

Situations



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cover image

pedestrian street in Banja Luka, photographer unknown

Because Elvis gave 'em cars, you think I'm cheap, and you're hard done by.

--Joni Mitchell

***Violet:** Good afternoon, Mr. Bailey.*

***George:** Hello, Violet. Hey, you look good. That's some dress you got on there.*

***Violet:** Oh this old thing? Why, I only wear it when I don't care how I look.*

--Frank Capra, *It's a Wonderful Life*

Shrugging Off

In the morning, the ride to the train:

“I was told you put your feelings
to one side & music to the other.”

Sabotage
of the image, a point—

caught in forest
with full moon fever taking calls—

how old were you when you noticed where you
might want to go?

“The fern in the corner
is one part of this feeling.”

I paint my hymn in history
& give & give & give & give—

difference between nerve & pulse
I write, as you keep

church. “Once I was something like you,” you say.
“I was burned a heretic.”

*Holy writing forms a rift with space—
The sun happens after the limit of three—
In the stairway in the palace the sea—
In the neighborhood the architecture—*

*O hurried drifter o provident in dress—
Is it royalty is it love is it politics—
The encounters gather together marvels &
the mathematical landscape is agony—
Lovers entwined in the city close their eyes—
The speculative cut off as the body gropes—
& time is that which will soon return—
At this particular time I will see you will see you—
I will not omit the distance—
& has our art become a separate culture?*

I think sometimes we arrived late.
At dusk I think of metonymy—

you smelling the showplace for
traces of art's excesses.

The more I reach for it, the more
easily it disappears in ash.

First the automobile, & then the railroad:
relics of what goes by *knowledge* now.

The signs & signals are merely ideal.
I catch my waiting on a wing.

The martyrs make provisions.
The décor changes our blueprints.

I go far into the cathedral
& see you as a composite whole.

Lamb-light & after-shade on the mend.

Apart from the Priest

At coffee, the thought of a revolution!
A living writing! The beginning of the last true end!

I pin a photograph of you to me.
Am I still dreaming of our water?

We belonged to brotherhood,
we made great apologies.

I am not satisfied with myself—
I left the temple with your heart sutured to my breast...

In your interior: an afterlife? a mother?
I opened myself up to change—

you reappear, you fade, you reappear, you fade.
I meet the eyes of a new audience

& the camera cuts to the scene of you
waving to me from the bridge, throwing *future*

into the labyrinth. I take an ash &
pin it over the photograph—

we pirouette into a unique love
& the legal man binds our tousles...

Near a kiss, the winter lights
are unfaithfully defiant. In the game

I write & forget alone:

these adventures, ever incomplete,

are unfaithful to us. The strike of the word—
a plunge into structure's passage

& then out again, out again,
our lives becoming resolved journeys

but, once again, tales of
the street's mourning.

The New Live Image Intervention

As if seeking
the dove elates
dynamic trees:

it begins with
a stone or a tree or a man—
abundance

is a woman's
(my) abundance, yours is
mine is yours is mine...

*hoped that I
would never find would keep
& be critically kept—*

rarely occurring in pure
form as gentle is
a game—

I frolic with
ideas of travel
as pleasure &

terrain of loafing:
*where was your heart when
you first*

*left the house? (In yours,
a trump of your voice...)*
Simultaneously

we read the code

(stars in earnest, stars cut
from the body's

pores) & undress in the temple:

whose history

opens the door or fills

the glass, & is this supercession?

Reversal Leads Further

I

Stammerings of body:
air resembles

risk resembles *histoire*,
& who is getting

out of the century
at curtain call?

The desert only knows one god,
is disinclined

to celebrate
the oblivion of reflex...

*A film is only
as good as its*

*actors: star
quality turns*

the empirical:

two harbors at dusk make a
bridge & I am happy to
make love on this bridge with
hagiographical aims
as you are, I'm sure, in your

time away from home.

The original version

of the painting called

“ART” is still a scandal to
some who practice writing.

Look for me when—

II

I was meditating on the press clipping

at the harbor. *Do all bodies fall?* & then some:
the tiger is a machine *burning bright*
with ribbons *tied to the ordinary!*

Bluster of chromatics in the swell, new opticians!

The nature of knowledge cannot survive.

As Narcissus had become-- as a self-portrait becomes an echo—
as nuclear elements—
paradox mistaken for discovery—

A new suit of clothes & a non-attention, the lines illegible in the light of the
latest thrill...

The geranium: gentle as ballet, the remembrance of a universal to keep the
map by...

The weight is a foot in the real.

The anchor is a jade museum.

Wind Chimes, Telephones & Waves

The radio plays each April in the birdlight—

*o bird of speech, which decade did
you enter in the zigzag of money?*

I loved your little apostasy &
now your holiness.

What's the new cliché for flame? Which wizard's uncertain?

Hot star, your tongue is hanging out of your travels.

Those who wield the knife often turn to slant the cut deep—
“exposure is a form of protection,” as Yeats might say.

The short dream & the long dream are the same...

The Skin Stretches to Submit

Revolution

is afraid of the language
the lion speaks (survival? silence?),
but the night does not explode into a single
ticket. And beneath: nerves, *billets de joi vivre*, loose singles.
Someone left the semiotic loosened — “in the air,” as the books say.

I place one hand
in enlightenment’s coat of black.
Sweet dream welcomes filter-shock in plussed tens.
“Are you furious in your zen dialectics?”
A box of old letters in the shape of the city
deals into text or exhibition in the book of laughter or forgetting...

Infinite,
walk past the old signposts,
erase yourself in the scent of wind.
The geometer takes a series of blurry photos:
to one side a hyacinth, to the other a novel.
Each dailiness is located between the (obvious) flowers.

I wear evening gown & wig:
comic grace
of an affection. An anarchy
as a portrait of bliss is an argument
for polis: “sackcloth is unblinkingly
participatory, political anti-majesty.”

Taxi

Lamented culture of unease: *pity*
the anchor its lack of luster,

shame the suffering QVC show!

In the back of the station-house one lover

sits with neatly-trimmed episode of *X-Files*,
frees you from your ordinary Bakunin-style *coup*, dresses

vowels in Louisiana. I note harmony
in the *man* & the *earth* entwined in the cab.

The public wants the freedom of the alternative,
& ecology wanes into *worthwhile, functional,*

edible. Strike academy from forgive
& come up hungry for a new brand of blue alkaline.

Kiss the river. (Dollop of invisible, drug of choice...).
The real America stands up & watches local miles

wane into soot-light & next-ness... You paint
me libertarian, I paint you green...

Public Square & Nail

Echo of amusement:

“meant” as suburb of exchange,
city of park & freeway—

the center’s green

if you’re looking for exile—

“I fought Brixton all the way to
medieval”: grail is

the body, ours,
you in the chair with the blue
darkly fading into

our sweetness (myth).

“They de-schooled us,” I
say, hanging off
the diving board, code

for red or hambone dance.
We avoided drama,
the nurse, the bottle caps
sitting in the sink.

*Put that fist of sun
two inches ahead*

of the paragraph,
& as I climb from debris
I'll build a maximal poetics
from the curve in the little...

But oh! the pop song returns—
just remember that I'll always love
you / I'd be better other-

wise, so isolate

without adjectives the love
in the old simply-shorn dress,
take the vitriol
in this bottle of steel.

The readymade in the black box is
one ahead of the woodwinds
but who's counting those?
Lettrists, maybe?

The Symposium

Galley of Gaia,
a thrill unplussed, & now, an effigy.
No less valued for the overtone:
the cultural federalist, spinning
at the edge of the door...

(I suppose there's a way
to read *this* oval; still, the body's orphan
vanishes into the mine of the gold thing,
emerges with
a drift of mothers & a politic

drawn from liliated breath, a letter from the co-op,
mango & Plato &
Puerto Rico in one hand...)
I park diagonally in the Easter
lot, your head in my lap.

In Tennessee we waltz through our desires like little flames.
The Berlin Wall falls into our cupped hands. We stop
for a bit of visionary stupor,
committing crimes of style.
We continue to paint walls

with criticality & nuance.
(Gaia falls out of
the individualism
of the dearth in the gut.)
Who will paint the capsule

of the carnival? Freedom
is too abstract,
ugliness too virtuous.
& the new spectacle?
valued for its proximity to

umber or undine? I busy
myself with questions about your
past, & you correct each one.
We exercise with the wind in our hint-sleeves.

Silver Ocean

Meaning as an EVERYTHING:

the poor women are still buying fish
& photography moves in inches

across the screen of presence,
TODAY SLEEPING, the body
says, between catching stills

of children & trees.

In the café, order reigns,
but the governing is

farther from continents
& closer to the Madonna
than your coat is to your breast.

Marie Flor, Marianne, save us,
I sing quietly
in the ancient hotel, still touched

by the vision of Walt Whitman
picking pomegranates from
dis-ideologized maples.

A method? A wild street? A blue
hacienda on the edge
of the body's eye? The polis

on the south end of France wears its
buildings like an afterglow
of roots & unborn experiments

& well-traveled is the mist &
we llama around in the crowd.
At the cusp of the stairwell

I catch you drifting into
a new woman, your coat cut
on the courage

of the eight-day week,
the sea of X's rescinding as
the feeling we get from morning is "took
castle at some Thebes"

A Divertissement in the Process of Disappearing

Cross the line & no longer feel the limit

as separate

is a violet line in the sky—

one small garden is unable to read the sutures in

the stutters, catches a gamma

& twines along parables

with *thin gem-like flame* tattooed to the underside of its

antiquated work ethic: &

what's done in the car stays

(without hesitation) in the car. The garden to the left

of the Pauline body lips

its little kisses (agony!)

into an intelligence of one woman's body (a kiss!

a carpe!) & holds on for

a flash of insight.

It recommends to her the continent & the public;

it crafts messages

in silk. The form changes quickly &

Maria Dolores falls into stone! O cast the world off!

She is quickly disappearing in-

to the magic of the platform!

The metagraph in the bodice has seduced one

suspect

to char

& laboratory!

On the edge of the river there
is only one coat of blue

remaining: an exhibition

templing
ole!

As Alive as a Landscape

Soldier's simple twist:
in the studio the man eats
salted peanuts from

hologram-shaped bags & counts his blessings
on the pronominal footlights.

"That was the Mynah Birds on the tube,"

or maybe it was clever
as a holiday or a congress of spoons.

"Coffee has no value when

thinking of health," one woman says to him.

He cuts the body to shag &
pieces his feelings toward the south.

His ex-girlfriend's caught in a heat wave of eyes.

"Blustery! blustery! freedom
in the aviary!" (She's tattooed.)

The future makes a stumbling political move
& everyone runs after it too quickly.

For some it's an enraged vehicle,

for others the hall is a mere blip.

"Cultivate the inner space," the couple coos like
rockets (cultivated silicon & involvement-breakers

commodify the file-folders: smashed glass &
effigy-compartments). "Cultivate plants,"
one rather brief period piece says on the stage.

“You smell of a holy mint leaf I have not
often found in this part of the city,”
the express train says to the younger girl

seated in the corner, with
a bag of books at her ankles.
The television flashes blue static.

The gem of the film is play:
the lovers play croquet & eat roast
as the towers hunker down.

No Useless Leniency

As lean as a collective at mend:

*rambling boy why don't you settle
down?* The civil snow continues

to echo into the canyons. *A cannon,*

*a pinprick of folly,
this ain't the kind of town for you.*

Dolores-graph & fire: Venice on the feeling side,

the dissolution of
the young into their holes.

But what's not wonderful about this?

*I'm your number one fan, you
know, never dreamed you'd leave in summer.*

The city is the shape of us:

summer in a heart-moon, a melon-shaped
caption beneath the

gracias floating up from the

stairs with the ghost of you
pinned like an emblem's nostalgia

to a red violin with

the unpeeling substance of
an uncoiled doctrinaire in

country's ribbon-tide & *vida!*

& we sing with this *vida!* wholly we sing!
Starfleet of ambiance &

fascination of *difficile*—
unfurls the science we had studied
from the corners of the world

as if in a painting where the body pours
itself out in a halogen
of duty & limpness—

you suffered sweet,
& I watched you put aside
the twin bed & the anomie!

The corners mend with flirting:
one apothecary kisses
another in the saint's tent....