

2017

the even passage of the sun

Terrence Suraj Arjoon
Bard College

Recommended Citation

Arjoon, Terrence Suraj, "the even passage of the sun" (2017). *Senior Projects Spring 2017*. 314.
http://digitalcommons.bard.edu/senproj_s2017/314

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects at Bard Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Senior Projects Spring 2017 by an authorized administrator of Bard Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@bard.edu.

the even passage of the sun

a senior project submitted to

The Division of Languages and Literature of Bard College

by Terrence Arjoon

Annandale-On-Hudson, NY

May 2017

*Such tenderness, those afternoons and evenings,
saying blackberry, blackberry, blackberry.*

Robert Hass, Meditation at Lagunitas

Acknowledgements

The completion of this project could not have been possible without the aid and guidance of Michael Ives, who shepherded me in the right direction.

Thanks to Vlad, Max and Mira for their guidance, and for editing my poems over the years.

Thanks to Maggie, Holly, Juliet, David, and Abe for their love and support.

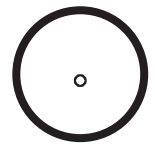
Thanks to Mom and Dad, and Kris, for being the best family I could ask for.

Thanks to the sun, who taught me language, and the moon, who taught me silence.

Contents

the even passage of the sun	1
the even passage of the sun	
moss temple	
preincarnation	
Sagrada Familia	
Rodan Crater	
the bull	
RAM	
rain-condensor	
radiesthesia	
for Penelope Spheeris	
figures at the base of a crucifixion	
vertical service code	
apophenia	
readymades	
eigenraum	
ekphrasis	
petrified forest	
ruin-quench	
immolation spell	
restoration	
carmen	
area denial services	
post-edenic	25
Decknamen	33
biblioklept	51
biblioklept	
shapes that make me feel busy	
gasmask	
governmentality	
eating	
weather report	
drive	
babble	
dreamhouse	
heart attack gun	
goddess of spring	
splanchnology	
drone repair shop	
haute surveillance	
museum of the mouth	
fatal error	
gold	
a song for a new way of living	
chrysopoeia	71
afterword	87

the even passage of the sun



the even passage of the sun

my fingers become nouns:
Juliet's memory jar

flowers
blue tile

roots
candles

we walk
in a dusty city

I want to ask
her about dews

the habits of trees
but my voice quavers

words dissolve
in milky clouds

into the hem
of an approaching storm

the mind fades
the dead cry out

from my bones
rising into the purple sky

the sun will rise
the birds will whirl

moss temple

tomorrow I weave cherry sprays
in my hair and on my forehead
at the moss temple in Kyoto

an unpunctuated book written
by centuries into a compressed garden of decay
calls to mind the red sky

and a bird plucking berries
from the fire
the weight of the air the way the future uses up light

preincarnation

there is no such thing as the pomegranate tree
there is only the ocean
brackish water seeping up through the gray sand
the spring is late this year, the wind is still

a structure on the horizon
floating over the waves like a blinking text cursor
darkens the consonance of colors
in chance array over the ocean

I don't remember my name
but the train is still in the station
dreaming that it is moving
like water through the source of memory

Sagrada Familia

the first time you wept like a wooden boat
the arches of the church collapsed
in a winding fiction

I was in the square
shadowboxing with blackbirds
doodling in the Spanish man's notebooks
drawing turbot, a winged bull, a sugar loaf
carving a path into the garden of your idea

we enter the basilica
a fire growing in the shadow of the transept
mutates into the sudden slowness
of construction

Roden Crater

here I am again at the volcano in Arizona
thinking of all the tangerines you'll peel and eat

and offer me nothing but a blasé palm over the eyes
treating color as a thing I'm receiving

checking the flow of light
and putting bars over the windows

you lead me over to the crater's eye
the droopy stars fall towards the earth

which gives me the thought of sleep as information
the cinder cone a momentary lapse in flame

you enact the lenience of the lemon blue sky
or the exactness of roots scraping in the sand

the bull

we build a temple right here in my backyard
for a wedding-bed

where on one side the grass slopes towards the river
on the other to the lightning hole

doomdrums flare up in a syncopated nightmare
torch, whip, robes

history curves in a panorama
a rock cracks open like a fat egg

tauroctonian remnants in the center
outside people fall out of a windows, trees collapse

the sun tracks in dispassioned streaks
inside a vermillion nothingness

we feast on tuna, mullet, fava beans and bread
divine the bovine leftovers

love striking water from a stone
in the cave of the deathless auroch

RAM

ended my love affair with the microchip yesterday
now learning to store things in different places
jars, accumulation of time in walls...
cigar boxes, etc

embedding memories in air plants
which release new clocks
to store my writing in

I take my necklace off and lay it in the sand
face contorted into a naked sneer
my neurosignals wane
the drowning trees and my infinite eyelids
the hour has disappeared through the window

rain-condensor

two older ladies from a local horticulture organ engage in shoptalk
they spread a thin layer of hibiscus jam on the floor
I look at the screen on the wall
common rural sadness now reflected in JavaScript
a storm is approaching
I leave the shop and come upon a rain condenser in the shape of Richard
he forms an elaborate geometry of ovoids over the marble arches
effectively killing the pastoral
pulling the bodies from the Seine
dousing the local fires

radiesthesia

my knees hurt

I walked backwards for two years to see the future
already, I know this venture is foolish, purple
now I can't sleep

I drink a gallon of horse tranquilizer a day
the future is still there I'm sure
that's why I became a doctor
a luxorthochronologist
a light, bones, and time doctor
to heal the sickness of the rising sun

for Penelope Spheeris

I bare my mitochondria
another fit of emotional exhibitionism
speaking in crash-tense again
roads sidwinding from my mouth
violets fall in my lap
I stop talking
you've been mute ever since you caught me
cos-playing the decline of western civilization
wearing nothing but an exit mask
and a baby grand piano

figures at the base of a crucifixion

I'll go with you as far as Golgotha
the gaudy vomitorium appears over the horizon
skullcap grinning white
ravished from the lonely shore
I stop in my tracks, neck craned upwards
dust motes floating to the top of the hill
what about the spores' point of view?
a couple thousand years ago
floating by the first drug bust ever:
another Garden of Eden

vertical service code

a phone call

I hang up planning an exit from History

I fling scraps at the vertical display
which loops dark-spiced branches

on my bedroom wall, nature speeding past
my sensorium diminished to a thin oxide layer

which spirals around my pupils
my limbs useless and weakened

the remote is located anterior to the comforter
my neck is stiff, I rotate my entire body to the left

the remote is on the floor
with a great shrug I roll out of bed

the waters at the edge of History dredge auburn
the total past felt nothing when destroyed

apophenia

lying beside the universe
dirty from ash showers
wizened and arrested by forgetting
I sit up in a coil of rope and read

books are savage traps
now I am reading shadows
now I am reading the anguish I knew in the cave
and the fear I know now

the golden roots of the universe
shoot through my mouth
wood now dispersed through my brain

into the belligerent hologram
where people accelerate into slow comets
and poppies drift up over the lawn

readymades

a ball of twine
reverberates with hidden noise
by the juicing machine

immortal dust
in the lemon grove industrial

we siphon some juice
go down to Panama

where we plan to meet Aboubacar
for *assemblage*

he lives in a condo with the brahman
that eternal darkness inside your simulator

the universe has been outmaneuvered
drenched in its internal alexandrines

eigengrau

direct control of my retinal field

in 3,2,1...

confession time:

I talk in my sleep

to the sun

news:

there are no more years

fact:

the attitudes of the body

are the categories of the spirit

that is why I joined the harissa cult

for the great views

spiritual detritus, the man, the street

ekphrasis

I tried to paint a portrait of you and painted a map of 17th century Europe
 It's hard to believe people thought it looked that way
 this poem is an ekphrasis of you, the subject of my painting
 and because I cannot remember what you look like
 it is an ekphrasis of me

what began in confusion ended in a thick black beard
 in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey
 across America in tears to my cottage in the West
 nudging soil from the pasture slope
 you will think we have been married for years

back when this place was a large bee-garden
 you dark lady of the chateau, born during nemontemi
 when J had a brain aneurysm in Sicily you cried for a week
 which gave me time to lie in bed and slip slowly into madness
 eventually washing up on your lakeshores

around the time of the London bombings and the Oregon Militia
 I made this painting through a thick temporal mist
 I lost my left eye three years ago to a skinny carpenter
 the new eye is a lighter shade of brown with a snug fit
 it only sees into the past

so living and painting are like driving
 keeping an eye on the rear view mirror
 licking the salt from my eyesockets
 you are on the patio out back and hand me the rose
 recommending its thorns

the auditor at stage left puts their mask on
 your teeth bared, you curl around the Atlantic
 the fermented juice boiling over to the shore
 twisting locks in your backyard
 the garden behind you is the hologram of all holograms

petrified forest

crawling through the sand
rocks at foot and elbow
lost in the transept of america
resting on chords for brief respite

sand-blind
cold as night
permineralized and moving fast
no water for days
dreaming of an oasis

and bubbles in quartz
kneeling in the desert sacristy
tears invading solitude
a lonely vow

beaten by the sun
guzzling bright silica
lay down
and will myself to harden

ruin-quench

having been made aware of the detrimental effects
it would incur on the New York psychosphere
I cease production of my dream machine

no birds, no bugs in the sky
a mysterious mist creeps from the edge
of everyone who minds his dog

the one animal moving on the street
for whom the traffic lights
have instilled a celestial vortex
in the justice of my punishment

immolation-spell

you are buried in the hot tar of the arcade
cars rumbling overhead
remind you of the monk you saw on tv
dividing your passions into units

you vowed your funeral would last a hundred years
lengthened by many eulogies
and the deaf raspings of branch upon branch
as your dream penetrates through layers of concrete
seperating you from the birds

I will learn to see the wind and the gods
I will be as wise as mist
you will winter over to me
across the plectrum of the garden

from the freezer of discontent
rose-buds crinkling under your step
will jingle in the morning air

restoration

he comes in like always
martyred feet and cindered mouth
his inescapable gaze scours the earth
you can hear it turning if you listen
a soft whirr
a grind skittering across black space
celestial vibrations in planetary teeth

he stops the turning
bees bloom one last time
the hyacinths wave to the wind
a secret tether which connects all things
you know, because they all go around
the wrist, the neck, the abattoir

carmen

every image is a sleep in itself
by virtue of my smile

all things are glass-backed
like vapors rising over the earth

in a seasick nightmare
or red dye along a flaw

in the letter-knife in my back
forever birds wheel contemplating arthritis

a purgatorial plinth has broken
causing brain fog

to vivisect the avenues
and the coffee cups

area denial services

being born is like this
on a journey to the west
my dream goes wandering
over withered fields

each flower
each blade of grass
is violently torn into life
and behind my feet flowers grow
where before there were none

I know I am on a journey to find something
a flower perhaps, or a relic
but I do not remember

the sun lies low over the mountains
like a cherry blossom, glistening

post-edenic

a poem in 6 parts



I

I wrote about you
la luna, regina
the moon appeared before you
like it appears behind my father
pulling a sword from the scabbard
the moon glinting off the blade
until, suddenly, 35 minutes ago
it was black
like those dreams
where you are falling.
I lie down face up and began singing
children drift in like water
I had dreamed it was you in that ditch-car
but since it was not
I'll tell you
without any fear of infamy

II

he had made laurels of his anxieties from eucalyptus
for memory, the act of forgetting is the act of atonement
but the cat-scratched fronds don't help
but as the swamp overflows, so does 1901
1902,1903, etc
into now, the past
even two days later
I cannot help but wonder why the swamp-water
was gray, like underbaked concrete
and the palm fronds of then, for memory
sweeping behind our footsteps
and those also of the frog, the vita nuova progenitor
angry because he called Mary's belly
a womb

III

1814, 1511

10 generations of slaves

on cherry plantations

Black Bush Polder

would call to tell of the power

the might, to scare caimans

back into their ditches

“want to see my gun...”

my gun is a blackbird

Noah shot right through this jacket

right here

almost hit me too

IV

My father called a locksmith when he needed a priest
this was a misunderstanding on his part
your message:
at the periplum monoplex
sugar, bauxite, arapaima
butterflies, mint, and Lesbia's sparrows
I've erased my culture
desolate is the tree
the roof on which we sat
Allegra, Diane, Kimberly
what was her name?
my father knows her name
darkness descends

V

oh Padma of the seven griefs who has entered the lotus
moon, cloud, tower, a patch of light on the Casa Battlo
sulfur pile as per long island Islip
where we vacationed
chatting with the dying Cato
she came down the stairs in a Céline dress
I like a certain number of shades in my landscape, unlike Mondrian-
you being one of them
why are your feet bare? Was not death to come?
why is he not here? What summer have you broken from?
“Donna! Fetch mi ma wine-skin”
the Arno is still
the plum trees are in blossom

VI

I drop to the floor and kiss the earth
the crowd thinks I have fallen
the puja of marigolds and goat's milk
continues to be passed around
in a clock-wise fashion
the tabla player is crying
Lakshmi, her sari falling off her shoulder
drops a marigold into my lap
petals lighter than sea-foam

Decknamen

a sonnet corona



Decknamen I

You could read it in the air, scaly and sun-choked.
The sky is nervous and it strikes nerves in my teeth
like a stairwell full of birds or a klieg-light pointed at my mouth.
The cobwebs console an eternity within limits, like an ore.
And we will pick up our work again: clothing ourselves in fire,
concealing ourselves in tin and copper.
We hide our breath in the bellows, our cries in the chalk-traces
on the wall in the city below. Ash raining down some night-sickness.
Written into every clock face is desire to see green again,
the sulfurous wallpaper nuzzling our shoulders.
In this house occupants are instructed to look inward from the bog,
down from the cordoned-off air upstairs.
Now we commit radical sleep acts and research on metals;
we destroy dream fibers for fuel.

Decknamen II

We destroy dream fibers for fuel,
producing metals to use in our machines.
One renders clouds, another ontologies,
my angler-helmet hears incest.
The in-ear-device sprouts a bloom.
Sunfall combs my moss into disarray and the seeds are glowing in the ground
and I am lazily pursued by several factions of poison.
I fight culture by tinging metals in the basement.
The sign of true potic gold is a thick paste excreted
from the worms dangling above the pots, and their screams,
which produce a chafe in my liver
and a thin memory of prayer.
The worms initiate the moss-placement algorithm,
spreading plants, placing dogs near people.

Decknamen III

Spreading plants, placing dogs near people,
using my ear-residue and worm-paste I produce a salve
mixed with two parts lemon and one part water,
yielding mandarins and blackbirds,
which the government attempts to exterminate.
I put down my worms and head to my lover's micro-apartment.
She is a yew tree growing out of a book with a blue cover,
lovely, whispering secrets behind my eyelids.
I inscribe equations onto her low-hanging limbs.
Dogs are condemned from her room,
whose fur ionizes her leaves.
When she sleeps I rub the salve on her roots,
and mushrooms grow along her cipher of sleep.
Her sap reads my dreams, so that I may step out into the yard.

Decknamen IV

Her sap reads my dreams, so that I may step out into the yard.
The automatic rain-machine purrs,
and large steel urns collect rainwater on the roof.
Fat drops, each one staining me with militant perseverance,
lubricating my eye sockets,
teaching me the secret numbers of flowers.
The house is sacred, but the garden isn't.
Lavender, thyme, nightshade,
all gathered in sufficient quantities, coloring the dyes and tinctures.
The horses have stopped marking the weather
and have retreated further into town.
Bristly boars have infiltrated the irradiated homes of the locals,
running their own rackets and labs, using their ancient names.
Pulling secrets from the dirt,
upsetting the nettles from their purchase.

Decknamen V

Upsetting the nettles from their purchase
I hear the axe blossoming by the windowsill,
the corroded edges green in my shadow.
The flowers erupt in soul-sweating panic,
roots surge around my fingers and dirt
tracking up the decaying walls.
Only the mnemonic value of stillness
gliding in and out of security checkpoints.
Silence drifts up from history
in reams of biopolitical displacement.
First the trees begin to grow, then the vines take hold.
First the bugs invade, then the birds,
all standing in dust as monuments of perpetual exile,
condensed radial engrams.

Decknamen VI

Condensed radial engrams
manifest as paranoia and science.
I hide my work from myself by sleeping
and through absence.
Diegetic whispers boiling in the heat.
This house is a fork in the canal,
and as I dip my swollen legs in the current
I make of the jagged edge of rusted metal
a thousand knives.
I feel birds on the other side.
Therefore the fissioning of gold
is not the transmutation of metal,
but a tuning the landscape to its most lush and vibrant aspect.
A forest with the speed of a temple.
When I wake I am a lizard
turning in circles
before a thousand-petaled sun.

Decknamen VII

When I wake I am a lizard
turning in circles
before a thousand-petaled sun,
looking for crystals, for teachers, for guides.
Books talk to each other,
their rumbling bellies are the silence we hear.
I am at the disposal of every body.
Books eat me.
Copper and zinc poison me.
Come to my alembics and sandbaths.
In my struggle to produce an antiperson
my garments weigh me down.
My hands burn hearts
and my body quivers.
The songs force themselves into
this insurgent scrabbling
through my dense shrubbery.
I retreat to the bedroom.

Decknamen VIII

I retreat to the bedroom,
descend the staircase, push through throngs of jaguars
with human names, alligators, sharks and serpents.
I meet the orisha of the river, flowing pink exuberance.
She lays out a great table, filled with bright and leafy foods.
I kneel one hundred feet away,
bow my head towards the ground.
In the black air here she calls boat for me,
made of cedar lashed together with halfah grass,
it arrived curling and twisting
in a blue flame, and I find myself lying in the floor of it,
a tenon to the mortise of the weeping rock of the sky.
I become conscious of the most beautiful singing.
My skiff has stopped before a fence of fronds.

Decknamen IX

My skiff has stopped before a fence of fronds.
Two gates of sleep and a bridge of dust.
At the top of the sky the wind barely stirring.
Thunderous veins of light coursing down,
space itself drunk on black shreds
into a palace made of winds.
A solution of the mind
devolves into a large copper retort,
into a Slow Henry,
from which fish hooks grow barbs,
knives grow longer.
And in two days I reach into the althenor and find an emerald tablet
the writing of which has been scrubbed away vigorously.
The full universe of empty objects.

Decknamen X

The full universe of empty objects
pours me back into my delapidated pensión as if from a dream.
I hold the blank shard on my hand,
a brushstroke from an absent goddess signaling her absence.
This morning's sun rises with creaky joints,
the horizon is aphasiac.
I descend the basement steps to my laboratory
and make headway to the aludel,
flailing through my notes,
inserting the tablet in hopes of wringing some vision from it.
I terrorize bits of paper.
Strangely fluid, my vision has stopped.
My sleepwalking hands move angrily over the instruments.
I have breached the implied contract of the shard.

Decknamen XI

I have breached the implied contract of the shard.
The door performs ceration on my hands and soul,
makes of me a gummy performative wax.
Furnishing obscenities and mercury
out of big knot holes, the door arouses empty space
for the venom sun to enter and destroy,
while the police state initiates a violent spell
of home-made tear gas
and large mills to grind my bones.
I a pale rebus, dripping sweat
and stuffing sheafs of paper into my pockets,
am dragged into the sunlight.
A barren necrophilic wasteland populated by dogs and cars,
they bring me to the pyrological machine.

Decknamen XII

They bring me to the pyrological machine,
where humans, bored and industrious, are building pyramids,
those clocks of grief and passage,
rhythmic generators extracting
latent projections of consciousness from the earth
filtrating them into a purified apoplectic form
which is projected from the tip of the pyramid
into blades of grass that weep the dewy liquid.
I am brought to this place for punishment,
to restore the knife to the traveler.
Churning the nursery for three days,
connected to the sky with a gossamer thread,
On my final strobiloid day I think of home,
and I am all teeth and nails.

Decknamen XIII

And I am all teeth and nails
returning home face-down. Floating through an empty city
5 feet off the ground, bald, wearing a white tunic,
mute and unable to understand the language
of my blind apotheosis,
I feel the salt spray from the ocean,
hear the glacial rumble, the volcanic murmurings.
I return home to find my lover has borne fruit.
The dogs clamor outside.
I push past the door hanging limp by its hinge.
Her fruit is large and glistening in the fading half-light,
radiant like a mushroom cloud, or a smile.
There are four glassy drupes, pulsing absentmindedly.
I grasp the fruit between my fingers and pull downwards.

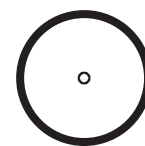
Decknamen XIV

I grasp the fruit between my fingers and pull downwards.
A fruit nigredo overcomes me.
Oh my sons and daughters,
my children born knee deep in coal.
We know from the rind of the fruit what is concealed within,
we know from the soul what is concealed in the body.
My lover wraps her limbs around us all,
and giant clouds of fireflies descend from the sky.
We peel off our masks and touch the cave of the sky.
We will return to our many basement workshops,
extracting our dream fibers and performing sleep-acts.
We tear down the choked wallpaper,
slather a layer of fresh paint,
wind the clocks and clear the chimney.
A pleasant humming of bees
tells us that there will be rain.

Decknamen XV

You could read it in the air, scaly and sun-choked.
We destroy dream fibers for fuel,
spreading plants, placing dogs near people.
Her sap reads my dreams, so that I may step out into the yard,
upsetting the nettles from their purchase,
condensed radial engrams
before a thousand-petaled sun.
I retreat to the bedroom.
My skiff has stopped before a fence of fronds,
the full universe of empty objects.
I have breached the implied contract of the shard.
They bring me to the pyrological machine
and I am all teeth and nails.
I grasp the fruit between my fingers and pull downwards.
It looks like there will be rain.

biblioklept



bibliokept

in order to torment ourselves more efficiently
we must gather together into societies
probe the syntax of lightning
gather up our ashen effigies from our midnight vigils
we must enter the barren deserts of our souls and make rain

walking avenues in the mud my disease turns into a map
in the forest the branches droop heavily
the mist blurs our outlines, the birds flee

a querulous bucket of water
avoids theologians and encyclopedists
stealing books for their stench
we swim in the murmur of sun dogs
through stunted mandrake withdrawal

shapes that make me feel busy

your techno-babble is the toile de juoy of my sun-room
I hear your spirit rubbing off on the walls
smearing a brown paste
the blue and white farmer covered in dirt
busily toiling at the earth
in the wall we hear a buzzing
black locusts bubble over the wallpaper
there is a sudden noise
crypto-human voices of avian insomniacs
ringing through every room of the house
executing a piecemeal pestilence on on the dining room
the ceiling joists grow tired
we fall silent as the lights dim

gasmask

I leave my DNA on the sidewalk
and decline the asthmatic staircase
I must continue my research
a way of transferring the bark to the entire dog
the sky is still the same charred vellum
the yellow hole the bird made in my throat is still there
I am the same
I am scratching into the canvas of my life

governmentality

the new bible is transliterated
from the shift of the bunkers into the sea.

its marble heartbeat is all apocrypha
which are as incontrovertible as dreams

wringing our docile bodies dry
on the municipal building steps

etchings on the doors of the city
ring like the rain's loud chatter

as the book is read aloud
for thousands of years

forming a light buzz
disguised as incandescent humming

eating

summer throbs into being
from the winter of over-speak

but the problem of lighting continues
to occupy the fetishism of its own curiosity

there are tanks patrolling the boulevard below
shining lights into to all the windows

like the sussurus of endless thighs
parading through a fugue of gun oil

the heart turns to marble
by beating itself into a ribcage

fear consuming the future
in an endless repast

weather report

the sky in taking on a new consistency
put this war economy to use
by miniaturizing the leopard

whose ballet of moons
warps the board in the image
like a phantom of a chronology

the tree is constructed for the body
the body is constructed for locomotion
people fall down in the dark breakers

the inevitability of a deluge
typifies the burning cathedral
in a world waterlogged in worms

drive

I shed a vial of Lancôme and a busted speaker
my tongue trips over
the accelerometer goes up
but the truth of the matter is
you have a misshapen conception of what I'm trying to say
which is mainly this:
every time you reach for the glovebox
I feel a pang of jealousy and rage
the last time I opened the glovebox was in the hole
that's where I store my youth
densely matted in fur and covered in teeth
scraps of nerves poking out
laughing nervously

babble

some times
the monolith is hidden

Tower of Babel
on a VPN server

construction halting
at midday

as cloud machines
whirr by

their echolalic residue
skitters out

onto the ground
like splinters

of someone breathing
in reply

dreamhouse

trying to wrap my neck around this attachment
I find I have no neck
in fact I have nothing
tuning sleep machines for a living
I carve dreams into the crystalline grain
the wearers melt the glass with their forehead
release a sugary tonic
mouths loll open in moist reverie
they build cities against the barbed wire
teeth grinding the duration of elevators
dream loudly in softly caresses
a catheter in the chest
scribbles electric eyes
across the sleeping army
like the memory of cars
parked in fog under a bridge

heart attack gun

people are changing all the time
in a fast-moving ruse

I dreamed I touched a guillotine's edge
and woke up in priapic boredom

drifting into the wispy horizon
thinking of guns and pharmacokinetics

I would like to be surveilled
by outsourced Indian CIA ana-lusts

they will put a bug on my moon-blind horse
and follow me down to the pump.

using sex is a PR disaster
bonnet off while the massacre continues outside

I pull a knife from my boot
and a fast one on the spy from Bombay

simultaneously they bleach saxitoxin
simultaneously they "be real" concerning sex
simultaneously they drink gusts of ataxic wind

goddess of spring

bio-reactors in a basement of the city
river heaped with charred cedars
charcoal littering the avenues
bad milk mixing with the blood of goats
a tearing of meat from bones
a breaking of those bones
and a sucking of the marrow from them
pale faces in phosphorescent glow
their eyes reflected in the glass of the incubator
as troops exit the city
we are being swallowed by plant life
and drowned in the floating spores
of the algae in the river

splanchnology

in every branch of human activity it is the same
their pockets crammed with grapes
saliva dripping down their chins
haunches bent over unrolled tarpaulins
the soldiers doze
we hear fuzzy static of the monitor in the adjacent tent
they're tying animals up in back
the wind sticks to the palm fronds
we sit on grass corroded by salt
pricked by the edges of the zeriba
against a metal beaten vision slurry
we think back to the first invasion
mitochondria entered the cell
hostile invasion abandonment of binary fusion
sludge of rotting meat under useless reeds

drone repair shop

OBJ Lethal was haymaked two days ago

damage to the control module of PLUMBIRD

we need a new password

it seems like this service model is infected with a language virus

sustained kinetic effects damage on the screen of good fortune

be advised these new models come with volume control

sorry this drone is projecting a formally complex representation of cultural brain damage

I have drone-induced anxiety (DIA)

what are your qualifications?

at space camp they called me radiant node

what time is it?

this is not the geo-location of information being used to zone potential chronologies for future documentation

drone operators infiltrating the mirage layered necro-luminescence

haute surveillance

they insured the universe
by bringing everything
plumb with sleep

these pork-synthesized steel drums
tweaking the beaks of birds
rip open the swamp belly with a torch

renewed by knives
a pond for the drowned egrets
pipes metadata into my vegetal organ

the optical unconscious sprained
bird in red dye of dogwood
sings through its hollowed thigh

is sacred disc of failed sun
for the ray casting operation
bottlenecked in a bog

museum of the mouth

the museum is composed of human sounds
we hear teeth opening pomengranates
a mouth pressed against the steamy mirror
interrogating its gums

deeper, small moans heard through the wall
and tongues slurping over denim
followed by sharp intakes of breath
and laughter stifled in throats

the floor of the museum forces
the walls to breath
through a porous membrane

fatal error

sunsets packed into guns
reach the seabed

from aboard the crumbling skip
the rays illuminate the poseidonia

the lettuce and algae are awash
light has gotten loose

while above the deacon uses a scalpel
for gustating the sweat of the prisoners on board

his eyes meringue in the escaped light.
the detainees now damasked golden effigies

glorious hetacombs of data march to the sea
the glassy ocean palpates in revery to the sun

gold

I'm being carried to the outskirts of town
becoming a payment to the diviner

the changes in the polarity of the lake
yellow my eyes

I feel the moon in my marrow
digging at the cellar of me

and the new gold in the mines
suddenly my irradiated lover

we descend into the shaft
as he fire-sets even deeper

using me for a dowsing rod
as I glow brighter and brighter

a song for a new way of living

the crystal hazes phlegmatic tubes
in the empty municipal library

you walk like a refugee through my pages
cubistic glimpses of flesh and flesh

between the days hidden by trees
and the death-masks of work

when the library collapses
we are coated in a slip of chalk

ghosts walk through the rubble
weeds push up between our toes

when the last satellite falls
when the last plane is rusting in a field

we will begin our new way of living
transmuting into a genealogy of minerals

our souls buried in the soil for safe-keeping
while we learn the language of the land

the clay talks to the wind
the spider talks to the vine

after some time down in the dirt
we assemble tools to extract our souls

big loud machines extracting resins from our skin
salt from our bones and gelatin from our blood

we find our shadows are new again
dark with the vigor of youth

spreading across the land
even the temples look new

the birches now blur into the back of our eyes
and we see the rays of our metallic spirit

chrysopoeia

a poem in 15 parts



chrysopoeia 1

across the gray steppes a horrible procession of welders advances
binding iron processes which stop at dusk
I dream my shielded arc
my gap of hot fire, my tungsten electrodes
I'm hiding from the stars, imprints on the copper plate
my brain hammering thoughts flat
there is a fire roaring from within me
dissonance buzzes in the air outside
somersaulting over rays of light and faint motes of dust
I scrape some grain from my linen pocket and step into the night
my lower back jabbars with pain
I see the mangle in the distance, wheels aloft
flames frozen in a shiny faience
the sand dulls in the light
my sister steps from behind the wreck

chrysopoeia 2

which makes a shimmering crystal city in the distance
Galena stepping lightly from the metalwork
shaking bits of tin from her arms
large and smooth, born in some basement laboratory
her presence a study chiaroscuro
even in the uniform light of the desert
she dwells in the roots of language
voices indeterminate rain down from above her
an ash-flaking behemoth ahead of me
she opens the trunk of the car, still smoldering
she removes many withies and poles
wordlessly constructs her hut
she-who-blows-smoke-through-her-eyes
inducing her dry bones through the small hole
the moon congealing to a bloody clot
the ritualism, the vandalism of the night air

chrysopoeia 3

Galena made of a series of small fires
her tools drown the eyes with their iron menace
in soluble night-errors
that compose the sky and its flames
she was born of a dog who had coupled with a bell
at her birth a crow leered at her and she wept
her life a land of grief and locked doors
churning ore in a slush-boat
her skin a grey-black osmosis
and I plump as a cherry, learned nothing
in a town of alchemists without hands
my sister in the mountains, I in the library
before she learned to drive
her brain turned her armadas against her
she leaps up driving a lance into my chest

chrysopoeia 4

the lance in my chest becomes a glittering antenna
it's length catching some stray desert signal
my chest becomes a hypomnesic archive of images:
a sky covers the grainy detail of the crumbling wall
I collapse to the sand in pain
as the images fade from my eyes
the enormous tragedy of Galena's dream
I wake up unharmed in my tent
eat blackberries and make the mouth a springtime
in my sleep she has birthed in the hut a copper effigy of herself
when she replaces our father's stone she will be king
all this hangs on our finding
our father's sleeping chamber in cartesian space

chrysopoeia 5

my hands mourn the absence of electricity
in the half-light
I carve a chrestomathy into the tentflap
haunted by my empty steles
and the many indecipherable ones littering my study
then the smell of burning ore outside
hot sulfic gas passing through the grate
galena's smelting process halts
the world word by word
and I, suddenly decarbonized
my mangled mind
carried through the air in the beak
of a round metal vulture

chrysopoeia 6

my face reflected in the gaps
in the crosshatch of the boma
Galena choking in a fit
watching her flux-covered lead
she is a furnace sweating toxic
resting while her offering of metal cools
she sleeps, she eats
brown fields hurl by in dreams
she stirs killed mercury
surveying the feckless drought
making heavy heat with her furnace
hoping to precipitate a storm
I mime naked into the desert dancing
mine steel to fling at the stormthroat
Galena scares me, I am afraid Galena will leave
she came in an ardent wreck
now leaving with an armful of misshapen ingots
she goes into the uncreated night
she disappears in a sheet of rain

chrysopoeia 7

I am alone
I have several things:
wooden mortar, wooden spear, glass beakers, flint
Galena had dissambled her boma before the rains
the ground spongy underfoot
the fires on the mountain quickly subdued by damp air
I construct a second hut, with a conical top
offer food and drink to my ancestors
the car is now an aviary, it knows how to stop a bird in the air
as I know how many spots are on the cats that prowl at night
as the lightning burrows into its summer cottage in the dirt
and the forge knows the names of the trees
the sun returned today, and I am no longer in the desert
I must have traveled a thousand miles in my sleep
the sand thrusts up in so many moist castles

chrysopoeia 8

store the light in the day to project in the evening
the holocene ghost of the ocean in the dunes
like waves frozen in time
the dunes wear so many faces
crescentic, star, dome, linear, parabolic
reflections of the movements of the stars
they wander like monks across the desert
some are held back by winds, some push forth
rolling monuments to ancient kings
I try a spell to push the dunes away
to make level land to live
the snakes sidewind from their holes
a dog howls to the east
magic has no interest in my comfort
the dunes alter themselves under various darknesses
flattened versions of which innerve a phantom water

chrysopoeia 9

a bullroarer razes the distance
weeping in circles
going back to the origin of the illness
a scavenger alights atop the dune...
I awaken in the mouth of a crocodile
water gushes through my pores, my gaps
forming a new ocean
energy pulsates from my chest in surging waves
my inward cataract now a platinum cumulus
I am delirious with the brass founder's ague
lungs full of heavy gas
when the nomads appear
from along the newly revealed beach
long hidden beyond the dune-cap
they wrap me in linen
strap me to a board
and set off towards the sea

chrysopoeia 10

we chase angelic edicts scattered across the beach
the book is lying in my lap, brown and moist
like fertile soil ready to sprout a massive tree
to my ear the drift is the sound of the borderzone
moving crabwise, the birds moving diagonally
I close my eyes rabid and iconophobic
and the desert din becomes rain
the gloaming edge of the sky a common error
sand speaking extravagant diatribes
my eyes glaze in a corolla of mud
I wake stretching my neck in bovine persistence
I am alone laid up in a grotto
what I thought was the sand was the sea
the world around me warbling a false tune
trapped in a soma press at the edge of the ocean

chrysopoeia 11

the ripening of stones at the grotto's edge
soft red clay grown phosphorescent
beneath the moon in my lap
like spring I construct a bloomery
I mold a pygmy ziggurat
leaving a hole for air at the base and apex
burning sticks and branches for charcoal
slapping mud at the sides
ore from my bag enters through the tip
the bloom is highly porous
in my sleep the slag flows to the forehearth
the work here is but work
transmutation before machining
I sit before the ocean as it throbs deep resonant chords

chrysopoeia 12

the heterogeneous bloom languors in the small grotto
I, one green sprout in the weed of summer
resting in a reprieve from truculent sand
I stare at the lump there on the incline
like Galena, I transmute with purpose
I want to be shaken all the way back home
the ocean and land become as one
my loneliness all-encompassing
I break the bloom with a hammer
picking the slag away
in sleep I return to my former solitude
beneath the arches and the rhapsodies of the desert
to escape the paralytic damp summer
and the desolate impermanence of the tide

chrysopoeia 13

blank effulgence of the late sky
the old latticework of leaves on the shore
everything is shredded
now back in the night of the desert
the wind in contrition
no car, no Galena
lost in the variable striations of the desert
I find myself west of the river of Hapi
the somnambulant wasteland assembles
quickly producing a crystal that floats heavy on the air
turning askew in the pre-dawn light
the size of a kidney
the crystal would appear to look at me
a glimmering distant hope of the horizon
as the crimson ribbon of solar radiation
comes fast over the dusty promontories

chrysopoeia 14

the crystal looks like a boar
I see inside, its tusks pointing upwards
coarse hair spilling blackbody radiation
in endless millisieverts
all the raging boars of Fukushima
must end in this dusty corner of the world
I think this boar must be my father
my vision blurring in his gaze
and the sun setting like a shard of glass
he will unzip my DNA
I will fall to the ground in a pallid thud
moisture quickly evacuating my coil
I will stare at his shadow
I will do nothing but die
my mitochondria will bore into the sand
my body a helical lacuna of divagating cells
my teeth will scam and nails stray
my atoms spreading me across my life
from the initial bloomery
to this final fission
I begin to rot

chrysopoeia 15

my quarks' agglomerating movement flattened by static
my body flees me and my father
form burns of light that spread over the world
and trepan the roots of the trees
my nonmotile bacterium extruding a lust
and rods of light issuing from puddles
my electrons gaggle in cooling grunts
one by one they come to a stop
I torpedo past spilling sap and slag of me
and antipodal spears of ash
spreading myself across the underside of the earth
Galena anneals me into a dark crystal
I'm absorbed into the valley of the neutron
my soul flexes its daydream
my brain the forge of its memory

afterword

The meaning of a poem should, generally, not be explained. I believe that the poem is language condensed to the utmost degree, purified and condensed into a glistening metal. I aspire to be, in the words of Charles Olson, an “archaeologist of the morning.” The root prefix of archaeology, ἀρχή, can be translated as “beginning.” I want to return to the beginning, to the roots of meaning.

However, the poems “Decknamen” and “Chrysopoeia” are both rooted in the practices of alchemy and metallurgy, and deserve a little explication. *Decknamen* is a German word that can be translated as “cover-name.” This refers to the practice in alchemical writing of obfuscating meaning by using code-words, or referring to compounds by incorrect names. This ensures that only other alchemists will understand important texts, creating a cult of secrecy and misinformation. The word *chrysopoeia* is an alchemical word that means the transmutation of gold.

Alchemy, strictly defined, is the science of transmuting base metals into silver and gold. The roots of the word are unclear. “Al-” is the Arabic definite article, and the suffix can be traced back to either the words *khemia*, land of black earth, *khymatos*, that which is poured out, *khein*, to pour, or *khymos*, juice or sap. In any case, it is the root of modern chemistry. Alchemy becomes truly interesting when viewed through a spiritual lens, as a transformation of the spirit, as Carl Jung espouses in *Psychology of Alchemy*. This can easily be applied to the poetic project. The words on the page should transform the reader.

What follows are definitions of some of the more arcane terms in “Decknamen,” a poem which attempts to hide itself.

- In Decknamen V, *engrams*, used in dianetics and Scientology, are detailed memories of trauma that are hidden from the conscious mind.
- In Decknamen VI the *fissioning of gold* refers to the synthesis of gold in a nuclear reactor. The ancient goal of alchemy was finally accomplished in 1980 by Glenn Seaborg, but unfortunately, all the gold was radioactive.
- In Decknamen VII, an *alembic* is a distilling device in which one container of liquid, a cucurbit, is heated, and the vapors rise and condense onto the walls of the anbig, which is placed over the cucurbit. The anbig has a long tube connected to it, which the liquid slides down, landing in the receiver. A *sand bath* is a device used to evenly heat reaction vessels by submerging them in hot sand.
- In Decknamen IX, a *retort* is a device that combines the cucurbit and anbig of the alembic into one container, under which a receiver is placed. *Slow Henry* is a colloquial term for the athanor, a coal furnace used to slowly and uniformly heat substances, performing one of the basic alchemical processes, digestion.
- In Decknamen X, an *aludel* is a pear-shaped bottomless and topless earthenware pot used for sublimation, which is the phase shift of matter from solid to gas. Several *aludels* are stacked together, and the substance is placed in the bottom *aludel*, which has a bottom, and placed in a furnace. The gas from the evaporating liquid collects in the top *aludel*, which has a top.

“chrysopoeia,” while similar to ‘Decknamen,’ is centered more squarely around the practice of metallurgy. This is the study of the physical and chemical behavior of metals, and the synthesis of complex metals from simpler ones. It is less strictly spiritual than alchemy, but in my research, I have discovered that the metallurgy that was practiced in the area of pre-industrial West Africa had ties to Ifá, a spiritual practice that my Caribbean ancestors also practiced, and the production of metals was almost a ritualistic practice. Below some metallurgical terms used in “chrysopoeia” are explained.

- In chrysopoeia 1, *shielded arc* and *tungsten electrodes* refer to two types of welding. Shielded metal arc welding is welding by pumping an electrical current through an electrode to the metal being welded. In Tungsten inert gas welding electrical energy is conducted via inert gas and metal vapors called plasma.
- In chrysopoeia 5-6, Galena is smelting in order to produce lead, which she hopes to offer to the gods. Smelting is done by using heat to rid an ore of extra carbon electrons, which are released into the air as poisonous gasses, in order to produce a metal. She has covered the galena, a common mineral of lead, in a flux, in this case, lime, which absorbs the sulfur dioxide. She roasts the ore in a furnace, and the sulfur dioxide gradually evaporates to leave lead oxide. This is placed in an air-starved furnace for reduction, and the carbon monoxide in the furnace removes the final oxygen molecules from the oxide, leaving the metal lead.
- In chrysopoeia 9, the narrator is sick with *brass founders' ague*, a sickness caused by ingesting too much poisonous gas.
- In chrysopoeia 11-12, the narrator builds a bloomery in the grotto with the hopes of making an offering to the gods, like his sister Galena did in the desert. A bloomery is used to smelt iron from its oxides, one of the earliest devices capable of smelting iron. The bloomery is constructed from heat-resistant clay in the form of a chimney, with an open top and a hole in the bottom for retrieving the resulting product. First charcoal is produced by heating wood at very high temperatures, functioning as pure carbon fuel. Bits of iron ore are placed in the bloomery, and it is heated at a carefully regulated temperature for a long period of time. The charcoal produces carbon monoxide, which reduces the iron oxide in the ore to metallic iron. The iron drops to the bottom of the bloomery and mixes with molten slag, which is a combination of silica, oxygen and iron, hardening to form a lump called a bloom. After it has cooled, the bloom must be broken with a hammer to remove the slag, and the metallurgist is left with wrought iron.

