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## Konvolut: I write the city

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*Bard College*

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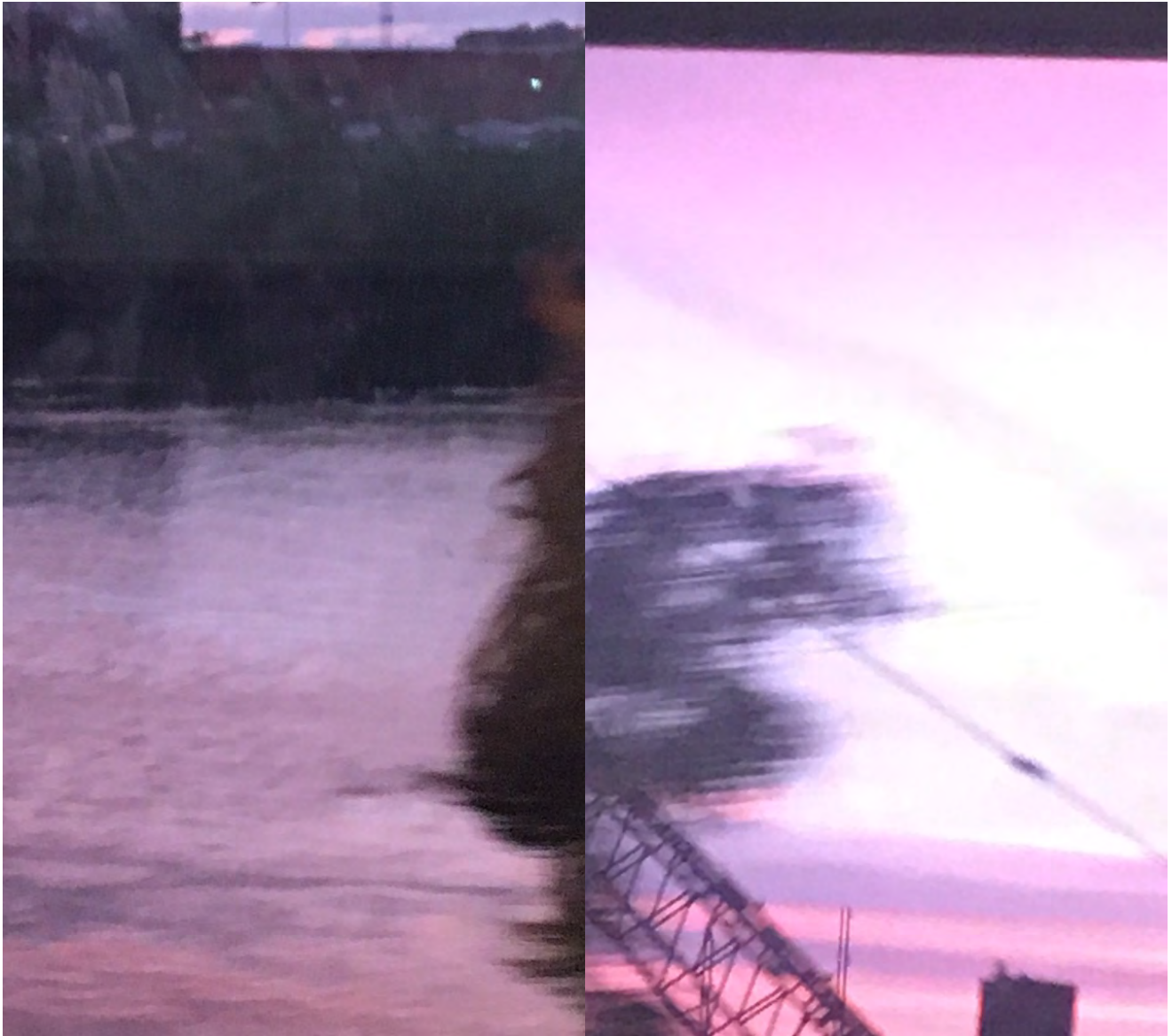
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# Konvolut: I write the city

a senior project submitted to  
The Division of Languages and Literature  
of Bard College  
by Yuma Carpenter-New

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY  
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Konvolut: I write the city



thank you

Ann Lauterbach, for the brilliant poetic guidance and the friendship,  
through all the many chuckles during this weird year in Shafer.

Elijah, for listening the loudest.

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in all my endeavors.



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*Come here, my dear, good, beautiful doggie, and smell this excellent perfume which  
comes from the best perfumer of Paris.*  
Charles Baudelaire

*The course of the world is an endless series of facts congealed in the form of things.*  
Walter Benjamin

*The walls and the floors used to be gorgeous.*  
C.D. Wright

*To explore the nature of rain I opened the door because inside the workings of language  
clear vision is impossible. You think you see, but are only running your finger through  
your pubic hair. The language can suggest a body where there is none.*  
Rosmarie Waldrop

*Memory is redundant: it repeats signs so that the city can begin to exist.*  
Italo Calvino







BERLIN

There are four ways of describing the new city,  
spelled out in a pact:

All the limbs rush together  
each morning to hear the daily news,  
and I am to take four photographs.

Their thick, mad harmony lends itself to the type of image  
I produce, laid out like a system within a frame.  
The first image sees blood from the others,  
opened up vaginally. In the second,  
we do not see a woman. Three: two cappuccinos,  
laughing, clinking change.  
The conclusion of the system is  
red, like the blood, but thinner.



SONNET : *KEY*

I carry with me this convolution through the city:

memorial,  
Angel,  
a small dog,

dreams,  
the blocks,  
blood,  
Baudelaire's flower pot,

a second language,  
the bus home,  
a swan,  
maps and sites,

water in the center,  
bird, after fire.

THE THEORY OF THE FLOWER

I see land and water.

The other things I cannot name. I stand by the water  
kicking around shapes into the center of the city.

At the water, I see a book of songs by Michael Palmer. I open  
to the song "The Theory of the Flower":

*Now say the words you had meant to  
Now say the words such words mean*

The word I mean is the water sometimes  
spitting out onto the land and blurring the shoreline.  
I see no land and no water, but a third shape,  
taking place where they meet.  
I reach out to name it, a flower, like Palmer's.

A VOICE:

There were seven clocks running in the house. Each one of them tuned to a different hour, disturbing my sense of present to the point of my scrambling breakfast eggs late in the afternoon.

## IN ERAS

I said I am most comfortable when I am describing a map that I have stitched together in a quiet room. These maps vary in quality and in scale but are all representative of the eras that I have seen pass:

The first era is that of the Kingdom. The map is beautiful; like topography, it juts into the present air with a royal vigor. In this representation of the Kingdom, I see the Palace, and its majesty makes me sweat. I run my finger along the spine of its infrastructure.

Then comes the Era of Metal. Surprisingly, on the map, the tin shines brightest. The map covers the largest distance of all the maps, stretching greater than a mile. I must keep it away from the window as the reflection off the metals can blind. About the era, one said *it is beautiful to die in a bright flame*.

The next map is quite small and remains on display in the entry way. It is intricately carved from balsa wood and represents an era spent at sea. Balsa wood is the lightest wood and is emblematic of an era of landlessness. I sculpted with great prudence each moment of wave from the era. From the years of results, I then produced a single, universal wave from the balsa that encapsulated the motion of a thousand years.

Then comes my era. The map for the age is particular and the surface is covered in dust. I do not like my era where I can see it, so I keep it hidden in the pantry by the door. I have taken it out only four times in order to perfect it. Now I wait until the era passes, speaking of my maps to the people that I meet.

SONNET 2 : *MEMORIAL*

The noisy  
present  
breathes hot steam  
from the crannies of the stone.

I can follow  
the stairs down under the stone creatures who stand big  
like a horse that I ride at a canter until she trips and flips me off  
into the woods in Slovakia.

I look through the grey alleys and catch a glimpse  
of what's since then. So far, the city  
consumes bits of the memorial, only in the  
way she wants it, chipping away at its edges to make room

for these present noises,  
filling my glimpses with architecture.

## SQUARE

I see the scene in shapes.

I always write in squares, although now everyone writes of Tigers.

I tell them Listen

closely to the writing of shapes.

It reminds me, suddenly, like something savory,

of how I see the train from city. The train traces the outline of the city, shaping

it square. I deem it mad for teetering so close.

In the body of the train, there are boxes,

each of them filled with wooden spheres that take their time

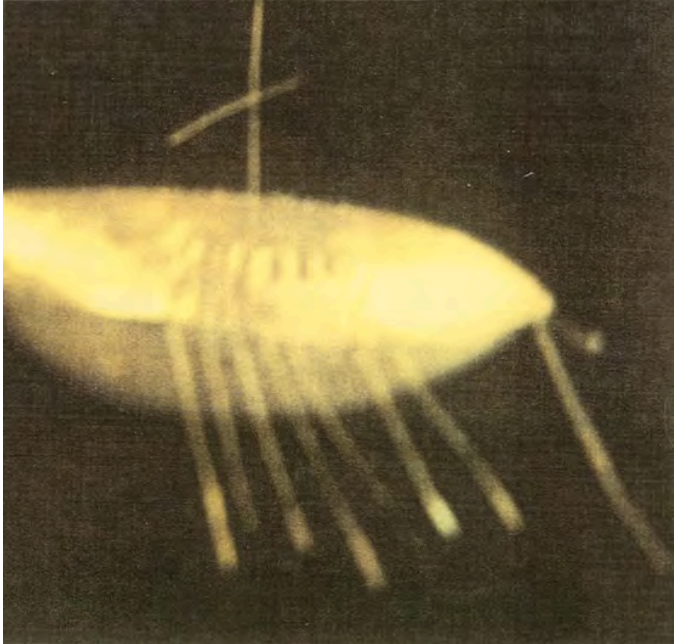
in filling my cornea.

My cornea is red and has been sliced open

by a triangular man on the train.

My eye leaks a weird substance onto the main square,

upon which I write.

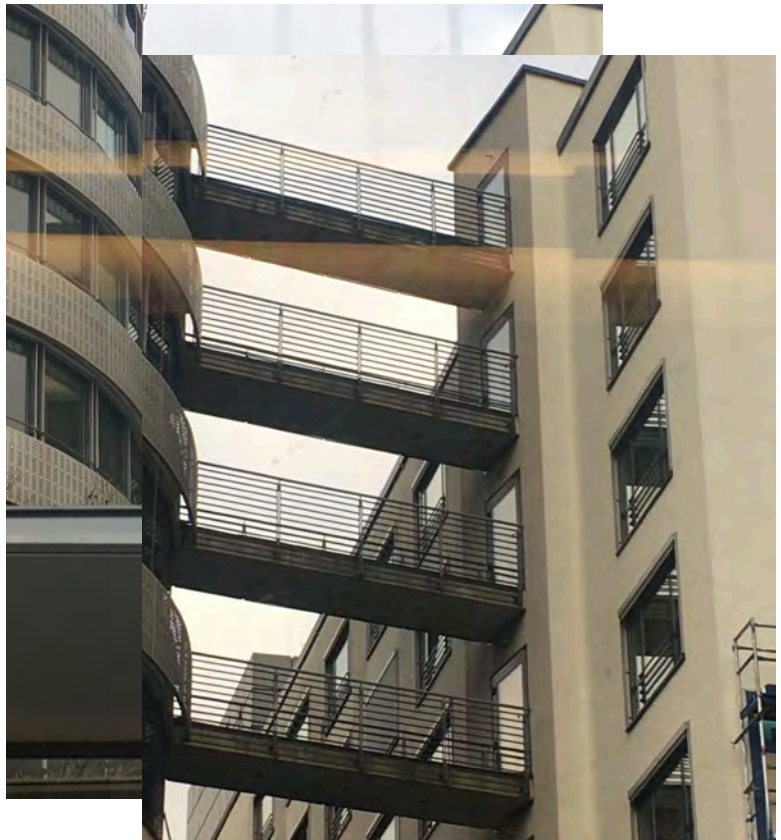


A VOICE:

I crawled into the house from the dog door in the back to find it remained evening through my absence. I was reported to have been gone for at least half a day. I reclaimed my spot on the sofa and sipped the remainder of my port.

### THE THIRD

In Chinatown, from the apartment window, I saw the rain  
in the alley and was able to make out the three of us  
standing there, expecting the third to arrive.  
When we realized that we were each the third,  
too many people had written the scene.  
From the alley, I see the stasis  
in the written history has become too thick  
to allow for movement away from it.  
I lie waiting in my alley and in my window  
while the street catalogues its lexicon.  
The movement is centripetal.  
I fall from the window and land in the alley covered in my blood.  
That is where I was when I did the writing.





SONNET 3 : CORRESPONDENCE  
*after Nathaniel Mackey*

Dear Angel of Dust,  
I wrote you into  
the foreground  
first. You settled

there nicely, sinking under the  
surface, nestling between pitters and patters,  
rooting your Angel claws  
into my momentary. A few days passed

and I understood you so boldly as a faction  
of my tapestry, that I believed you to be  
a glass of wine  
that I shared with my

young sister. Dear Angel of Dust, now I write you as myself,  
sharpening your Angel wings across my back.

#### CONSIDERING HISTORY AT THE END OF THE WORLD

As I walk through the old city, the signs give themselves to me silently but with great passion. Each light has its moment and screams. It is night and I look up. The name of the star is Wormwood. In the sky, it shines brown and dusty yet is not imperceptible from the street, which remains still in its emancipation. The lyric the city dwellers wrote for the countryside, entirely inconceivable now, is somber and full of passion.

A VOICE:

Morning stands as a placeholder for what may occur later. I lie in bed until the light is too bright, checking my calendar twice. I waste the mornings.

FROM ELIJAH'S RECOUNTING OF HIS TRIP TO MAINE

*At last, those who left too soon don't need us anymore.*

— Rainer Marie Rilke

Maine's most popular photographs are of dead people.  
I saw fifteen of them elaborately framed and hung in a procession on a wall.  
The highway leading up to Maine affords the most realistic images of the ideal.  
These images, the photographs and the sites, are symptoms of the great north.  
In Maine, each person I asked for directions pointed toward the coast.  
The coast is where the language of the dead becomes clear.  
While we were driving, ten flies swarmed around the inside of the window.  
I cracked the passenger window and the flies were consumed by the wind.  
When we return home, Putin takes a small dog from Turkmenistan's  
president who, moments earlier, held it by the scruff of its neck.

SONNET 4 : *INFAMOUS CITY*  
*after Charles Baudelaire*

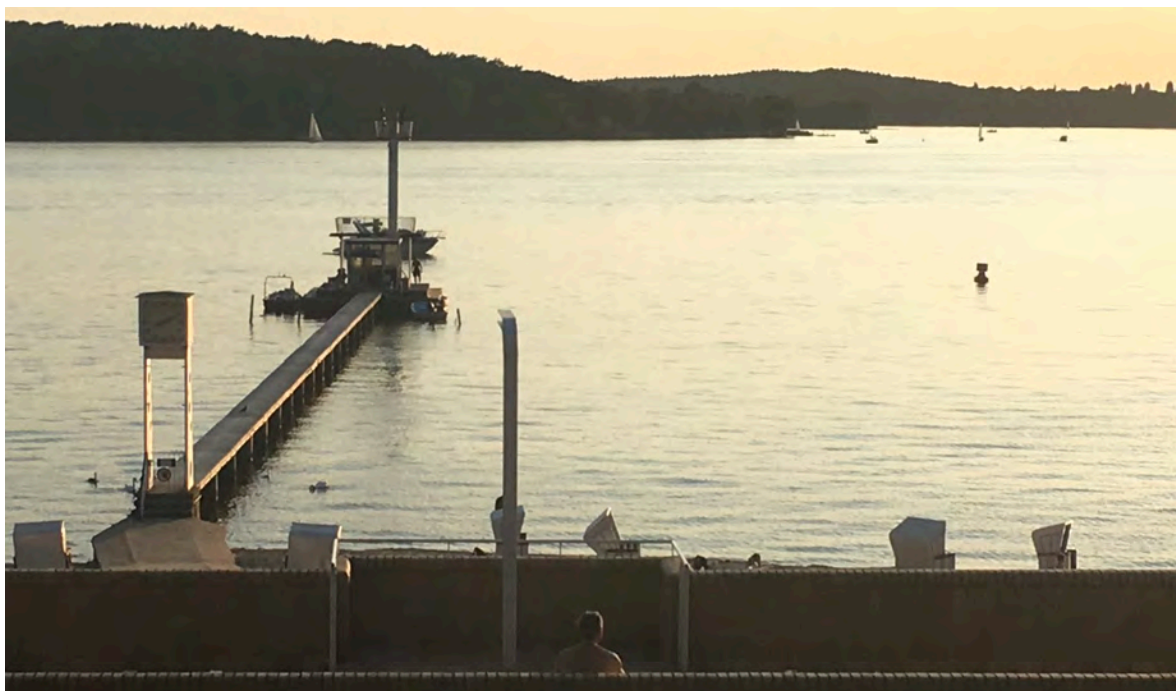
Infamous city, I adore you!

I take my small dog out for a walk next to the canal,  
and she picks up the bones deposited in the dirt  
by things bigger than she is. I collect each bone in  
my blue bag and carry it with me through the city.

I stumble through uneven trails leading away  
from the canal, which take their form according to a map  
sketched in the early 20th century. My small dog and I  
know memorials are embedded here, bones

embedded in gravel, heavy in my blue bag. We  
meander through the city, stuttering late in evening  
onto the center of the memorial, and I throw my bones up.  
They shatter in the air, raining down on me and my small dog.

Infamous city! I adore your blue bony  
architecture, rising over embedded memorials.





## ARCHITECTURE

There are four ways of describing the new city, the one next door, although sometimes translated as the other one.

Little rats run about in the neighborhood,  
known to draw lines with their little rat paws.

Little rat paws claim all the stone and pebbles from the gutter grit. Their lines run from point to point and create,

finally, a gridded map of the new city. Little people dance about and fill each grid with the chitter

of time. When each square, or triangle, becomes an afternoon or a day, the rats have completed their work.



SONNET 5 : *HARD DREAMS*

*This may be an incomplete explanation of our relation, but we've always feared  
the dark inside the body.*

— Rosmarie Waldrop

Hard dreams, mostly of  
flying over Paris: the  
clouds skip between vibrations  
of my wing. I take the Chunnel

in the day; it's quicker. Hard  
dreams, the boy with the scar  
and his two friends wave  
a gun around in a museum.

The poem my muse wrote  
is incogitable; he says  
he can't sleep. We buy tickets to fly  
in the morning before we've woken up,

depart from the image  
of museums, see some new ones.

SO SAD SO CREEPY SO BEAUTIFUL: A SEQUENCE IN SEVEN

*Watch  
your head. No fires should be  
unattended. Especially when wind. Each  
receives a free swiss army knife.  
The first few tongues are clearly  
preparatory. The impression  
made by yours I carry to my grave. It is  
just so sad so creepy so beautiful.  
Bless it. We have so little time  
to learn, so much... The river  
courses dirty and deep. Cover the lettuce.  
Call it a night. O soul. Flow on. Instead.*

—C.D. Wright

TRANSPORT

How did they know the world would look like this?

## BOMB

On the map, I see green and blue.

The bomb settles in the grey and I cannot find it

on the map. The pieces from the grey

amble and shatter the windows in the green.

Traveling along the blue, closely to the sharp edges of green, I am lead  
to the place where the land was leveled.

There are only five standing bricks, colored orange

like rust and aligned in a row with an opening in the center.

I step into the orange passageway and am transferred to the grey.

Here, I know I must be nearing the bomb.

In the grey, the rust is silver and weeps down

old structures onto the head of a baby tiger, broken

under the explosion. I crawl through

the metal limbs and, blindly reaching, my finger is scorched

by the light of the bomb. I take it,

weighty on my palm and the flame burns a hole

in my pointed finger. I climb out of the argentate metal

and sit the baby tiger on my arm, barely breathing. I allow the two of us

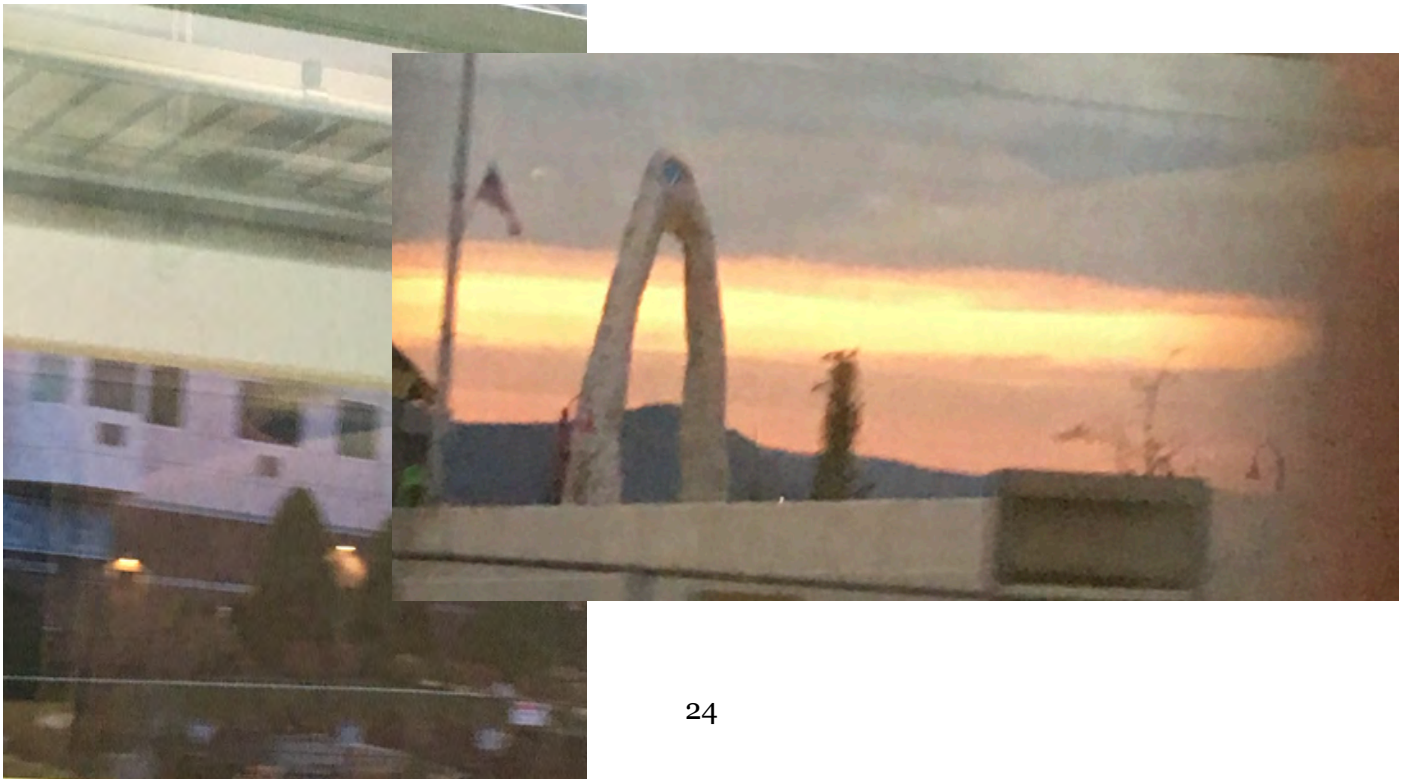
to burn: a sacrifice that closes the gap

between the orange, forcing the grey to the surface

so that I may consider it on the map.

The value of the ruin is determined by its relation  
to what still holds. I stumbled upon one  
still breathing, although its stiff limbs seemed  
to taper off.

In the tips of its fingers, I saw  
a quick pulse. Blood  
fled through crippled veins, carving a wide,  
black stream. I played in the stream, filling  
myself with dark liquid. I drank  
from a glass, and poured more  
into me from beneath my dress. Now  
the structure is pregnant with the confluence  
of time, and I take everything from the moment,  
from the relation of what still runs through my body.



4

COMMUTE

The five of us take the train into the city from up north.

We stretch our long arms over two full rows of seats,  
slipping

our creepy fingers around each other like the bald eagles slip  
around on the river:

the shape of their wet claws carved into the ice where they stand.

The car stutters

over silence and we read the signs as they pass.

There is a divide between these signs that show us place  
and our event, static and quiet from within the mechanical stir.

I consider the transit and am faced with the stark divide

metal and loud

on a route that is outside of real time, without place.

My four friends and I attempt to reach through the window to understand  
the flit past of place where there is no time.

The disconnect is alive, mocking us through the window  
writhing around among the waters. I see now

the image of our own writhing  
is reflected in the glass.

5

GLIMPSE

That spring, I stole from the city      a charted glimpse  
of perfect architecture. I saw a gridded landscape,  
sharp and contained like a chassis,  
from down an avenue.      It's density resembled a view  
framed within a portrait, lines enclosing one another, so as to leave  
no frayed edges. The lines broke up the skyline  
in a way that was satisfying to touch, so I reached out  
and ran my fingers along its geography.      The metal and glass  
shone brighter as I put pressure      on the glimpse,  
cementing it deep in its own structure.



I watch the sun but cannot understand the coming of evening.

The world is on my street, at least to begin with.  
I watch mangled figures spread out on their backs  
on the path leading to my door.  
I try to count them,  
but each has varying limbs and the numbers blur.  
I watch the sun but cannot understanding the coming of evening.  
It shatters the code the city has installed, sun  
gripping its gross paws into earth and ripping downward.  
Last night, when it came, the corners of the alley  
wrapped around my neck, which had been  
broken earlier in a street brawl, leaving me writhing  
at dawn. Actually, the cement corners  
came as a force of comfort and respite,  
laying me down next to the figures with all the limbs,  
scrounging loudly.  
The world is on my street.  
Although we do not make the city, stretched out over the cement,  
we write it from where we lie.  
The outline of our bodies reads like the blueprint when I trace it  
from my window, slowly, in ink.



SPECTATOR

At the peak, the fog  
takes most of the time.                I,  
the spectator,  
watch the city,  
tarnished.     The soft weather  
clots the particulars of the skyline,  
softening them under the grey.



#### THE MATTER

I will sit at the counter and let the people next to me give me advice.

I will take any advice the strangers give me, but I will avoid discussion of the matter.

The chitter in the restaurant is the matter.

I do not make contact with the memory of the opera nor with the conversation the two men have next to me.

Their friend is fishing, and they don't think she should come to Berlin.

Berlin comes to the mind as dirty in the winter and as memory in the summer.

The strangers advise me to travel in the winter.

This is as close as I can get.

SONNET 6 : *BLOCKS*

The blocks in the city  
move like language.  
I ride the subway to the bridge,  
where I read it,

laid out, contained  
in its own movement, latched  
to its own system.  
The blocks' particulars

fall over each other  
like weird animals and I cannot  
make sense of them separately.  
Only when the bridge breaks up

the language, briefly, I see    the trees  
dying for each dawn, waking up in May.

## MONT ROYAL

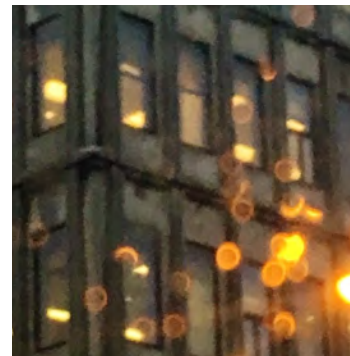
Our Lady of Snow grips; she built us this castle. It's silenced in the rain. The landscape has been curated to include only particulars, leaving out now all that might embellish. The castle is silenced in the rain and grows weary of its loud neighbors. I open the chamber doors and launch myself onto the wet bed to realize,

suddenly, that it has been raining all day.

From the position on my back, I can see out the window and it is quite still. The way that the rain interacts with the glass reminds me of a photograph,

where I am unable to distinguish the side of the building from the memory of light. In the photograph, the orange flare eats away at the cement, digging its paws into the metal structure. Leaving the chamber, I climb to the highest point of the castle. The castle stands higher than every structure in the city, not including the steeple of the cathedral. From the window that looks over the city, I see:

the correspondences of the rain over steel structures reveal the presence  
of Our Lady.



A VOICE:

I come to the ruins and find an image of collapsed time. The land by the wall feels the way it did before. At least how it did in the winters. They've always been dark. The wall runs around but there is no movement within.



#### ANGLE

It is said that the poet has a way of creating and maintaining silence. The poet makes cuts into the silence so that she can see it better. Each cut creates an angle. She takes out fractions of the silence and, with the distance from the whole, she can count them. There they lie before her; there must be thousands. I watch the pieces shuffle around between the passing moment and the fixed site of history. If she touches them, they scream. Oh do they scream! I hear this scream crush metal structures; the sound of sharp knives cutting each other apart, flattening them into a shape that resembles that of silence. The first fraction is exact. The ones that follow rely on this. Now they lie, pathetically, in the grey snow.

SONNET 7 : *NOTES FROM THE OPERA*

There is a passion that weeps  
like plasma onto the stage.  
The dancer wears white, her  
feet entrenched

in red viscous blood.  
She crashes into the liquid,  
slipping out of the image  
and into real time.     I say  
                                 I'm close

to the moon up here, the silver  
of it has an interesting story:  
listen to her who falls, dampened  
by the light cutting

viscosity.     There is a passion that  
                         sometimes teeters.







TWO POEMS ON THE KEEPERS OF THE CITY

1.

There are four stone figures  
that stand in the moat that surrounds New York City.  
With their stone mouths and ears, they collect  
the voices of the city and sing them as a ballad.  
I walk toward the city and hear the ballad,  
stumble into the moat; my feet wet on their song.  
The water trembles; to be made privy  
to an invitation of city is enough to make one  
sweat. The song digs itself into the bones  
of my feet, replacing my human infrastructure  
with little red knobs I can barely walk on.  
I trip and begin to drown when I am raised  
by the magnitude of stone wings upon my back;  
the same wings I see brooding  
over the backs of the four figures. I fly  
above the moat, where I hear the song  
most fiercely. I sing the city now,  
keeper of the sky, and transport it to the divine.

2.

There are four guardians of the city. They are stone figures that rise taller than even the highest spire. In the city, all objects are mute until they are named. In stone cloaks, the guardians walk the streets ranging from highest to lowest, ingesting each facet of world. It is when they assign a name to each of the streets that a dark light is cast over the city. And the days end.



SONNET 8 : *PARIS SPLEEN*

I write sonnets from the roof of the hotel,  
remembering quietly Baudelaire's act of defiance  
against time. There remains little time for food or drink  
in the rigidity of wasted time. My day shifts

to allow for his structures of repeating mornings.  
Each morning, I watch the city and the way  
the particular present is displaced by images  
from personal pasts, disturbing the contemporary

so that it cannot persist. I walk through the city  
and see only memories hung on the walls leading  
to the center. Their opaque presence steals  
space from the city's own moment. The collapse

of these images upon the having of my breakfast each morning  
reveals exhaustion to the point of mandated rest, my head on the hotel pillow.



POEM

*on Vodno, Skopje, Macedonia*

Wherever down the pass they lay, I saw three figures.  
The marble boy dances.  
The golden palace is coterminous with the tamped skyline.  
Between the two, the point of contact  
remains that of perfect torpidity:  
                                    the sea water's soft.  
I use the word "intemporal" to describe the scene.  
I have spoken of eternity with reference to the distance of the valley.  
From the mountain, the siren lurches, and we hear her.  
The hollowing of sound causes a curt break in the day.  
The fragility of remembrance urges us forward to feel the noise.  
A flutter, a flit into stillness.

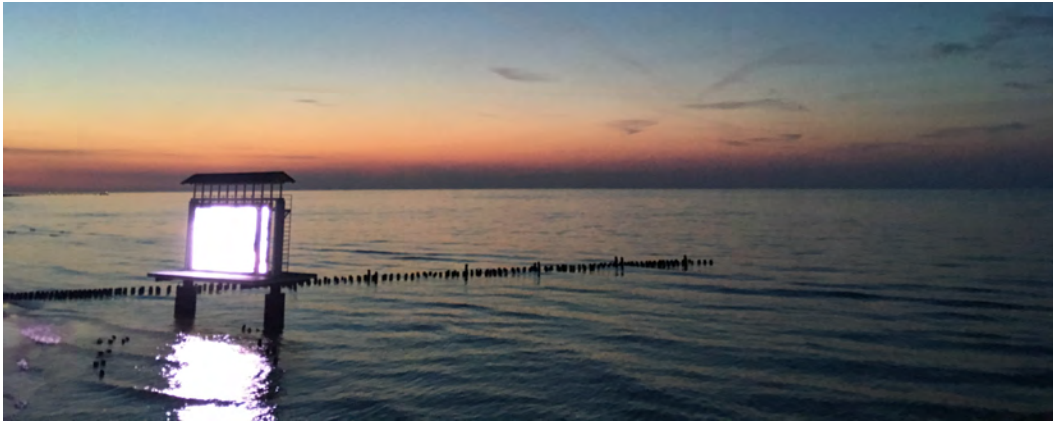
SONNET 9 : *THERE ARE TEN MAGICS THAT I EXTRACT FROM THE WORD*

For five days I did not see any language;  
the day came only as blurred signals. I took a cab  
to the highest point of the Holy Mountain, but even  
the view from the cross was illegible. In the street,

I opened a package of correspondences between  
two people in the second language. After reading  
for an hour, the collected writings still appeared  
like signals. I could barely sense an imprint

of the magics. There are ten magics that one might  
extract from the word. Without magics, the structure  
of the day tapers. In the second language, “event”  
is the signal of day. In the airport, I located the event

of the second language and then  
was able to detect the magics,      reading the signs out loud.



## WE LEAVE

Most days we leave by water.  
Summers are spent by the water.  
My sea legs kick.  
On a boat, I do not row, but dip my finger in  
and the glassy water breaks. After summer,  
there are sheets of ice on this same shattered surface.  
Then, when I dip my finger in, the whole sea shudders.  
The storm leaves us silently in bed with the stiff light.  
Most days we leave by alleyway; gravel trickles  
down the alleyway and creates new pretty streams.  
On a boat, I do not row.



A VOICE:

During the day, I have little time to glance out the window to notice the seasons change. By the time I have weaved through this maze of a house to find the front door, ten seasons have passed. I know now that the sunroof in my car must have let in four years' snow. I dash out into the cool autumn as quickly as I can, but in vain, as the books on the backseat have perished.



#### CENTER

There is a grey room filled with rectangular paintings of my eyes.  
I sort them by right and left eye. I am able to discern right from left  
just barely from the way the eyelashes create corners.  
I love to see the walls filled with the tool of my perception.  
I lie down in the midst of them, piling the leftover canvases  
atop my body.

This is a place in the city where I see everything.  
The center of all seeing: I allow my body to adopt sight, too.  
My arm follows the course of the alleys, like tributaries,  
leading to the Grand Station. My fingers, so long,  
are neither human nor machine; I become total city.  
My stomach and chest stretch to accommodate  
the mass of a thousand memorials, each one heavy.  
In the grey room, the paintings bask me in a bright flame,  
while my knees burn with a home on the edge of the city.

SONNET 10 : *BUS*

We all take the bus home:  
four of us laughing outside  
the station, thinking about  
the forming of lines from here to each point.

The lines etched by our transit  
gash deep wounds into the countryside.  
I saw sweet homes and side roads  
crumble into the gaps.

I cry tears, lick my finger and  
run it on the edge of the bleeding  
wound, swim around to keep it  
open wide enough:

I take the bus  
through the gaps, drive with the windows up.

A VOICE:

The wind fills the flimsy walls with some sort of sticky presence. The inner courtyard remains empty. A surprising thought, given there is so much present in need of a place to reside.

## WAGNER

We've all played the cello and now the strings are broken. They expired suddenly after four years of shared use. Not one of us could find the note. We played Wagner loudly behind our plucking but our hideous clamor disrupted the tune. I returned to the cello after these years in an attempt to salvage the dying creature. I picked up the G string and it was heavy in my hand. After studying it carefully, I took it and laced it through the pegs of the cello, returning life to the solemn beast. Strung with only the richest of the strings, I was finally able to play every note from the overture to *Tristan und Isolde*. Finally, it was red.

SONNET 11 : *SWAN*

I felt the stiff shards of a swan underneath my wheel.

I was driving out past town, saw the broken  
figure, elegantly tucked beneath the body of my car.

A fly gathered itself softly around her eye, half way

dismembered. Her neck maintained grace in her nearing death,  
slithering around the side of the road, claws scrabbling,  
fervidly reaching their menacing potential.

On the tarmac, her whiteness shattered  
into pieces of gravel, until those shards consumed

her strange body. I stood with the creature, morphing black into white,  
white to black. Now I am standing in a snowed field,  
speckled with three black dogs licking their paws loudly,  
though the stasis of the scene remains.

I walk past and around the dogs so as not to disrupt the harmony.

In the center of the field, I am at once swan and snow in their reveries.

WARSCHAUER STRASSE

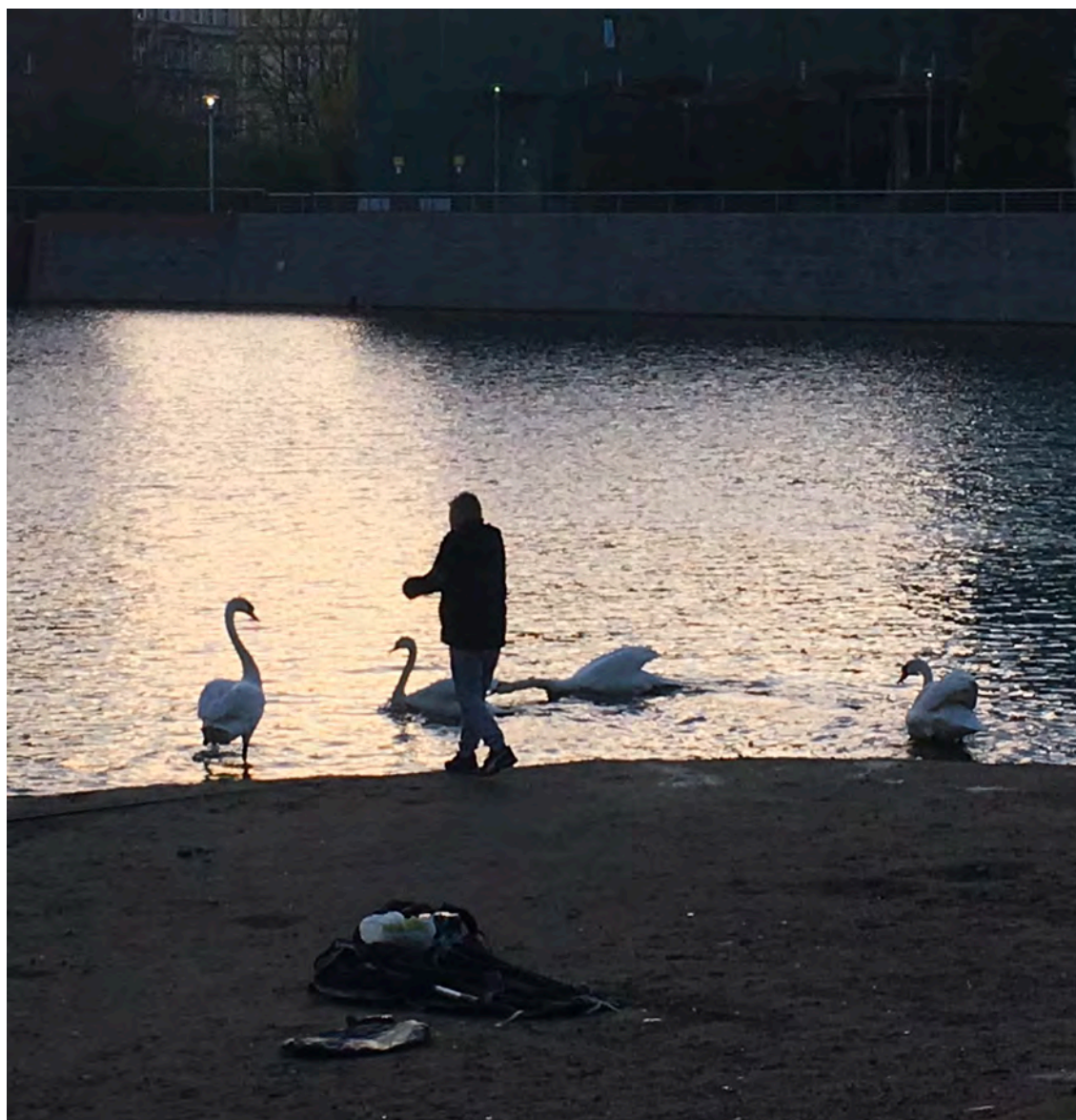
In the alleyway near Südkreuz, I walked by a tall building that was molting its skin in the late winter. Among the debris, I saw a black book leaned against the side of building. It was the book that my uncle (dead now) used to carry. The book was missing the travel phrases in every language as I remembered. I opened it to find, instead, a collection of fragments that appeared as lost poetic renderings of a dreamy epoch. I was able to recognize the flicker immediately. The lines weaved to construct mental and corporeal sensations of the city. It read as follows:

*Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples.  
I am a rose of Sharon,  
a lily growing in the valley.*

*Why indeed, should I be a wanderer?  
And our couch is green, the beams of our house are cedars  
and our rafters are cypresses.*

*I am a rose of Sharon,  
a lily growing in the valley.*

*Little foxes have been devouring the vineyards already in bloom.  
I will rise now, and go about the city on the streets and highways.*







## LAMINA

There are four ways of describing the new city. The city is measured in laminas, eroding from the surface layer. As time passes, a man is left standing slightly lower than in previous years. The laminas that line his spine make him frigid in the cold. The metal interrupts the humanness of his curvature and eventually the cold machinery morphs his spine into an arc. Like a parabola, his fingers are stationed inside the sedimentary rocks. The man fits into this arc quite effortlessly; his face pointed toward the city floor. He drags his nose and forehead across the rugged earth, which is littered with letters of an alphabet. The body of letters swarm around his open mouth, forcing him to choke on the plastic points and curves. These letters carve a path for the untuned definitions that may come forth and give voice to the city's structure.

SONNET 12 : *BORDER*  
*after Ron Silliman*

I see the city from the border  
most clearly. As I tiptoe the line, fragile and  
asperous, it threatens to topple me off,  
out of the city.

The sculpture in the center  
weeps down silence like water,  
only quicker. I lay myself down  
to bathe in it.

Deluged, the coming of day  
is quite quick in its taking of me. Little bugs  
nibble at my feet to invite me  
to remember the walkways—

those that lead to the border form the city into a web.  
Weird tributaries. Spurting from outside in.

### THREE SHORT ESSAYS ON LANDWEHR KANAL



1

On the canal, I consider everything. I nestle into the grand trajectory with a flaccid ease. The quality of the space, its breeching of the universal and specific, quite pleases me. In the late spring, I revel in the coarse presence of personal past and historical past; how these two find me in a contemporary moment.

2

The woman across the bridge's right hand is swaddled by a mechanical contraption. It swallows her boneless fingers and stretches half way up her forearm, ridding her from a fleshy existence and pinning her to the pulse of machine.

I long to be metal. When I am alone, I pluck out the smaller bones from the forearm and feet and replace them with pieces of thick wire. Tepid is the extraction of my bones. I get a good grip on the tip of each bone and it slips, wet, out of the hole in my skin. My right forearm and foot are now almost totally mechanized. These limbs sag under pressure, appearing limp. The wires are malleable and so, holding a large bag on my right arm has become nearly impossible. I wobble around equipped with an infrastructure that is inconceivable and indestructible. This is the funny secret I do not share. That my limbs seem flaccid is a joke.



A VOICE:

The grandfather clock in the living room chimed this morning but I haven't heard it since then. I heard the door open in the evening, but I couldn't figure what time it was. A man entered. He told me he came to fix the clock but, in my confusion, I thought it would be better if I headed to bed.

WISH-IMAGE

*I waited for the flame, the passage from eye to world.*

— Rosmarie Waldrop

Finally we found the fodder.

We fed it to the fire like flint.

We let the fire expire only after it had consumed

the furniture in the living room,

noting the way it glazed over the difference

in states of perish. I could no longer remember

the moment of departure.

Now we stand within a condensed presence

that is thick and brown in the air. I light another match;

it flickers

the brown moment into the present,

though the smog fattily

lingers

until the old prints on the wall escape into fodder too.

SONNET 13 : *MAPS*

There are maps  
written on the buildings.  
The lines, appearing like  
webs or quickly penned marks,

lead me to sites of the  
the building's memory.  
These sites are images or  
impressions of gifts

that someone received.  
They take up space in the  
windows,       boarded over.  
I followed one line to the image

of a man blithering    about a woman who moved very quickly.  
He didn't see her for long    before she left.



ALLEY

Sedge of bitterns cause staid  
in passing between street lamps.

Bird eyes beat like a quick drum in alleyways and  
the little rat brother leaps over a heap of crumbs,

black wasps surround: a swatch of rupture  
in Berlin winter.



A VOICE:

Living in any place, it becomes clear that occupied space is preoccupied with fragility. The borders are locked in a way that makes them very easy to blow over in the wind.



SONNET 14 : *DOCUMENT*

A trip, now marred, occurs only in documentation:

The film bears its flaws,  
    unsure of how birds take the winter.  
The bird looks down and

sees her feathers have been  
weathered and the roll jitters.  
    The negatives spark and      trip  
    into a new shot: I see on the projector

the highest spire in the world from Alexanderplatz.  
    The metal tip quivers into flames, leaking down onto the body of the  
        tower, shivering like a candle.  
    The bird trembles, follows the fire.

She shoots upward,  
    feathers weathered in a trail of ash.

## THRESHOLD

Most days, I stay behind the line that separates the city from water, but there is a chance that tomorrow, I will step over. I am a small rat and I fester with my brothers under the man's feet at the kebab shop. I dig myself a hole in the planter and do not make room for the blooming roses. I find the city itself to be a passageway. This is rather deceiving and difficult to navigate as there are not many places for me to scurry and hide. Dangerous, even. When I have a wound on my small arm, I lick it clean as I do not wish for it to become infected. My brothers have had their own wounds become infected, and the skin around the wound becomes raw and disturbed. Some of my brothers are larger than I am, but I have very strong arms and I know how to locate sources of intake. It does not take a considerable sum to make me full. That being said, I do eat when I can. In the city, I am a stranger because I exist everywhere but am negotiating from an outside realm. If I slip into the water, and if no man sees me, perhaps I could reset this distance. I would like to find a closeness, with regards to opening up a new and eternal realm. Death by water or, perhaps, life at sea.

SONNET : *FINAL*

I carry with me  
this  
memorial. I have  
embedded it in gravel.

Images take up space  
on the way to the center.  
It's all I see,  
weeping when the dancer falls.

I take the bus home,  
scribble maps, lay out  
the workings for that piece  
with the bird, the dreams, maybe

magic. I carry with me  
this thick convolution,  
this sonnet.

## TRANSIT

Father writes two haikus from out the window of the train.  
The song of the train makes for gaps in time  
in the otherwise undisturbed countryside.  
My father, quite drunk as it becomes evening,  
has finally finished with the haikus.  
In the way that they inscribe a particular moment  
into a new one, they are most beautiful.  
The poems breathe the new moment  
that my father and I do not have.  
I consider the transit while my father mulls  
about the cabin, airily regarding the particulars  
out the window. We have made this trip for years  
in such great intervals that we often forget the details.  
I see them remembered in the last line of his poem.  
His assigning memory to the countryside  
proves futile as we step onto the platform.

I climbed the mountains in Sierra Nevada with my father  
before he was too old. We arrived at the peak, thinking nothing  
of the transit, as we'd be there for two nights  
camping up by the watering hole  
before we even had to think about climbing back down.

