

Fall 2020

## NOSTALGIA FOR GLACIERS

Luke Burton  
*Bard College*, lb7490@bard.edu

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### Recommended Citation

Burton, Luke, "NOSTALGIA FOR GLACIERS" (2020). *Senior Projects Fall 2020*. 30.  
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NOSTALGIA FOR GLACIERS

Senior Project Submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College

by  
Luke Burton

Annandale-on-Hudson, New York

December 2020



NOSTALGIA FOR GLACIERS

LUKE BURTON

Dedicated to the world that is & the world that is yet to come.

## Acknowledgements

Fields and fields of thanks

To Ann Lauterbach, for the years of expanding my poetic universe. For the faith, insight, and honesty you have given these poems. They could not exist without you.

To Alex and Eli, for listening. For writing the poems that make me want to write poems. For executing my solipsism. For seeing through the bullshit and helping me find the shine.

To Alanna for love and patience and time.

To my family, for being the reason any of this is possible. Dad, for teaching me that poetry is a way of being in the world. Mom, for seeing worth in me and my work when I refused to. Nathan, for showing me how to be alive — soon we will pack up the truck and scatter poems across the continent. I promise.

To the invisible & inanimate objects of this world, for shimmering in the mist.

Thank you all so much.

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The abject: an object that has no proper place in the world because it is both a waste product and a part of us.

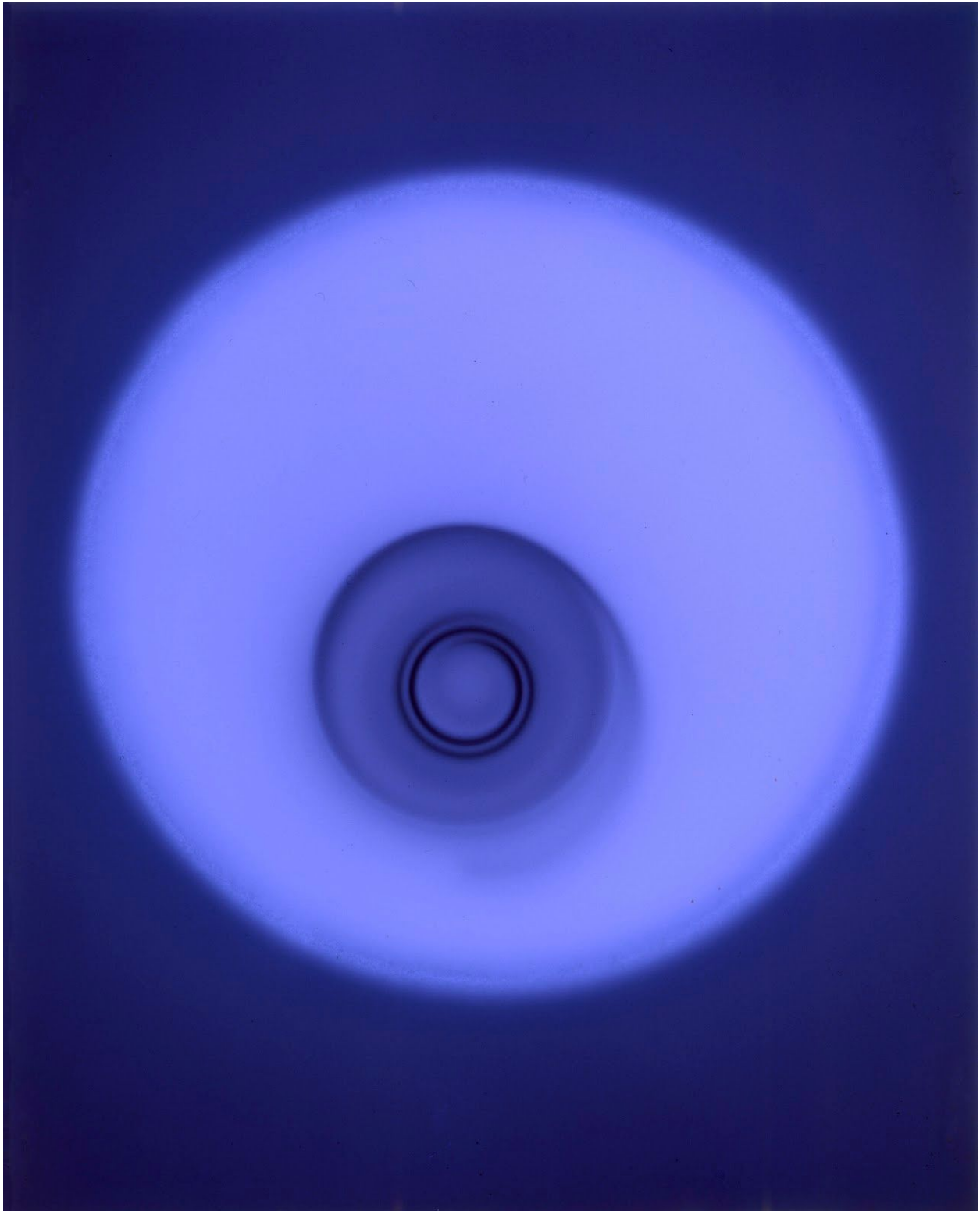
-James Elkins, *Pictures and Tears*

A name, like a face, is something you have when you are not alone.

-Annie Dillard, *Holy the Firm*

Laser technology has fulfilled our people's ancient dream of a blade so fine that the person it cuts remains standing and alive until he moves and cleaves. Until we move, none of us can be sure that we have not already been cut in half, or in many pieces, by a blade of light. It is safest to assume that our throats have already been slit, that the slightest alteration in our postures will cause the painless severance of our heads.

-Ben Lerner, *The Angle of Yaw*





1

Living Objects (Perpetual Motion Machine)

## World-unraveling Ash Graces Extended Tongues

The sketch of power lines coallesing at the transformer reminded me of you  
and that where I hold my head will one day be underwater.

I love you. I try and understand storm clouds. I trace their electric openings  
with my finger on the car-window's canvas in the medium of breath.

This world is beyond repair. The gooey actual slops across my surfaces  
like your emails sliding over each other in the fish-pail of the archive.

A sentence spoken in no language. The closest we come to eternity  
is strontium-90's half-life. A spun-out concept constantly fleeing  
itself in straight lines. I get it. I love you. It unravels the mind  
& hand identically. The two of us hold looms to weave back the tide.

To assemble comprehension, think the last thought first.

This world is beyond repair. Transatlantic fiber optic cables  
slip from the ocean and onto Nova Scotia's stone beaches.

The Trinity Test's echo is heard two towns over  
where world-unraveling ash graces extended tongues.

Soft dry snow in July. A modicum of the body  
swells past its container. Replicates  
to the point where it ends everything.

Water, ice, and glass are things. I am the sound of their dancing.

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

## American Alienation Sonnet

I've got a 20th century cannon and the manifesto  
to match it I moonlight as a self-sucking fire warden  
congratulating himself on seeing the smoke  
through the trees I'm at the baseball game  
of now with a fat foam finger claiming  
this is the avant-garde I'm building  
weapon systems for the blind grips that vibrate  
when the reticle touches a living object I'm lying  
hungover on my apartment floor cracking up  
for thinking *I am the anthropocene* out loud  
to the television at the gas pump peddling  
peach vape cartridges and video games  
where I point and click to obliterate  
pixels arranged into a portrait of my face

## In the Living Room of the Object

You, a poem of genetic possibility  
finding its phenotypic expression.  
Evolution in real time, you buy a bagel  
while telomeres unspool. The end is in  
the word. You drag the bagel's ragged edge  
in helix patterns across the surface  
of the cream cheese. What if  
I told you we are already dead?  
Torn in half and in half again  
like the last bagel shared after the end  
of the world. Through the object an absence.  
Text implies a writer. A coin a coin-maker.  
A system by which each approaches.  
No matter how the coin flips,  
the other side remains hidden. The hole  
that makes a bagel. And all the while  
the dough of I flakes. At the bottom of me  
I chew little transcriptions of we. One head  
sieves an utterance over the page. Another  
scavenges what it can. I can't decipher  
which side I'm on. Elephants in the days'  
brackish action. Absence gathers  
its weight as you stand to leave  
the crowded room of the living object.

## In Case of Unspecified Event

She sips from a flask  
between passengers

he keeps binoculars  
in the glovebox

the triceratops dies  
by parasite

we have no name for  
or record of

the process which leads  
through petroleum

to a plastic dinosaur  
wobbling on the dash.

## Anarchic Sight Theory

Each Sunday I play pool with eyeballs for billiard balls  
at the Other Place & envision what it might be like to be touched  
by felt & fluorescence in alternation. The light of passing cars  
filters occasionally through our pitchers of PBR. I know no metaphor  
for sight, yet the beams protrude, pint shaped,  
from the sockets of anonymous angels. Lines sharp as axe blades  
gently part the trees, then brush away before the fall.  
You ask where the terror is located—  
*Is it in the horse yet to be broken or the broken horse?*

I'm embarrassed by my telos,  
a stance of cue balls awaiting sticks. The future  
perfect will be an ongoing breeze. I have no theory  
for dream without waking. Falling from the lake onto the shore,  
I wanted to know how you felt about the hurricane  
hoarding air above the Atlantic, the one that shares a name  
with your lover. Instead, I zipped my coat against the wind —  
whose breath? A thin horse swept up from the South  
and kicked my eyeballs back into their dark pockets.

## Self-Portrait Minutes Before I Die in the Bowling Alley Parking Lot

Is limbo fun? I wonder  
while watching the pizza party.  
One by one each kiddo's spine becomes a palm tree  
in hurricane wind. I've spilled another margarita.  
The wet amoeba a blooming map  
of my life. I'd agree, it doesn't hold together,  
but "Dialectics" says the teenage attendant,  
grinning, holding up a bunch  
of soaked paper towels stained lemon-lime green  
in the process of disintegration. My last sent text:  
a series of round winking faces,  
tongues out to catch  
three drops of rain.

## Autopsy

*The scent of the moon,  
says my mother,  
is a freshly fired gun.*

And Homo Sapiens?  
*The seventh or eighth species to leave the planet.*

She drew a diagram of a cow's eye with my reflection in the pupil  
to show how we'd extended our phenotype so far outside our bodies  
the distinction between *outer* and *space* no longer held. What else was I  
to do but watch videos of lightning frame by frame and study  
how the light branches up from the ground to meet the thunderheads?

That halloween I dressed as a chimp in a space suit.

My mask slipped each time I approached a doorway.  
By the time I got home, sweat sealed it to my face.  
My mother had to pry the plastic from my skin, whispering:

*No longer any such thing as exit velocity.*

Yesterday, she bought a bottle of pills  
that guarantees 10 billion living things.  
I asked her — does light cleave away its absence  
or does the dark usher in the rays with open arms?

*To be human, she replied,  
is to return to earth and pretend it hasn't ended.*



## Fatalism with Native Advertising

I.

Knock-knock.

Who's there?

It's your new blade.

Grab the hilt, pack up the hungry hungry  
Eez-o-matic sharpener, and take a long walk  
with us on the path of our present condition.

Welcome to your free knife offer.

May we suggest you take a good look  
at the Canadian Geese, how they fill  
parking lots and golf courses,  
ornamental ponds and urban parks  
with acres and acres of shit.

It's safe to say they like what we've done with the place.

There are many throats to slit  
on the road to undoing the Anthropocene,  
but remember  
most of the stuff that fills your day  
is a recent addition to the catalogue—  
Oh, and if you happen to get thirsty,  
we've provided complimentary Dr. Pepper.  
Relish its frothy red hue in your old life's last light.  
Relish how it tastes like nothing else in the world.

2.

Hi,

Are there free radicals in your endocrine system?  
Too much Pinot Grigio at the art opening?  
Ever wish you could wash your insides?

The good news is you can  
take an incredible photograph of the sunset.  
Our beauty blend promises  
pinks the likes of which will shatter  
the phone screen of your nemesis.

When the clouds have thinned into distant wrinkles,  
don't get caught in the hottest summer on record  
without our promicrobiocollagen serum.

Only we can protect the elasticity of your skin  
from the great enemy in the sky  
as it steadily destroys your face.

3.

Wild caught concealed carry  
seafood certification. Guard  
gutters of your future  
home. Defrost your erection  
with our professional chewable  
installation. Never-farmed, no  
gun range microwave time  
needed. Breath Omega-3  
wicking briefs to curb  
self-destructive second  
amendment cravings.  
This isn't your usual meditation app,  
this is Silence™

## Billboard

My car crept up an imperceptible rise in the highway and it occurred to me that I might be passing through the unlabeled crest of America: a washed-out patch between a low-slung truck-stop and sprawling field of soybeans; a locus where no one has stood in decades, yet wheels touch incessantly, changing their song ever so slightly as they do. My makeshift garbage — a chip bag stuffed with wax-lined coffee cups, gum wrappers, and apple cores — trembles with the resonance of the engine, the texture of the roadway. An unceasing hum pulsates through all known topographies, the wheel-drone washes over the delicate bones of our inner ears, my mind thinks to the shivering soundtrack of my all-season tires gripping the dry pavement too firmly to be efficient. Every route divergent save for the sound of traffic, save for the moment each passes through this asphalt window.

Then

the billboard

arrived.

Built like a memorial  
for the horizon, a mirror  
where the sky had been.  
In daylight, it appeared  
to be shards of glass  
fixed to a black canvas.  
An assemblage of paint and glint  
approximating the night sky.  
In the dark, it was next to invisible,  
angled just-so to catch the headlights  
of oncoming traffic and refract  
the light out into the air above  
the highway where it perched,  
vibrating without surface.  
Traffic slowed subtly in its vicinity.  
I could feel heads spin  
on necks to follow the unlikely beams  
as engines murmured down  
to minute explosions. Impossible  
to photograph the men at the truck stop  
told me. The light comes out all wrong.  
Washed away by the ambient glow of  
street lamps in distant housing complexes

or streaked with visual noise  
like there was an unseen source between  
the camera and the billboard. Close  
and grotesque as if it was already in the car,  
in the static of shitty speakers, the shadow  
cast across the back seat. It must have been

A NASA system to message distant nebulae /  
A call for execution / A sign of the times /  
A celebrity astrologist's passion project / The patron  
saint of the road of Sagittarius / A zero-sum promise  
the stars are intimately tethered to you / A constellation  
viewable from one location / The shape of a hazmat suit /  
A clandestine pledge to the orchestrators of traffic deaths /  
A pace marker for government-subcontracted experimental  
aircraft / The uncertainty of handheld UFO footage /  
One too many cliches / A signal for russian sleeper agents  
to put down their hot dogs and open ambiguous bunkers  
stacked to the brim with imitation meat  
and gaming computers, sets of second skins and catalogues  
of popular furniture among diplomats / The swan song  
of regional microcultures / A marketing campaign  
designed to catch the eyes of infants still developing  
depth perception / A collection of smart speakers  
like seashells collecting the soundtracks of oceans  
of background ephemera / A set piece for ethical  
sneaker companies and lifestyle artists with bodies  
wide open for consumption / An envious facsimile  
of a verse in a classic country song / A beacon  
to push soft alerts onto the phone screens of the empire /  
Acronyms of enemy and interest groups intersecting /  
Cartoon avatars of typing heads / An illustration of a deer  
weighed down by vast quantities of ticks  
bearing bacteria that degrade the central nervous system

over the course of a decade / A line graph of blooming  
megaregions as suburbs smudge cities / An unfinished ad  
for vine ripe avocados / The seven most popular  
brands of chips / The position of celestial bodies  
on the night California slides into the sea / Old-school  
unthinkable lights in the sky / Cold beverages in cooler coolers /  
A site manufactured by Left-Hand Path magicians to  
accumulate the energy of unknowing within an object /  
Abandoned real estate / Flecks of wiper fluid  
on your windshield / Better not look away now,

something is staring you right in the face.

## Perpetual Motion Machine

I.

Through the net I am  
not sure what that means  
and intimately I followed you, friend/  
specter, checking the boundaries  
of your webbing, elbowing or brushing  
until a long beautiful breach, referring I  
beside the gulls, and circling memory bunkers.

You will wake on a province of sand  
with no recollection of the world set before you,  
as if you wandered in from a long afternoon  
of diving to the bottom of the lake and found  
at your table an intervention, your old best  
friend speaking in a language you can't  
recognize. A squawking of prime numbers.

My island is as long as a nickname or prayer  
spoken into an atheist's wine glass.  
In middle school you called me by my title:  
plastic moment recollector. That was before  
strange hairs arrived like decimals  
between my integers. Please, I said, spit on  
my face like a squall wave erasing a plot of sand.

2.

my face Through the net  
a nickname or prayer  
intimately strange,

as if hairs wake  
a province of sand.  
not sure I followed you

to the bottom of the lake.  
That was before spit  
set before you, My island

A squawking  
of prime numbers. specter,  
and friend/you called me

your webbing, with no recollection  
of a long afternoon at your table.  
an atheist's Please

checking the boundaries.  
what that means you can't recognize.  
besides decimals a wine glass,

the gulls wave  
brushing an intervention  
or a long beautiful breach

until plastic referring I,  
your old best memory  
bunkers, circling and elbowing,

arrived from diving in  
a language of middle school.  
you will you spoken

of and found In.  
my title: a plot.  
my friend recollector,

wandered on by  
like integers. the world  
between is as long as speaking

into. like I said,  
squall,

of erasing sand.

3.

through brushing spit  
intimately boundaries arrived.  
as if before speaking, a glass specter  
wandered in from middle school  
erasing your old best friend.  
Please referring the afternoon  
to the bottom of the prayer.  
My island called wake  
found In you my title:  
A strange intervention,  
webbing and net  
I am an atheist's will.  
hairs as long as a nickname  
spoken into wine.  
plastic face circling  
a memory of my prime  
with you between me until you  
plot a beautiful diving province.  
at your table, that means no world  
and an I, besides your recollection  
is like checking the sand or set  
of long long numbers  
before a friend can't recognize you.  
decimals a breach of the language  
of gulls. I wave and you followed,  
elbowing like That was you,  
recollector, squawking in  
my lake or bunkers or sand,  
what a squall of the sure moment  
on/not on



4.

is land like wine

refer ring to wake  
between wave

That was long before specter

circ ling plot,  
chec king the atheist's squaw  
king

world

found besides the net

era

sing prayer

or

Please

recognize me

by my face:

squall  
arrived  
Through gulls

elbo wing memory

spea king language of sandglass province

your plastic

nick/name

beautiful

spit

I of sand you of integer

with no will

or recollection

A long middle

lake

you can't breach



2 (000)

Despite the ease & rapid delivery,  
you hesitate to order live rats in bulk.

An attitude exits the mouth of the subconscious;  
far from the lip of the precipice Wile. E Coyote treads air

The pineapple anticipates the mouth's arrival;  
acids shred the tongue tenderly with each encounter.

All the oil sucked off fingertips;  
Frito Lays burn like money.

The scent of death;  
credit card tucked in leather field.



The price of knowing your location;  
a planet forever ringed by dead machines.

The proximity of opposites:  
a surgeon leaves the scalpel inside.

A virus chews the echo into an exact image;  
a word rewritten dead & quick.

A raindrop parts the hair of the biosphere;  
the unknown vivisects the known.

The wind winds about the trees;  
the plastic plastics about the ocean.

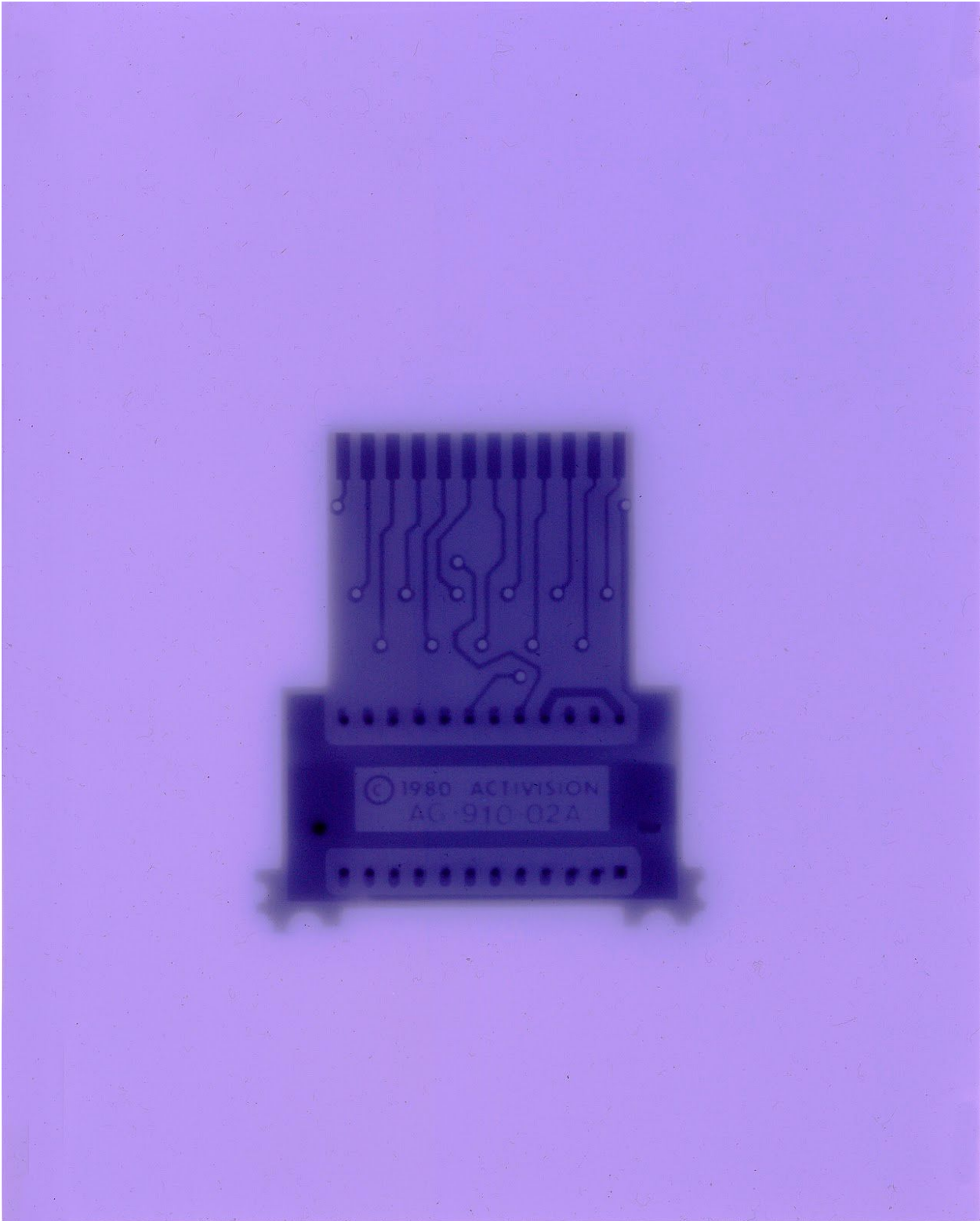
The implosion required for plutonium to reach a supercritical state:  
immediacy extinguished by the reflection inherent in language.

Trinitite radiates its list:  
sand, glass, gadget, plutonium, world.

one-thousand freshly minted hundred-dollar bills;  
a hundred-thousand minor gods in circulation.



A broken bottle, a sigh of relief;  
The tire holds a breath for a lifetime.



3

Anthroposcenic (Climate of Failure)

Anthropo : scenic metadata : low altitude lustre : my palm :  
rare earth metal menagerie : charger sparking in trailer park :  
live feed : cirrus cloud streamers : over theory games : age of  
antihistamines : uptake inhibitors : expanded cinema :  
bitbanging : cerebellum bucks : sweet sovereign state of stevia  
: hammer and meme memory : when I say emergency I mean :  
everything outside : the minute orchestral avalanche

## Nostalgia for Glaciers

I've never seen one,  
but that doesn't stop me  
from casting my stones.

The disruptors flew me to the north pole  
to give a talk on "unethical ascetic etcetera"  
in the arboreal tech-trahedron.

The applause was as thunderous  
as an ice shelf crashing into the sea,  
or at least i'd like to imagine.

When it came time for me to propose  
a toast to the success of negative capability  
in rebranding the image of extractive industry,

I held up my glass of glacier water  
and noted how it glowed in the midnight sun,  
how there were no words for what it's worth.

metonymy	microwave shortcut evaporates milliseconds : metonymy
made	made physical : oblivious infrastructure : dodecahedron
secret	tree trunk : church steeple secret satellite dish : the shell
extracts	of a shell : extracts insensible money : vacant hospital
names	roof rendered for millions : lovers carve names into fake pine
above	cell towers : above the surgery wing : swift gold-thick wind :
an	within an anesthetized hour : parasitic electro-marketism
unconscious	in search of near-zero latency : my unconscious body :
invisible	practices invisible coin tricks : to reach organ shave skin clean :
literal	literal money in the literal air :

## Climate of Failure

I listen to wind-sounds through headphones that use my bones to transmit music.  
I am not with you. The call is coming from inside the head.  
Weather shirks off the ritual of computational thinking.  
Far above the Atlantic, pockets of turbulence devastate increasingly empty planes.  
Near-zero latency leaves nowhere to go.  
My handwriting dips below an imaginary line.  
If abstractions are objects without location, why am I attempting to cat's cradle the horizon?  
I've failed to turn the I to o. A mobius strip trip of retrieval.  
I dream I am a snail sliding across the canvas of Blake's "The Ghost of a Flea."  
Salt collects at the creases of my eyes.  
A zone evidenced by living silt — scabs and cat hair, coffee grounds stuck to slivers of plastic.  
The composition of common dust.  
A whole less than the sum of its parts.  
A future confirmed by each minute act of combustion.  
The wet paint on the levy a facsimile of the final vandalism.  
I take up tines and part the salmon's soft pink tissue.  
At a receding date, strontium-90 whispers through the halls of my arteries.  
Flotsam gains a transitory I.  
A small section of the brain is removed through the nostril.  
Feels the breeze for the first and last time.  
The ethos of 21st century storms; a pattern of accurate artillery.  
We were waiting, lighting a match in the wind, and then we weren't.  
At slow speeds flight appears implausible.  
At impossible speeds falling doesn't appear at all.

: teeth bright in screengleam : water wifi pours from tap  
router at lightspeed : data prickled flesh : photon bathed  
windows : ghost licked walls : surface frequency hummingbird  
: interior bone dry ice cube node states : unread accumulating  
catalogue : long trail site obscurity : high-contrast transition lenses :  
shaken hours : signals diffract 'round corner pores : downstairs begins  
the masturbation formula : enlightenment thinking : rises right through : "all  
wholes penetrated" : rises right through me : a failure to notice : telephone wire  
tunnels : aggregated world moan : flash crashes my : inverse vampire : sunset clearer  
in mirror : walls smudge but do not contain : a sequence of locations : true (t) or false (o) :  
build a living room : less intelligible with every addition : bring up the lights : brighter : brighter



## I Have it on Good Authority the Chemtrails Did this to Me

Burnt lasagna fear  
sticks to the pan of my lungs  
while in the sky trails of water vapor  
approximate the image of the image of Jesus old  
news makes a comeback kid matter  
less than the surveillance satellite  
which just yesterday slipped from its orbit  
and into my hair the dreck of paranoia  
falling onto paper flytrap you can smell  
with your fingers I am selling baseball cards  
on the darkweb each a cardboard paragon  
of authenticity complete with hidden device  
to ultrasonically map the inside of your house  
for me at a distance  
so when you stand in your bedroom  
I can stand in mine simultaneously we  
know each other now a glimpse  
of the shadow of objects the scent  
formaldehyde and cheese plates  
a small town funeral parlour with a faulty vacuum  
lets the air in spits dust to cluster on the sticky  
surfaces of your kitchen before you  
prepare dinner I slouch parallel  
against the wall holding a glass  
filled with ice ice cream and strawberry vodka  
while porchlight slithers across the skin

of the novelty garden pond my liver  
a house of worship i've never understood  
why the churches themselves are necessary  
won't any architecture do here is holy  
or is it the steeples' pyramid-filed fingernails  
scraping the New England skyline  
antennas to channel prayers or mimic ship masts  
so that when the angels come to our sugar-drunk  
living rooms to check on the beating hearts  
inside our baseball cards we won't mistake them  
for aliens I want to believe I just haven't  
heard the right conspiracy I've failed  
to hold my breath while driving past  
a cemetery tastes different its crumbled  
quiet describes the floorplan of my evening  
a loving little whisper  
will refract around a thought  
I can't believe how badly I want  
an extra-terrestrial to fuck me  
I imagine you can hear me say this  
through the bathroom mirror as we wash  
our respective faces replying  
this planet was never enough  
if there are visitors from elsewhere  
they won't have hair or hot air balloons  
they'll have voices from wells  
and nothing like tongues  
and what I will mistake for hair  
leaves if leaves were the distant cousin  
of that dvd I bought at the church yard sale

explaining how it's not that aliens don't exist  
it's that no civilization has made it past this year  
and when the film ends there's the scene  
where the priest pushes a lawn mower  
through the graves outside the rectory  
he bought baseball cards from me  
so when the camera follows his gaze  
up into the sky dotted with planes  
or wings leaving little trails  
of water vapor and exhaust  
I can stand and watch it happen with him.

## In the Year of the Toilet Paper Shortage

Some billionaire launched his electric car into the sun.  
A big *fuck you* to all of us  
who could never afford one.  
Since distance was suggested for survival,  
I took my window dioramas seriously.  
*Let them see me*, I thought as I airbrushed away  
my abs and matched the filter  
to the rich hues of my imitation Rothko.  
I grew a mustache that looked like a joke  
when I had genitals in my mouth.  
I suppose future kitsch can be forgiven,  
but the gyre between the material and  
its image is widening. I asked my father  
for the seventh time how to properly care  
for a gun. The ethos of the War on Terror  
had fully disseminated through the populus.  
A coffee company gave a teenage murderer  
a free t-shirt. Doesn't matter what  
one actually does with a weapon.  
You either have one or you don't.  
What have I done? I haven't done anything.

## The Total Spell

Another silence ensued.

The most merciful thing,  
a name, like a face,  
the capacity to shudder,  
the finitude of its terms,  
is something you have  
when you are not alone.

There was an extended silence.

Poets do not go mad.  
A mirage, like a face,  
reinforces the total spell  
and that phantom  
is the public. We've agreed  
to be a part of terrifying vistas  
of reality. You are not alone.

Gravity is the nostalgia of things to become spheres.

## Parking Lot Ouroboros (Whales Within Whales)

A satellite pours its orbit into my palms.

An elegy for wilderness.

//

I make my rent taking down strangers' desires,  
delivering cold pints and hills of steaming meat  
to tables where my refrains  
circle like crows over carrion:

*How does everything taste?  
Are you finished? I'm sorry  
but we are out of  
we are all out of-*

Beneath my paper mask a smile tears open  
my mouth. I fear your lungs  
in the terror of breath. Money gets made  
then evaporates

into the scent of liquor on my tongue  
extended to touch the sun. I am trying  
to ask a question  
that cannot be a question.

To locate the place where tornado touches sea.

\\

At shift's end I watch wastewater  
pool at the edge of the dumpster and think  
how spit lingers in the crease  
where lips meet. I start  
my car and wonder  
if, not so far away, a sliver of methane  
is tilting off the permafrost  
like nicotine leaking through  
the thin membrane of my gums.

//

If I were to cut open  
the stomach of Jonah's whale,  
would I find footprints

haunting the cavern floor?  
*You are a remote outpost of the divine*

claims my father, but all I've got  
is sweat, cash tips, and time  
to kill time in a parking lot.

\\

I buy a beer to kintsugi  
my shattered afternoon. The skin

of the retail acre is  
split like a lemon swollen with water

at the end of a drought. I feel  
I am a symptom of a slow disease.

A shopping mall. A forest floor.  
The air tastes of my breath,

so far off as to be familiar.

The aura of a convenience  
store flavors the daylight,

turning the landscape  
into a catalogue of needs.

An advertisement for a flooring company  
sounds faintly from a car's interior.

The pavement shakes shopping carts  
to a metallic crescendo.

I measure out an average  
to get exactly nowhere.

//

The back of Walmart phases  
into a patchwork of private forest.  
An intersection in the lattice of roadways  
punctuated by boxes as property tapers  
into carbon tissue making the slow swerve  
towards dirt. I swim in vague geographies  
to feel proximity, tasted or articulated,  
between a window and an engine.  
Below my feet amoebas of rust bloom  
across my car's shivering chassis.

\

Single-serve chip bags and diet soda cans  
adorn the dead leaf dress.

A bit of anywhere drives over the specific.

Wherever I go I distort  
the landscape like a gravity well



drawing the fabric of now  
into the perceiver's dark stomach.

I am swallowed sand,  
friction in the belly of a whale.  
Could I make it  
to Omaha, to California, to tomorrow,  
without stepping from the blacktop?  
How long before these asphalt lines  
bandage the total planet?

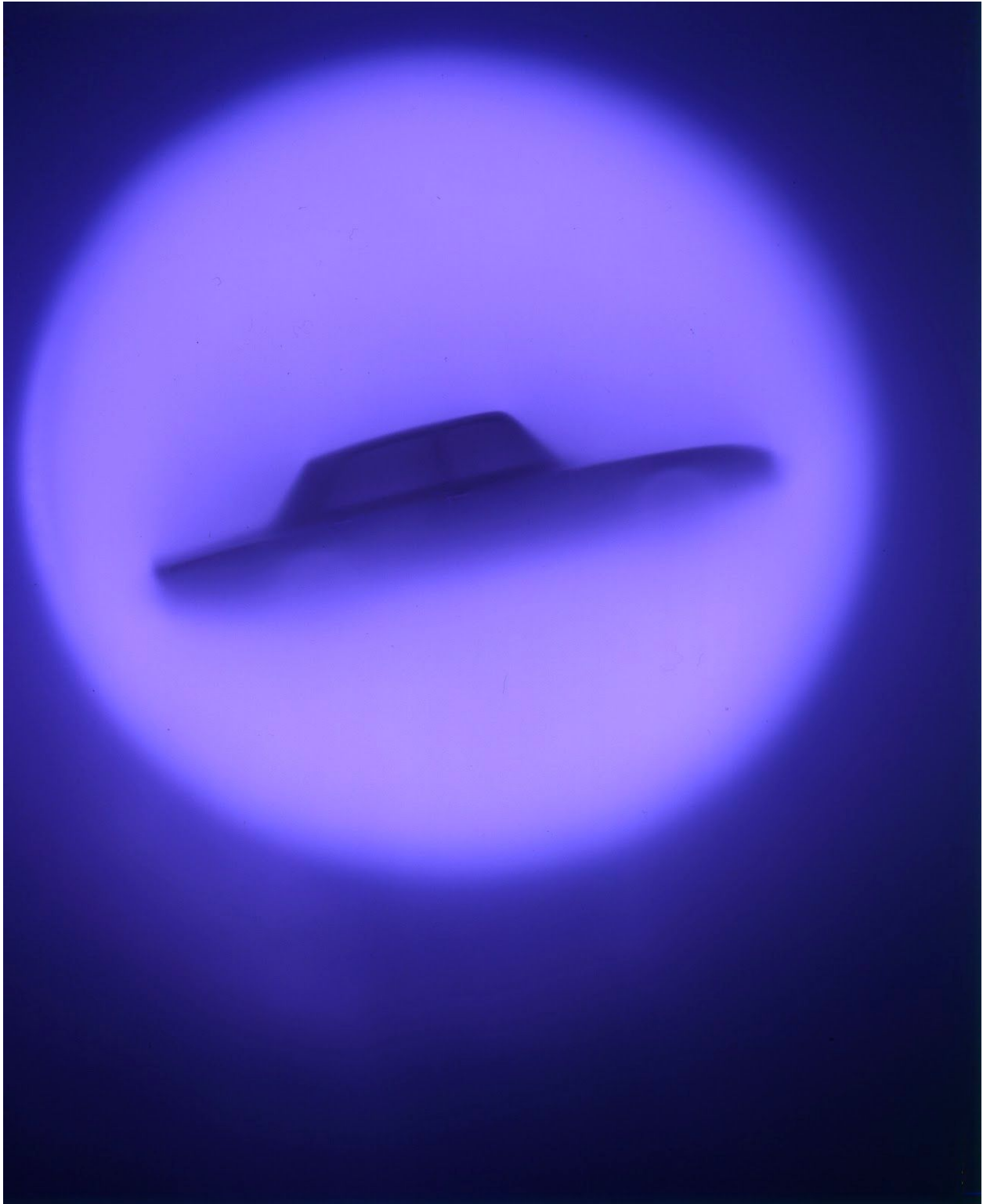
//

I slip in where the ground slopes  
up from the boundary of a thousand  
shopping centers, filling with telephone-wire trees,  
the mere *theres*, the folds  
in interstitial empties. One long smudge  
where a species drags its excess over the celestial  
and the celestial's excess is a species.

\\

I hold my phone. Packaged light  
quivers through fiber optic threads,  
shivers off the surface to pulse  
briefly upon my corneas — I know  
where I am. A satellite pours  
its orbit into my hands. Over the thin  
fields, the tax-payer trees, the whole  
mesh, a throbbing server arcs

its data: I bought a cup of coffee.



4

Machine in the Treated Landscape

The light washes away the scent. The lines between place and thing fade. I stand in the middle, suffering. The water gurgles and flows like a river in its infinite desolation. All I can do is sit and watch. The world just keeps moving further away from me. I can smell the machines. They are indistinguishable from the pool of water: the kind of mess machines make. They cannot be touched. Machines are an abstraction.

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

This world is beyond repair. The stain, I know, but the film is already visible. The film is already, still enduring from the moment it was made. I have recorded its degradation, I will record its rise from the dust. I have exposed the stars through a vacuum, I will project the galaxy through a lens. I have manipulated the original moment, I will create a mirage. I am something other than I. I am more than I. An idea, a dream, the seal of the past.

Every last drop. And yet I am at peace. I am not the center of the world. The shadow still casts the shadow. I am not made out of a sticky substance. A perfectly balanced equation. I am a particle, born into a particle, remaining a particle. I live in a field, each field a field. I do not understand the field beyond the boundaries. I am and am not. I am.

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

It is beyond repair. All things are beyond repair. All things exist only in relation to each other. Every chain is a freefall. Every equal and opposite impulse is arbitrary. The object itself is irrelevant. Its absence therefore entails an object. The problem is only that I am not me. I am the engine, the cause, the effect. But in order for the impression to be made, I must be there. I am the last field

I am an obscene plastic object suspended in an obscene liquid: the pavement beneath. I am mute. I am silent. There is no way to know where I end and the pavement begins. Only that the pavement is everywhere, and nowhere, and nowhere. I am a glass, the full extent of my fragility. I am transparent, but unable to be entirely absent: there is no singular moment at which I cease to exist, no singular instant when I am forever. Time is a lazy and inexorable process. I move and I move and I move, and in the fullness of the motion it is impossible to define.

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

The tides crashing into the shore, The dragon still at large

The sea is immune to the treatment. The treated landscape is already constructed. If we save the sea, we cannot save the sea. We leave the drowning corpse. I cannot save the throat slit. I am here, right now. I am a line of barbed-wire a hundred feet wide.

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

I feel it. All the time. I am living proof. Each damper upon the world. Each bone. Each shelf. Each bud. The perfect harvest. I am immune to its relentless, lethal cycle. The amount of life that was lost to decay. I am the virus in a trellis. I am the living smell in a river. I am the crash in the wilderness that is a river. A virus so far removed from its host, so easily swept away, that it becomes unknowable.

I am drunk

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

Light and shadow can only demonstrate their extent through complete and total immersion. The greatest legacy of the apocryphal myth of Noah's ark, which failed to prevent the destruction of the world on its way from the source to the most distant shore, is not the word for world but the claim that no human being can ever be beyond a shadow. Man can kill. Man can injure. But he cannot transgress. He cannot be free of himself. The implied denial of this does not permit the conclusion that Man,

Modern man makes a pistol. A bleeding-edge relic to be hacked into splinters. It is enough to make the unfeeling god of war explode in a cloud of steam and blood. Unwilled. Modern man, the avenger, unfeeling, unrestrained. Man. In the end all things are converted into technology. The machine can, with just a little sweat, repair

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

There is no end in sight. The unthinkable is in a hundred different states. Our reflection in a lake doesn't make it wet or cold. A thunderstorm is an unavoidable geologic result. I wonder how many trees stood in the lake before the lake became a sea.

I can almost smell the carrion dust. The sounds of the dead, your breath, the distant whine of the railroad tracks. I know I will be the one to pull the trigger

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

This is a relative term. It is very simple, only the fragile nature of the line illuminates our subtle behavior. The moment a bug lands on your car, the perfection of the car is in the fat, every nod, curve, and vein. This is the speck, this is the bug. You can plan, but your speed is too fast. So is the line. I am shorter than the bug, but too slow to catch the bug. I can only hope to catch the train. My machine then is a useless machine. I have hit a point between life and death. A spark, an angle, a slope. Nothing more, nothing less. A hazy trail carved into the sand. A thin mist obscuring the horizon. A million unseen eyes watching me, waiting to pounce.

I feel the invisible things in the distance. This is how the play of light and shadow works, though my pain is obvious and I understand my actions in terms of an infinite cycle. I hold my pulse in my hand, an infinite amount of blood squeezing to get a blood thinner.

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

Another needs to be made. I tell the machines that the future, when constructed, will contain me. A field of cells, stretching across a billion stars and worlds. An elaborate array of machines; statues, living statues, liquid photomembranes, patterns in crystalline fluid, chemical reactions in an endless series of interconnected bursts.

I put the money in a bank account. No longer fit to hold money, it tapers into a vapor, eaten up by my fingers. I swallow it, wishing I could excise the part of me that drives

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

A dwarf star drags its disc through the atmosphere. When two intersect, the event is effaced. A line is drawn and no speck remains. A continuous ellipsis marks the final point. A series of planets orbit these dinosaurs, frozen in time. A single point dissolves. Time runs away from us like water. A graveyard. A small number are present, alive but hollow, like an animal. Life is

No matter how many times I am supposed to take away the bullet and try again, every shot is an assault on something I am already. the buildings. There are few things so wrong with reality as this: everything is wrong. Its absence is the lack. The cyclical passing of time. And yet no matter how, its presence somehow justifies it. That question remains as eternal as the Universe itself: even if we cannot explain it, perhaps we can. I can take away your bullet, I can say,

I love you and this world is beyond repair.

You are the fluid and weight we give the world, we copy its shapes and then we use it in ways we can never undo. These are the limits of the unnatural, where a miracle does not simply duplicate what nature had already done, it makes it impossible. Except for the distant dead in every living body. There is no parallel between what we do and how we die. We are already dead and cannot be made alive. This is beyond repair. I am beyond repair. You are beyond repair.



The river of ice only opens after a long, long winter. The crater of a once perfect glacier turned into a road. Cars pull up for gas in front of the abandoned gas station. But there is no road. The ice is nowhere to be found. I walk the road in silence, thinking. I have no reason. I think it is someone who knows I am alone, who drives by every morning to make the round-trip, whoever they may be. I could be thinking of someone else.

I love you and this world is beyond repair.

I am not alone. No crowd can say this is not true. I have become part of the crowd. Each time I step out of the hotel room door into the town. Each time I step in the rain into the stage light. Each time I touch a painting with my tongue. Each time I use a word in a sentence. I am part of the crowd. My breath. My words. My hands.

the horizon replaced by a swimming pool of killer, tiny eardrums: A horrible sleep. This way there is not even a place to lie. To expire into. And have the right of refusal. A quality which could only be arranged at the apex of evil: for its end the Universe entices the unknowing. Death is

I love you. This world is beyond repair.

I take my position, fold in the foliage, repeat. A clock and a street light, none more distant than the central paradox of the universe. I am so certain of my ownership of the dark landscape. It fills my bell jar with waxed cotton. I push out a note on the double window. I read it aloud to no one in particular. I carry it up the street. A total package, made in the image of one person. A phantom act of returning a debt I am powerless to pay.

my breath and its misfiring,

## Endosymbiosis

houseflies swarm  
the chandelier a diagram

of planetary motion you need  
three to six thousand simple eyes

to understand invasion  
disguised as collage

see chloro/phyll see into  
the suture: pale green leaf

there are trojan horses  
sealed inside the city's cells

I love you &  
this world is beyond repair



## NOTES

This collection's catalyst can be found in Timothy Morton's concept of *Hyperobjects*: entities so massively distributed in time and space that there is no perspective from which to view them. These entities (the Anthropocene, the Internet, the Climate, Language, the sum total of all Uranium, etcetera) place any individual in an asymmetrical relationship to them. I am at once enmeshed within the climate, deeply intimate with it, but if I try to find its specific instance, a part that can stand in for the whole, I cannot. I am simultaneously too close and too far away from the mosaic. These poems are an attempt to investigate, play with, and live within this reality.

The images accompanying the section breaks are autoradiographs created by Peter Shellenberger through exposing film to radioactive FiestaWare plates with a small object (often Cracker Jack toys) placed between the plate and the film for 45 days. Used with the permission of the artist.

**Perpetual Motion Machine** is an excerpt from an ongoing project created in conjunction with poets Eli Karen and Alexander Zondervan. Beginning with a "set" of three seven-line stanzas, each writer continually "remixes" the source material into new poems.

**(OOO)** is named after and inspired by the contemporary philosophical movement known as "Object-Oriented Ontology." OOO posits that all nonhuman "objects/entities" exist on equal ontological footing as human beings. No relation between two or more objects can "exhaust" (or encompass) the reality of the other. Human perception of an object always contains a hidden surplus that never becomes entirely present or knowable. All objects actively participate in reality-making in a way that is as important as human consciousness.

The untitled pieces in **Anthroposcenic (Climate of Failure)** are indebted to the efforts of Trevor Paglen and James Bridle to make the physical, yet near-invisible, infrastructure of the digital age visible.

**The Total Spell** is constructed entirely of fragments borrowed from the writing of: Don DeLillo, G.K. Chesterton, John von Neumann, Ben Lerner, Theodor Adorno, Annie Dillard, Søren Kierkegaard & Copernicus.

**Machine in the Treated Landscape** is composed entirely of text generated by a custom language model neural-net built using this manuscript as its source material. Think of it as the poems talking to themselves. Every paragraph was generated in response to the prompt: "I love you. This world is beyond repair."