

S/W O R D



S/4: SUMMER 2014

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Introduction

When we say sword swallower
we've no doubt that these words
will come back
up
to bite us
to haunt us

Crafting, building, making, doing, tasting, mending
Occulting, haunting, stinging. Word-maker.
An alchemist blending earth and fire, cutting through a forest.
Sewing an argyle pattern into grey cloth, doodling a swirly-swirl on the margins.
Reaping, dragging, pulling, ripping.

Determinism floats along the surface, never really sinks
in
stead gives way to de
-termination
(accented or impeded the,
othered of,
etc.)
Is there in all this the flesh?

An astrologer with a ringed eye finding and knowing.
Sneaking between the quires, hoarding a letter here or there.
Using, marking, freeing, constructing.
Searching for the elixir of life.

one notes these things
so as not to forget
not to forget that's wet
to see and not forget
is that it yet?
to know no forgetting

Christopher Mulrooney

naturally

that is to say falling

in orbit

eighteen thousand miles you know an hour easy

so that you shoot across the sky

a meteor

Christopher Mulrooney

God of Trees

art is a perfect

dissection

**intertwined
intertwining**

conscious unconscious

***unless otherwise indicated, the translations are the author's.**

Bell

of

the dissimilar

it is the one thing

implies

perception

in

language

*The grammarian's distinction between metaphor and simile is unnecessary and will not be retained in this book.

beautiful flower
destroyed

a beautiful woman

flowers and women art sick worms and ill-
nesses in dreams in dreams

of waking

formation the woman is a rose
sick flower

the sick woman

becomes the Virgin Mary

the rose—is conscious

is deeper than that

† Names for women often denote flowers, of course.

in fused
drawings

beauty

itself oscillates

and the mind

emerges

remember

Let us

an almost perfect

sence

the woman
is felt

also fades
presence is felt it's ab-

she is there as a rose

after the flowers

the woman named

arms of
red cloth

in a

bed of crimson joy

night

the invisible

could
appear

opening into
a new object

a sequence of
more and more doors

**people
music**

was ready

Everything

harmoniously

poetic
scientific

and

language

they do not co-exist with but

manifest
meanings

the atmospheric

orgies of

stars

and
lighted temples

the colored spots

of his mind

clouds, pebbles, eyes, embers, holes in ceilings

diamonds, jewels,

reject the reality of stars

to add beauty to
the firmament

the light
of two live wires

thought acquires
stone walls

make a cage

of

the desert air

underocean
sweetness

the ocean's
desert

says that A is like B

signifying nothing....

There is no answer

IN DREAMS

**transformed
into forms**

into concrete, tangible symbols

weather
endless (infinite)

a change in the
singing

(life)

bells of

death

sound

the image of
approaching
sleep

the poison tree;

--the origin

of abstract beauty

look at flowers or at the clouds

and believe

them

Gray Tolhurst

poem

How do you say, I like something, you say, I die in it, like how I die in chocolate, die in hanging up the laundry on the roof to dry, die in the wind that whips around it, every stiff-socked hour, every undershirt a vow, die yawning in the morning, die in the made bed smoothing its sheets down, in the kitchen making cookies, in the radio on, in the idiom itself, the wait, the mouth that tooth down chocolate chips, and crumbling at the corners, saying so good, saying cookies, and I die in it.

Maria Flaccavento

ARTIST STATEMENT #65

The sky is enveloped, suffocated even, by an unearthly hue, which must necessarily be the case, since the sky is not the earth, nor would ever desire such a stifling status as that of gravity-squashed matter hanging in the freezing [there is hope, after all, in this chosen status of *becoming*, in contrast to the finality of the alternative, *frozen*, that is, *being* with a small *b*] wasteland. The women understand this instinctively. No, the sky is, and ever shall be, *unearthly*, true, & *thank the Lord for small favors...*

Then there is the other side of the debate, which states, and I paraphrase: *the only fate worse than that of Atlas shouldering the sky is that of the sky itself, disgraced by its public vulnerability*. To be, and yet to be nothing, still, one can argue that this, at least, is something to talk about. The women need their conversation pieces under the heat lamps. Without this dependable reserve of life preservers, the journey from shipwreck to desolate Oceania with its spotted mounds of dirt would be truly unbearable. *We try to accommodate a diverse range of sensibilities, & Lord knows it isn't always easy...*

Which side is correct, or even which is which, is a matter of disambiguation for another day. Today the long shadows imply other concerns. The painterly tone of quiet contemplation suffused with a hint of *memento mori*, stalled out of the gates, will have to wait until another day; the writer feels that today the words have regained the upper hand, yet he knows that a good general is never put off by a few minor, strategic withdrawals. The master plan may even require them as periodic sacrifices to a god I shudder to compose even a single sentence in reference to, as I put little store in entities the marvelousness of whom does not even warrant a capital letter at the beginning of their designators...

The women sit under surrogate suns, their frizzes condemned to sizzle, their sons to wait & play...

James Bradley

ARTIST STATEMENT #77

The eye approaches!

Preparations are made on all sides as a cyclone as big as the world threatens to touch its big toe to the small of our catastrophically relaxed backs. The shock of cold, though tolerable once experienced, seems desperately unbearable as the anticipation mounts, mocking us with its lighthearted melodies and paltry song-and-dance numbers staged amateurishly by evening newscasters and other officially sanctioned government spokespersons and entertainers. Whether their aim is to keep the *calm* or sew subtle seeds of panic I feel unqualified to say. Once, about two years ago, the street on which I had secured quarters was completely rearranged by one of these mad looters, these unbidden busybodies, but who has the wherewithal to fuss over something so trivial as a simple redecoration of ones living environment when, at any given moment, there are inevitably more pressing matters which demand our undivided attention?

No, the wake is inconsequential next to the sublime feelings which the eye awakens!

I am seated in what is known as the Burmese style, with both feet tucked securely somewhere between the knees (picture that if you're able), and in this cozy nest of my lower appendages sits a purring cat, my miniature muse. As wind chimes set the stage in clangs and cascading chimes, I feel such a sense of deep and penetrating *calm* that I hesitate even to mention that the lights have suddenly gone out, the electricity has fled for the time being, but what matters this minor turn of events save that I expect to receive no further diversion from the evening news pantomime, lackluster opening act, derivative and predictable as it invariably is?

(Ah the ambiguity of the written word, leaving hapless readers to fend for themselves when it comes to envisioning with precision a credible scene, a meager allotment of imagination the only thing separating these readers from that divine bewilderment of incoherence which all writers simultaneously dread and court!)

My computer has, I estimate, at least another six hours of battery life remaining before it fails me, at which point I shall turn to pen and notebook in a soothingly lucent bath of bubbling candle light! It really is too delightful, this waiting in the

wings for the eye to take up the role it was born to play, never blinking, never batting an eyelash, never for an instant threatening to disappoint its adoring public! Indeed, to venerate the eye is to take refuge in the most reliable of expectations; *a sure bet!*

All critics are bound to agree, lest they imperil the very credentials which have elevated them to the crucial position with which to see and, above all, to be perceived! If they are to stand together on naught else, all critics must surely concede that in this privileged, exceptional instance, there is no place for dissension, not a wink of wiggle room for opposition nor conscientious objection of any sort. It is the cyclone that unites, and it is the critics that, rising to the call of the written word, must toil altruistically to create the conditions conducive to an unlikely unity springing from the infinite diversity of a nation, strike that, *an entire world*, of wonder-struck windows to the soul, positioned at as many angles in relation to one another as there are grains of sand 'neath the Ganges!

The eye approaches!

James Bradley

ARTIST STATEMENT #100:

Galactic Alignment

In relation to a fixed date in the future, time, from the subjective standpoint, will always appear to accelerate exponentially as the designated zero hour approaches, making great leaps a year long, and then six months, then a month, a week, a day; the spiral tightens, the calendar loses all perspective, and suddenly it is over.

An uncharacteristically fierce wind combs the boulevards today, lifting children like lice, chipping away at the old, concrete structures one crumb at a time; in no time at all a grey desert of concrete dunes is formed in this manner.

Fatigue, a longing for the womb, a will-to-nothingness, all that, is there, *somewhere*, but where? In what nothingness, in what pitiful hovel, does this will take shelter from the blinding overabundance of existence which is everywhere without exception?

The seconds divide themselves indefinitely so as to avoid passing without leaving some indelible mark, indeed, so as to avoid passing at all. Call it a skill of the habitual, one acquired without any real effort.

The ancient amoebas of the causal sequence, the timeless asexual specks, are making great haste to decelerate, as far as their powers are capable, the slip of time, desiring each second to be precisely twice as long as its predecessor.

Consciousness is chained to this sequence and therefore sees instead, with the unflinching fidelity of the serf to his lord's fistful of dirt and the poverty of beets and turnips it turns out in a good season, a steady shortening of the moments which induces the sensation of being hurled into a vortex of stars.

There are theories, yes. They are not *actually* stars; that is simply a formality of speech with at least some small pretension to intelligibility for the discursive mind to latch upon. A longer life, greater density of experience or eventfulness, or some literal, sucking vortex which can be grasped with the acute capacity for terror which many have called *free will*?

Fatigue, a flimsy alibi.

James Bradley

The Point at which You Separate from the Poem

The nonsense of
Music is the happiness
Of the body

Is the fugue state
Of language

I write this in cursive
All over the page
Then set it on fire

It writhes & contorts

Don't think of this
As the point
 At which you
 Separate
From the poem

Raymond Farr

Oshkosh

Snow is one type of surface I imagine
sinking into Also falling off

a cliff in the Porcupines
lush on raspberry Miller

Deers tongue A butcher
shucks phalanx

*

The window is pain

blindfolded
tone-deaf
ajar

Creatures consume tequila
and Listerine inside Super-8

I braid You
call me back We plant
precarious bean field

Boona Daroom

Waved Heat

Fears bolden whine
at Waffle House

Seagrams flow The room
looks like Forever

just trying to ignore
an elephant

Church bells toll Cotton
scythes wave-like porn queens

under blue tarps
hands *dirty*

Boona Daroom

EXT. EARTH

The air in the medical bay was especially still.

The head surgeon performed at a speed that suggested he moonlighted as a time machine operator, but even at eighteen thousand incisions per minute, his slender piano fingers could not create a breeze.

I approached a humanoid that I had not seen in years. I presumed that he had been absorbed in a black hole. My left optical sensor, being practically useless, transformed his face into a blurred and pixelated mess.. I recognized him by the color of his sparkling red hair: a supernova that resembled a cosmic bong or a wood burning stove in orbit.

Relative to our galaxy, the humanoid was very small and only occupied five feet and nine inches of vertical space.

Compared to me, he was not as small and implied significance. The humanoid greeted me with such vigorous life that I felt the sun pressing against the earth.

The head surgeon stood by the operating table and stared. His expressionless face studied me, then lingered for twelve billion years like a star that burnt out.

Then he let go.

Being that close, I could see the humanoid's face.
His features shattered like glass.
Mucus ran down his body to form a dry, yellowed cocoon.
I wanted to slice the husk off with the bladed side of an asteroid.

The humanoid's bloodshot eyes closed and planets started to collide with his tears.

There went Pluto.

The head surgeon was from an auxiliary exoplanet. At last inspection, the region served one occupant. The Bureau has the outpost registered under the name "Bliss."

There was no need for head surgeons.

The only sound in the medical bay was the heavy bellows of patients sighing. I thought I heard praying, but it was only the door closing.

On Earth, there was too little space to breath. On my exact coordinates, there was the end of something wonderful.It was not enough.

There went Jupiter.

There went Planet X.

There went Kepler-10b.

The end was not exciting enough.
It was too far away.

I brought this planet closer
and closer

and closer

and closer

until it was more than a possibility.

For half a moment, the head surgeon raised an eyebrow.

I attempted to steal the stars from the sky,
but could not,
because one hand wasn't magic and the other was encased in meteorite.

Mitchell Garrard

Contributors

Christopher Mulrooney has recently written two books, *symphony* (The Moon Publishing & Printing), and *jamboree* (Turf Lane Press, forthcoming).

Gray Tolhurst is an artist/writer based in San Francisco. He is co-founder of Harmonium Press with Rickey Lee Bauman (www.harmoniumpress.com) and publishes a biannual magazine. His artwork can be seen at www.graytolhurst.com.

Maria Flaccavento is a poet from southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee. She is currently pursuing an MFA at the University of California San Diego. Her work can be found in the *Apiary*, *Bedfellows*, *The Fanzine*, *Madcap Review*, and online.

James Bradley's poetry recently appeared in *Caliban Online* Issue #12. He is primarily a visual artist, and some of his work can be found at http://registry.whitecolumns.org/view_artist.php?artist=11157. He received his MFA from the California College of the Arts in 2009. He currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

Raymond Farr is author of numerous books in print, including *Starched*, *DRUNKER/holding ember*, *Rien Ici*, *A Depot of People Turned Accentual*, *Writing What For? across the Mourning Sky*, and *There Is Something Missing in the Whole Transaction between Us* from Blue & Yellow Dog Press, as well as *Ecstatic/.of facts* (Otoliths 2011). He is editor of Blue & Yellow Dog (<http://blueyellowdog.weebly.com>).

Boona Daroom's work has appeared in *LIT*, *SOFTBLOW*, *My Name is Mud*, among other places. He lives in Brooklyn.

Mitchell Garrard's poems have recently appeared or are forthcoming in *baldhip magazine*, *experiential-experimental-literature*, *Futures Trading*, *Right Hand Pointing* and *Uut Poetry*. He is from Seattle, WA, where he spends most of his time writing and avoiding the rain.