trees, impossibly green, hold water
in the full on rain drooping heavy.

Time passes through the silence.
Moments frozen, compressed by weight,
thaw themselves slowly in the soft

darkened shadows on this, the evening of a first kiss.

I sit on these remains. . . and emit
my signal
a satellite waiting, circling
calling on mission-control to receive.

**

10.

I will outlast everything
and cannot mark my moment.

I have no connection to life's varied colours
and choose instead to absorb the space around me

in an indiscriminate attempt to assimilate
the signposts of living.

I build histories out of moments collected
by others
and this involves a certain amount of risk.

By spreading without center,
I leave no trace of what has come before
except a line of coverage.

Every movement is a process of identifying
things around me, naming, putting flesh to the bone.

This allows me to realize where I am,
but not from where I have come.

I am moving in the constant present.

**

Book VI

Choices

.

[Krazy Kat and Ignatz the Mouse sit side by side on a desert landscape.]

Ignatz: What seems to ail you Krazy?

Krazy: I am confronted with a serious quandary.

Ignatz: Ah so?

Krazy: Yaz.

Ignatz: What manner of perplexity is this which enthralls you?

Krazy: It is an embarrassment which smacks of the connubial Ignatz, dual matrimony in fact. Y'see I don't know whether to take unto myself a wife; or a, husband.

Ignatz: Take care, take care.

Krazy: That probably would be best.

(Herriman 12)

“Forms grow out of data. They are not to be imposed upon data. . . .

‘Academicism is not excess of knowledge. It is the possession of *idées fixes* as to how one shall make use of one's data’” (Kenner, Poetry 103).

**

1.

The bicycle leaned awkward in rain.

Spokes spread, dancing to the eye, holding
water inefficiently,
bracing a triangle.

Gearlines circled wildly, horns on the mascot,
and the twist of reinforced wire
cramped the breaks.

Crankteeth crusted with dirt, the reflectors
glistened, diamonds in red.

The rider leaped on and set things spinning
and had only to hold balance consistent;
in motion, the form fit the function.

But who's to say it should've stayed upright,
that is a function of mathematics.

“The bicycle is long gone, the Centaur dismembered; of the exhilaration of the
cyclist's progress in the days when he was lord of the things that move, nothing
remains but the ineradicable habit of persisting like a machine” (Kenner, Beckett
131).

Under all this
lay the smooth,
 sleek
 purple paint.

**

2.

3 4 6 2 9 8 7 5

and assorted combinations
on the address board that rocked in the wind
above the doorframe of the house.
It was all that was left.

The beautiful numbers,
letters in themselves
to be broken by the abstract equation
which makes them variable:

$$e=mc^2$$

and so Einstein
worked the phraseology
realizing the exact definition
of a representation in letters;

an equation which offered conclusions
on the infinite;

so disrupting the word.

“The terrified Pythagorean blocked number science for a long time. Starting from the faith that the system of rational numbers and the system of the visible world can be made to express one another, they had happily complicated their computations to accord with more complicated data, until it suddenly became evident that the diagonal of a square, let the computer twist and turn as he please, is simply incommensurate with its side” (Kenner, Beckett 32).

The frame fell. The machine stood for everything.

The road led nowhere, connections
would have to be made by the future,
the present had overtaken the past.

At that moment, everything became as we see it,
disrupted, unconnected;

massive.

**

3.

Measured by the height of her bicycle seat
to be at eye level with anyone,

she stood in her faded jeans,
a small tweed cap tilted to one side,

having just come from parking cars,
a safety pin in her glasses.

She had absently let go of her notebooks

and the quotations, slapstick, hung on tree branches,
fallen from her folder--everything might have been there.

“By depriving Mickey Mouse of his tail as a measure of wartime economy, the studio [Disney] is said to have saved many thousands of dollars: not in ink, but in time required to keep track of the tail’s movements. The animated cartoon, in which everything must be preprogrammed, is the type of all up-to-date technology” (Kenner Beckett 87).

She lived in fear of losing track
and this kept her from any uncertainty,
but forced her to choose between being
or leaving a mark for immortality.

“he himself had long stubbornly construed history not as a linear progression but as an endless circling back to an ‘obdurate, or . . . *archaic* time or condition.’ To see, and experience, history as a cyclic return allowed one to simultaneously escape its power ‘as a “fate”’” (Clark 282).

In short, she had lived.

**

4.

She, unweaned, six a.m.

The curtains came outward from the window
shell, collapsed. She spread on the lawn
under the bleached frame of the house. The weeds overtaking
what was the bedroom.

She fished about for her glasses
so that she might reconnoiter, pulled her lanky frame
and straightened her clothes
(bluejeans, blackswearer, oversized belt, big greenleather shoes
which disappeared in the grass).

The height of everything disproportionate
to what she might be on first sight.

Something got her started,
her nose and forehead always proceeded
thoughts, and this led to difficulties.

“The human body is to the Newtonian understanding an intolerably defective machine. It possesses, in the upright position, no equilibrium whatever; only by innumerable little compensatory shifting does it sustain the illusion that it is standing motionless, and when it moves forward on its legs it does so by periodic surrender and recovery of balance, in a manner too hopelessly immersed in the *ad hoc* for analytic reconstruction. Every step is improvised” (Kenner, Beckett 119).

The loneliness of mornings,
despite the redemption they might offer,
is often cool, lightly blue
and deep with expectation.

A bend at the knee,
she gathered her books and set out in search of him.

**

5.

Searching the missing transition,
Longwire moved as the sky finally broke
and water dispersed, reaching for leaves
unwoven in seasons of change.

“It is of paramount importance to see that this state of mind follows from a way of seeing” (Kenner, Poetry 99).

The house in gilded metal frame,
wherein everything is assured to remain
stationary. What remained of the past

taken up by the fastmoving current of beached rain and creeping metal.

“The way out of our dilemma here is first to perceive reading not simply as consumption but as productive activity, the making of meaning, in which one is guided by the text one reads, of course, but not simply manipulated by it; and, second, to perceive writing as an activity that is also guided and sustained by prior texts. The writer is always reading and the reader is always writing” (Scholes 8).

He walked on, collecting as he went,
releasing memory in the stream
on the lure of his line.

**

6.

Longwire was restored
to the role of silence.

It was then that the day
reminded someone of a poet
giving voice to the sky.

The birds landed,
projecting shadows on a space made
where none existed before.

The dogs raised themselves and moved on,
leaving clues of their passage.

Longwire shoved his hands in empty pockets
and set out in search of her.

**

7.

The sky turned almost white, a tinge of slightblue.
Longwire palmed her face, they laughed,
vapour weeping from their lips.

It was not change so much as yesterday.

They stood in line with so many others,
waiting their turn,
no longer the focus of attention,
the machine could write their story.

For now, it was waiting that occupied their time.
Longwire stood rigidly behind her
staring until she turned
 perturbed,
 and asked him why he was staring.

You remind me of someone who broke my heart, and you're doing it again.

“[Language] is a mechanic thing, in so far as words in combination determine or modify each other. . . . The science of style, considered as a machine, in which words act upon words, and through a particular grammar, might be called a *mechanology* of style . . . by which [language] chiefly communicates with grammar and with words” (De Quincey 70).

The machine, fueling the lines of data,
came across many words, but nothing else,
and struggled for context
quickly learning the grammar of all things:

choices were made blindly, and accepted
because that was the way things were.

Longwire held her hand as they threw roadstones in the stream,
watching the rivulet spread further outwards.

**

8.

“To restore silence is the role of objects” (Kenner, Beckett 178).
and Longwire too, unaware
that they were being watched.

She looked on, her book held open, and waited.

*The bicycle abandoned on a hillside
runs on the power of arithmetic;*
so said Jack Yeats long before the son

created anything the equal of mathematics
in beauty, or for that matter,
simplicity.

She left the bicycle, its parts dismembered,
discarded about the machine, wrapped in unnatural ways,
the tires providing traction for gears.

“Everything is infected with fiction” (Kenner, Beckett 173).

The house remained as a figment
locked in the weather, the pillars
holding, the trees bent around the foyer.

But slowly, everything of it was being taken back
by the greyrock of the Canadian Shield
and the sweep of current.

**

9.

Fullglare from lengthened days
And I, the machine, gleam exquisite, metal exposed,
my motion visible; the greaseweight.

What I owe winter: the shortest day.

The sidereal clock exposed,
its distance from imposed time
a sign of success,

I base progress on my calculations.

Days pass without recognition,
the evening depresses
a redwinter
moon settling
behind the trees.

To these seasons I owe attempts at depicting the human psyche.

The bi
 (nary)
 cycle
running on language
arithmetic,
filled with data
under construction:
 meanings,
 synecdoche.

**

10.

Perhaps what is most strange
is that stories lead to more stories,

an exchange of similarities,
a connection of style and method.

The breath is always met with another breath.

A search for companionship,
hoping to find some equality in all things,

joining everything into one.

The equation is something that will incorporate
the equality of all things.

This is perhaps what has led me to eliminate
any connections I might have to substance,
by becoming a thing of nothing.

I am what's outside the box,
the missing,
the unseen.

I am the collection of all things.

**

Book VII

Feeling Out Alone

[Krazy Kat stands alone in the middle of the desert.]

Krazy: Well, here I are, all alone with nobody around but myself.
S'turbil.

[A plane flies overhead and drops a newspaper.]

Krazy: Why, gosh goodniss!! There's me in this paper!! And likewise Ignatz also.
Jee wizzil.

[Ignatz arrives behind Krazy.]

Ignatz: Certainly fool--why not?

Krazy: But Ignatz dahlink. Here I are here and here you is here too--

Ignatz: Of course.

Krazy: But if I are here and you is here, how come I are in the paper, and you also--ansa me that.

Ignatz: Because fool, how could it be aught were it not this--you answer that.

[Krazy sticks his head inside the open pages of the newspaper and cannot see what Ignatz is doing.]

Krazy: Wooy, look, here is also a brick, give a look Ignatz as all my lives live, Ignatz it's a brick.

Ignatz: And bless my soft cerulean eye, here is also a brick.

Krazy: And wodda you think, wodda you think?--you are on the verge of tossing it upon my noodil.

Ignatz: I am indeed.

Krazy: Hooh-h-h here comes Offissa Pupp--Yizza, here he comes for a fack.

[Ignatz drops the brick.]

Krazy: Ooy, he's saying something at you--ooy, it sims to be something in werra roughish, and werra uncootish lengwidge.

[Offissa Pupp arrests Ignatz and leads him away.]

[A Plane flies overhead and grabs the newspaper back.]

Krazy: Well, here I are. All alone with nobody around but myself.

(Herriman 92)

“the acoustic, translates poetic sounds into the marks on graph paper produced by such machines as the kymograph and the oscillograph. Like musical scansion, this system has the advantage of accuracy, especially in its representations of many of the empirical phenomena of verse when it is actually spoken aloud; its disadvantages are its complexity, its novelty, and its incapacity to deal with rhythms which no speaker may enunciate but which every silent reader feels”
(Fussell 18).

**

1.

The remnants of what had been
couldn't take notice of the two figures
entwined in such a sunset
amidst the collapsed mollusk of the house.

A trenchcoat pocket and blackswearer greenshoes.

Dogtown Road split perspective
as if revealed for the first time,
embracing the subtitles of touch.

The sound of things returned and the machine
merged its function to that of its surroundings,
content to finish things in silence.

**

2.

As the stars sped away from one another,
the center onland spread,
 everything began to relate to everything else;
 the constant,
 a synecdoche unsevered
 from one place to another.

Tribal rhythms found their way into language,
not by way of heritage or repetition, but by numbers
and accent.
 The scansion of heard words
 converted into units of measure
 could be conveyed in a language separate from root.

The ground leaned under the weight
of the machine, surrounded by itself, slowly
absorbing forest, turning it into polished metal.

The world could now convey deafness by making it heard
a comfortable distance from the real.

Nothing was
heard without knowing from where it had come.

**

3.

While she was waiting for Longwire to decide on the finish,

she remembered the maple syrup shack
her family would visit in winter,
boiling the sap collected over months.
Playing desperately in the tapped trees
that spread through the forest
in a maze of sugarlines.

She would follow the lines in an attempt to see their origins.

The allred trees slouched over the path
where she collected what remnants
of summer she could
among the fallen leaves of autumn and crystals of snow.

Her endings began here, where she had started.

She bent over slowly and plucked
a leaf from under the wet slush

following its veins to the stem, broken from branch.
She understood what there was left to be said,
and gave nothing to dead leaves
that provided pulp for the press.

**

4.

Thicksmoke.

Wet golashes and damp grass like this depress
smells of burning sweet
fried onions.

She remained wonderfully withdrawn
from the underlined reinforcement of knowing,
losing moments to the grain
and the sound of the projector pecking film.

Watching the faces pour out of the Lumière factory,
she spoke to the night, commenting
on the figure in a trenchcoat
shadowed in the lantern
where the bonfire roared, flaming broken pillars in an afterglow.

Children ran disguised, collecting damp leaves.
Their faces hidden behind shy smiles,
they sung of forgotten lyrics;

old words for renewal and late harvest.
She watched this theater, amused by their antics
and their resolution in futures unfractured.

She was a part of all this; it was her context,
an explanation for the sweetness of the moment.

The machine could be left to figure the relevance.
She felt happiness in simply unwrapping a candy.

**

5.

The paleblue winter
sky rose from beyond
the forest surrounding

remnants of the house.

Leaves began to shake
and made Longwire's isolation comfortable
while grass bent under the season's tonnage.

The dogs came, sniffing at the machine.
Barking through the distances,
marking:
I too have been here.

**

6.

Longwire watched as Francis Doubliér set out
across the world for The Lumière Company
with his mahogany box
weighing eight pounds,

a camera and projector in one,

and showed the first newsreel in the basement of a Paris Café.
Thirty-three people showed up and ran for cover

as the workers poured out of the Lumière Factory

into the café
from a projection on the wall.

An offer of \$10,000 for the box
just as a dog,
tongue hanging,
leaped toward the audience.

Longwire finally reconciled
the contradiction between that which had been
and what was by taking everything for the real.

Language allowed for escape, but context held it prisoner.

The temporary of his existence
was left to the discretion of language
used to describe what he had always been.

**

7.

Longwire emptied his pockets of coins,
lint,
papers,
a pen,
then a streak across sky,
his to view only once;
it will be back again,
open only to likeminded bodies.
She saw it too.

He could not accept that he must finish
by entering
the word
“zymurgy”.

Wanting instead, despite her protestations, to end everything with the word “mayonnaise”, allowing for a continuation, unlocking the order.

They stood and watched the machine sputter,
working on its own,
closed from reality.

The greyrock foundation of the woodhouse
remained to support it.

They were confident of its durability.

Once Longwire entered
the word,

she pulled on the cork
and let out a scream,
scaring him,

and poured the deepred wine, pushing it forward
after sweeping the machine of its coverage

and gave up on everything for the sake of a kiss.

Draped on the machine, leaves wasted,
fermenting in the fresh snow.

8.

What remained of the house
functioned as the catalyst for meetings.

She knew the moment he tripped,
love announces itself in this way.

But there was already so much between them:
the machine itself was them;
the collected methods,
the sentence and the citation.

They, the evidence and the expostulation,
aided in the discovery of more things.

One spoke with words defined by lineage,
the other spoke with words collected from elsewhere.
The machine had named them accordingly.

The hill held them
and the landscape spread
as arteries from the heart, wind spilling
over fields of wet grass, high and ready for harvest.

**

9.

Always part of a longer project, the seasons fade into the dusk,
birds no longer escape the collapse of daylight,
landing instead on long plowed rows.

Experiencing the present, outside chromatic scales of view,
I discover nothing but my own emptiness:

the fields spread freshly seeded below.

“What art does is to seek to do justice to accident by groping in the dark, which darkness is the trajectory of necessity. . . . Its immanent process has something divinatory about it. The idea is to follow the divining rod in the direction in which it is being pulled” (Adorno qtd. in Clark 284).

The cool smell of winter, the sweet grass
stiffened into straw--pungency of thick hay
the steady hissing cricket in the distance
and the weakheat of December.

Too hot to touch, I continued
to be left alone as Longwire
made sure her lips remained salted
by simple gestures of togetherness.

The scarecrow scatters crows by the pressure of his pose.

**

10.

What you know is me, specific in the light
separate from other things,
so labeled.

This afternoon's loneliness,
a diet of circumstance
specific to the heartache I feel in the face of difficulties.

The vaudeville audience was thrilled by newsreels of war.

(Underwater footage shot through a fishbowl;
Smith and Blackton faking the Battle of Manilla Bay with cigars and wire trips;
The San Francisco earthquake filmed in a studio.)

The essentials of sight:

what not to see;
what is hidden from us;
others;
elsewhere.

The audience assumed itself before the facts were presented.
Their reactions and choices predicted
facts shaped to the theory,
rather than theories shaped with facts.

Just as D.W. Griffith said:
War is a boring drama, everything is hidden in ditches.
It's too colossal to be dramatic.

And then filmed *Hearts of the World* on the Salisbury Plain
capturing the scale and savagery of the real thing.

Life also is
too colossal,
but its invention
under control;

the reflection of self, a fiction.
Our length contributes to our volume.

We have invented ourselves before looking.

**

Book VIII

Epilogues

1. "Within this world is acted out one of the strangest love stories of all time, itself a total reversal of the expected order of things and common sense. Krazy is totally in love with Ignatz the Mouse, not for the pleasure of pursuit or for food as in the real world but for pure affection. The sole passion of Ignatz, in another defiance of the usual, is to crease Krazy's skull with a brick, which Krazy accepts as a token of affection and proof of true love returned. Presiding over this bittersweet situation in a final twist of absurdity is a dog, the benevolent Offissa Pupp, himself in love with Krazy. He sees the bricks for the evil things they are intended to be and stands ready to jail Ignatz at the slightest provocation" (Inge 446).

2. "Almost every day for more than thirty years, Ignatz hit Krazy [in the back of the head] with a brick" (Warshow 146).

**

1.

The engine is in the calculation.

Each literate culture has its beginnings:
the relic of choosing,
a guide, the start of record.

Classics stored on shelves of Alexandria are in a language indecipherable,
the hieroglyph disengaged by the burning,
translated from elsewhere.

“But the great thing to remember is that all this poetry was once in the language itself, and still underlies the dry bones of even our dictionaries. Every word, a metaphor, perhaps several degrees deep, still has the power to flash meaning back and forth between apparently divergent and intractable planes of being” (Fenollosa qtd. in Kenner, Era 119).

As the phoenix rebuilds from ashes,
we re-write our words,
and become convinced of our ability to unify.

Thoughts caught these/ and the snow falls
lightly here, where I continue to learn of new things
moved by new contact, the chassis and the soundscape
of silence.

I drift backwards in my perceptions
never forward.
I can only reminisce through my own constructions.

We, machines of perception,
produce the
stuff
of history--crammed

choking the seed.

“So the name Leroy Brown was missing from the honour role of the world’s
greatest detectives” (Sobol 81).

**

2.

Held by the hand on the collar of the coat
she watches M.A.S.H. re-runs, content to harbour an undying love
for Radar, wearing the woolen cap and wirerimmed glasses.

And she finishes lines from *Seinfeld*, laughing to herself;
a community.

She watches television
and steals moments
from Archie Bunker's chair.

“Utter ablation of choice will confer utter freedom, which is by definition access to
some plane on which all possibilities are equally available because all have been
cleansed of identity and significance: and this is the world of number” (Kenner,
Beckett 112).

Reality inside the box.

I am a continuation of Edison's arcade toy.

**

3.

Longwire realized that what is of necessity
became so by its own righting:

Invention arrived as possibility,
beginning with breath
and stood among other things, took its place
in the world as a story needed to survive
and speak for things it could not name.

I slipped into existence when no one was looking.

I stand to survey,
letting things rise into view;
a way of looking
 at things
 as they are.

“Objects have histories Thus the static object . . . is a momentary cross
section of a duration, the present index of a movement in time which may parallel
or continue movement in space” (Kenner, Beckett 151).

The stage is empty but for the performer
and the single audience member,
only they in the present,
everything else is gone or yet to come.

The equilibrium between object and viewer
is that they exist together.

**

4.

I write:

She moved forward
to kiss
Longwire,

hair pinned under
a loosely knitted toque.

A chipped tooth,
and the nervous twitching
of her eyelids,

assured their meeting.

I am unable to see
the mutual reaction

but spit out the word:

0110110101100110101010110.

The moment is recorded for posterity.

**

5.

It was then
that they became
 as they are
and I was left
with what I might
become.

Alone.
Left to discover
 on my own
 what remained
 to be said about them.

Forced
to examine
internals in order

to accurately portray
 what they had been to me.

They gave me everything
 I might be,
 but some part
 wonders why

I am
still

 standing disconnected as
I am
from the things which

make me up.

**

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