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Holy Fool

Sunglasses, big lipstick,
protected by vectors
she doesn't understand.
Sugarless gum.
Same mistake over and over--
assuming she'll fit in;
her intentions are good.
The book says: Often
what's taken for snobbery
is fear, a self-conscious discomfort.
She never sees it coming--
the resentment, envy, sheer hatred
of her self-absorption, lack of guile.
She knows she leads a charmed life,
like Macbeth,
gliding on the frozen surface of this world,
pirouettes through after-dinner streets.
What she can bear about herself--
the intent to get through
without kowtow or compromise.
Yet, not even she
can walk a mile in her heels.

Identification

I was not prepared
to sit alone, in the waiting room
that looked out on the river.
I'd come from work, downtown,
on the subway at rush hour.
The night moved in, not dark yet,
boats with their running lights on.
A quiet nurse said it was after hours,
then led me through a corridor,
down a flight of ringing metal stairs
to the empty basement.
There she left me standing
while she retrieved a gurney
with a covered, sheeted figure.
Later, I cried on the First Avenue bus
at the thought of myself
afraid to touch you;
your brown eyes still open,
(which I always thought were blue)
not staring at anything,
your mouth half closed.
The nurse had whispered, *I'll be back.*
Don't leave me here,
I'd tried to say,
alone with this ghost.

The Changeling

The excuse given for a deformed,
or ugly child.
The real one must have been stolen at night
by gypsies come through the window,
or exchanged in the maternity ward,
by a nurse paid by other parents.
For want of anything else,
they must keep the ungainly creature,
while waiting
for the return of the real daughter.
In the meantime, she grows up,
ignored and untended,
to become beautiful and accomplished,
and never questions how she could have
such repulsive, troll-like parents.

The Here And Now

She spends money on things she doesn't need—
books she'll never read, but which are good to have,
paintings of nothing but shapes and color,
music whose effect is inexplicable,
trips abroad she doesn't necessarily have to take.
Should she stay home instead, and immerse herself
in the great indifference? Pay tolls
on the turnpike of diminishing expectations?
Take a place in the endless queue of weariness,
apathy, and boredom?
O, reason not the need. She is for the here and now.
Put it off, wait to retire, calculate the interest accrued
in the next world, and she will be passed over
by the angel of redemption in this world,
because there is no angel, no redemption,
and no excuse.
Nor is there time for mediocrity, to become lost
in conversation—so much whistling in the dark.
She will be used up, if she lets herself be so—most do.
Too timid to speak, she will always be raising her finger
for attention, waiting to be heard.
She will be ruled by everyone but herself,
and she will waste her life
when it is the only thing she has.

January Thaw

The scant snow cover disappeared,
pond unable to freeze,
half the world is visible
as I chainsaw and split wood
behind the house,
on this Pennsylvania hilltop.
Nearby, my older son
kneels before the barn
repairing a motorcycle.
We'll both stack
when I am done.
I'll go inside first
to make lunch,
and sit by the back window
anticipating spring.
Afterwards, I'll dream
of being on the water,
and search online
a decent price
for lifejackets.

-

He is looking for the woman
who will save his life.
In the evening, on the ridge
of the hills behind the house,
knowing she is not there,
he looks for her,
because it is a good place
to search before dark.
He is also looking for the grey pocket stone
with the embedded fire,
gleaming points of star.
He has heard it was found there once,
surrounded by a pattern of arrowheads
all pointing inward.
He has always been looking
for the understanding which surpasses itself,
though he admits he's never been quite sure
what that means.
In the past he would have settled for
simple acknowledgement—
but things have changed and now he wants more.
He suspects he will never find any of these -
but looking is an all-encompassing pastime.

When I Lost My Love

When I lost my love,
I took out my boat
and rowed upon the lake,
the supple water,
day after day in summer.
I'd decided to become part
of the landscape,
the way objects gradually
lose their details
in successive Cezanne abstracts.
My skin and nerves,
my breathing, my bones,
all eventually left me.
Like paper after fire,
touch me and I would disintegrate.
I disbursed myself to the workings
of the water,
and to the breeze over the water,
as the waxwing
skims the surface
feeding on flies and insects,
and I fell in love with the arc,
the swoop, the graceful
leaning in to the curve.

The Celebrity Actress Inquires Into Her Ancestry

She searches for the great grandfather murdered
in 1910, and has to go to Italy,
where an historian has agreed to meet her at the café
before which it actually happened.
Resisting the explanations, she offers excuses--
he couldn't have been so craven,
nor carried a knife in the top of his boot.
During subsequent inquiries, she wears an assortment
of colorful, becoming dresses,
yet behind sunglasses is unrecognizable.
The landscape entralls,
hill towns up against the blue Mediterranean,
small boats, paint peeling, tied along esplanades;
winding, narrow streets through which
only miniscule European cars can squeeze.
One false document indicates he wasn't murdered at all,
but died of an illness never specified.
Finally dissatisfied, she comes home with some old photographs;
family members stiff in Victorian sepia.
She has also discovered a new cousin
who looks like her,
the resemblance being uncanny.

After Four Days Of Snow

The sky begins to clear five miles distant,
over the ridge where Peter's Transmissions
was destroyed by last year's tornado.
I remember driving by the morning after
and seeing Peter in black rubber boots
climbing through the concrete block rubble.
I've never known him, and heard
he was curt and too expensive,
but I felt for him anyway.
He's since rebuilt--
a long rectangular red-metal shed.
It's tin roof glistens
on mornings when there's sun.
Just beyond the shop,
at the top of the ridge,
a communications ter,
disguised as a pinetree,
untouched by the tornado,
has only fooled a pair of nesting eagles.

Memento Mori

Always vain about her appearance,
she was unaware that the effects
of the recent deaths of two friends
had shown up in her face--
suspicious creases spreading through the cheeks,
shadowy webs beneath each wary eye.
It takes a lifetime, she thought,
to get to know yourself,
and by then it's too late.
On some mornings, she fakes blindness,
closes her eyes to make way along the hall,
feel for the coffee pot, the breakfast plates.

Reaction To An E-Mail From A Former Student

She had such problems
late-night office revelations
resplendent in the flouncy
white dress she bought
specially for the twilight reading
the heart cries out
to the ones who need so much
small broken shapeless
barely aware of it
abused by the long hours
of the afternoon
the tediousness of evening
these are the ones with the inkling
the kernel and seed
the potential to fly away

Curved Space

She has already upbraided him
for the race-baiting incident,
and he is afraid to close his eyes,
for what he imagines
is far worse than what he can see.
The difficulties of the future
appear small apples,
mere nuts and bolts of the undercarriage,
as the bus awaits the earliest passengers,
the morning cold and grey,
streets strewn with last night's discarded,
blown-out umbrellas,
and puddles reminding the inhabitants
of the late floods when half the citizenry
was carried out to sea.
In the mind's eye, they can still
see them waving and hear the cries.

All Hell Broke Loose

There were times when we might have undertaken
the interminable project,
but we demurred knowing
we didn't have the intellectual rigor for it.
Instead, we escaped to the hotel,
dingy despite its reputation,
and dined downstairs, letting the talk
probe the distance between us,
our little in common.
Gradually, she revealed an admirable appreciation
for good wine in large quantities,
and once up in the room, all hell broke loose.
Later, she took the commuter to New Jersey,
and I the subway back to Queens,
both of us all the while savoring the details.
There was no presumption to her,
which I liked most.

She Pushed Over Dead Trees In The Woods

Said she was helping nature;
had been doing it since childhood,
having grown up solitary with her father
on an Idaho farm--
only small animals as playthings--
tamed chipmunks and robins,
two mallards named Francisco and Grace,
more dogs and cats that died than she wanted to remember.
Now in her comely twenties, she was still doing it,
couldn't get it out of her system.
Walk a leafy path in the forest with her,
and she'd make these constant side trips,
still had the eye for it. *There's one, be right back.*
She'd maneuver through the underbrush,
and soon there'd be a loud creaking
as she shoved hard and got a good sway going,
followed by a slow aching, a wrenching, lightning-like crack,
and the thudding smash to the forest floor.
With an expression of great satisfaction,
she'd come back, nosily slapping her hands
one against the other to get the dirt off,
as if applauding herself.

Caretaker

He keeps to the few rooms with heat.
The rest have been closed until spring.
As he goes out for wood,
for the second time that day,
five crows show up over the frozen pond
behind the house--
briefly,
the snow-covered landscape
takes on the look of a Brueghel painting.
One by one, the birds alight on the branches
of the oak nearest to the ice.
They appear to be watching him.
Thinking they are unusually quiet for crows,
he talks to them, but gets no response.
After a minute or two, they take off, heading west.
He senses something in this,
but knows it's not worth the time
trying to figure it out.
Back inside the house, his hands are cold,
fingertips numb as he types:
*When the wind blows hard, as it has all day,
these rooms are impossible to keep warm.*

New Orphan

The tourists on Duval took pictures
of your bearded dragon;
the python curled around your neck,
while father waited,
parrot on his shoulder,
in the background shadow
of a boutique awning.
A magician of sorts,
he substituted at school on Sugarloaf,
and guided sport fishermen
through the mangroves.
His trick was trying to make ends meet.
When mother took sick,
no doctors for her disease in the Keys,
the three of you moved to the interior wastelands
of New Jersey--far from the shore.
Father died first, catching you off guard,
as mother hung on, difficult,
becoming, in your words,
more of a bitch.
Her character and demeanor
the most obvious signs of deterioration,
you approached her as if crossing ice.
Before long, you were left alone
with a houseful of exotic pets
you had to sell off one by one,
a brokedown VW, and the fast-food job
that couldn't cover the rent.
You had meant to go to college,
but in the end were content
to scrounge the price
of a bus ticket south.

A Woman Of Reserve

She realized early she was not good
at going along to get along.
She could have used her beauty,
but that would have been unfair.
The distaste would have shown in her face,
and she has no talent for dumbing it down,
the empty talk--
so much whistling in the dark.
Mostly, she keeps her satisfactions to herself;
shares a few, like dancing,
but music, no matter how large the crowd,
you hear alone.

On Leaving The City

Your hand on the dashboard
to the left of the little saint,
bare knees beckoning touch me,
move up my skirt.
Before I can turn again,
my eyes on the road,
you strip off your clothes
to wrap yourself in the blue silk
Chinese scarf
I just bought for you
at the museum shop.

Years Later

Years later I ended up in that country--
Ain a house with my own well,
about which I'd heard stories,
but never had the guts
to peer with a flashlight
into that long, stone cistern.
I preferred the dead oak, grey and scraggly,
at the edge of the neighbor's pond--
its surface thick with algae because he didn't take care of it.
Once a week, I'd see him drive along the shore
on a three-wheeler, towing a cartful of refuse.
His daughter had disappeared.
Some said she'd run away--others weren't so sure.
I knew he liked to bury things,
and had watched him cover old stoves, cylinders,
pottery, and glass under a pile of dirt--
tamp it down with a shovel, then walk on it.
Crumpled over, he moved slowly with his head down,
and used the three-wheeler to retrieve the mail at the end
of a long driveway.
At night, I'd hear the buzz of a table saw from his workshop,
and look out and see the light.

European Poet

The TV has no channels,
the coffee cup no handle.
I know the first birds from their calls,
as they know me.
We stay mum when others awake.
My daughter gives me a look
after the empty birdcage,
and wants to know
what happened to the canary.
I've done my dirty dishes,
and walked the morning dog—
the tops of my shoes cut off
to air my aching feet.

Easter Sunday, 2012

Alone on the five miles
of Prompton Lake,
everyone else home for dinner,
I finally square my oars,
and take a breath,
shaken from the straining
against row after row of whitecaps
riled by a blustery wind.
In the sudden calm, envy arises
as I picture the composed John Biglin
on the Schuylkill,
red pirate bandana wrapped around his head,
painted in 1874 by Eakins--
who left a signature
scrawled on the wood splashbox
of Biglin's scull.

Hudson Crossing

Having just learned
that someone she knows
has been in a coma
with pneumonia for weeks,
and is not expected to recover -
for the first time, she can sense
how life has caught up with her.
Though she hasn't seen him
in eighteen years -
due to another woman -
she has attentively followed his career,
knows he still lives in Hudson Crossing,
and has always considered him a best friend.
She feels a great loss tonight
for all the things in this world
he will never have a chance
to name in his poetry.

Memorial Day

Black sox on the line,
rain holding off, catcher's mitt
in the grass,
he's proud of his ancestors,
recusants burned at the stake.
If he'd lived then, he says,
they'd have gotten him too.
Hands tied at the wrists,
chains round the iron post,
he wouldn't have given them,
he says, the satisfaction.
Eyes heavenward, he would have prayed
for those who piled on the fagots.
His wife too, he motions,
with her yellow kerchief
and walking stick.

The Tempest in Central Park

Impatient with the rain--
thick drops illuminated
in spotlight beams--
and ignoring the lightning--
the first strikes are mistaken
for special effects--
this audience isn't going anywhere.
Not until the sopping actors quit the stage,
do we reluctantly respond to pleas from the attendants,
rise from our seats, and gather in access tunnels,
huddle under ticket-counter overhangs,
or wait, sloppy packages wrapped in plastic,
beneath umbrellas and trees.
Carefully quaffed hairdos fall apart,
makeup runs, clothes soak the skin
revealing unusual varieties of underwear.
There's a certain release though, an exhilaration,
in no longer being able to maintain one's appearance--
most of us will never see each other again.
This is the price we pay for free tickets,
for standing in line half the day.
Ten minutes later and the storm has passed.
We return through ankle-deep pools to drenched seats--
the lovely young woman nearby suddenly smells rancid.
The play resumes, until a second burst of rain,
harder this time, and without lightning.
But, it's too late--we are so absorbed,
rapt by the fourth act, that no one will be dislodged this time.
The actors sense it, and decide what the hell,
it can't get any wetter.
At the finale, they do a jig, making sure to splash,
like little kids, through the deepest puddles on stage.

Trompe L'Oeil

From miles away, you can see
the line of giant white windmills,
each the length of an upended tractor trailer,
spread along the ridge of Strayhorn Mountain--
elevation 1,580 feet.

In the sun, framed by a clear blue sky,
there's something calm and miraculous
about their whirling, as they provide green energy
for up to 40,000 homes in Georgia and Florida,
nearly 1000 miles from here.

Yet, at first glimpse,
every time they come into view,
I mistake them for a long line of crosses,
and I think of the 6,000 slaves
crucified in 71 B.C. by Marcus Crassus
for taking part in the revolt led by
the gladiator Spartacus,
and left lining the cobble-stoned Appian Way,
as it runs south from Rome to Naples;
then turns east to Brindisi and the sea.

Comparison/Contrast

You can see from miles distant
the long line of giant white windmills,
each the length of an upended tractor trailer,
along the ridge of Waymart Mountain--
elevation 1280 feet.
In the sun, framed by a clear blue sky,
there's something calm and miraculous
about their whirling, as they provide green energy
for up to 40,000 homes in Georgia and Florida,
nearly 1000 miles away.
Yet, for some reason, each time I go by,
I can't help but think of the 6,0000 slaves
crucified by Marcus Crassus,
for taking part in the revolt led by
the gladiator Spartacus, in 71 B.C.,
and left lining the bucolic Appian Way,
as it ran south from Rome to Naples,
and then turned east to Brindisi and the sea.

Everything Happens To Me
(A Dramatic Monologue)

No it doesn't, I keep telling you,
and stop complaining--unimaginably horrible things
happen to lots of people in this world
(I won't go into it)--but not to you.
You're just feeling sorry for yourself,
and please shut that damn song off--
it's annoying and always makes you feel this way.
You should take the keys to the Mercedes,
drive to the mall, and buy yourself something.
You know that's guaranteed to improve your mood.
So what if the effect wears off once you get home
and you spread, say, the new dress out on the bed,
and realize you have absolutely nothing to go with it.
Instead of getting into a blue funk,
just go shopping again tomorrow--
find some shoes and accessories to complete the outfit.
If you keep that up long enough, you won't
have a single reason to complain--because you'll be dead,
and will never need anything else again.
I get tired of repeating myself--you're a beautiful woman;
don't spend time on this petty whining;
these things are not that important--
yet I know I'm wasting my breath;
it all goes right over your head.

The Necessary Separation

She knows to take this waking slow,
resist the invisible filaments,
tendrils reaching out each morning
to draw her from herself.
Basket of green walnuts at her feet,
she spreads her legs
as the cat jumps from her lap;
stretches while the senses extend.
Leaves beyond the railing
the size of kites, of elephant ears--
she rocks back, porch boards creak reassurance,
and she inhales the extravagant release of obligation;
the realization of false security sent packing.
Workers arrive one by one--
the new path, under construction,
will not be visible from the door,
the way the old one is.
Her only regret,
having been raised on the edge of the sea,
is the absence of the murmur of waves,
the loss of dreams with shorebirds rising,
the rhythm of the tides
no longer moving through her.

The Neighbor Has Died

The neighbor has died,
the evil one, who threatened
to sue everyone who lived near him.
He'd sit at his window with a camera,
trying to catch us in an act he could take to court.
Over the years, as he shrank and became bent over,
anger and hatred consumed him;
arthritis locked his hands into claws.
He thought he had all the answers,
but was nonplussed by the onset of his own disease.
He used to look like Harry Dean Stanton,
and we'd assumed he was a good man,
until he lost his license to DUIs,
and had to drive a lawn tractor
to reach the package store in town.
Even his wife finally left him--
for a machinist down the road.
When his long-gone offspring returned for the services,
they couldn't understand why no one showed up,
except for the neighborhood gossip.

Episode

She'll never forget
looking the wrong way,
on that grey morning,
the smell of rain coming in,
when he snatched her
from the path
of a London taxi
speeding around
the traffic circle.
Its fender had grazed
more than her skirt,
which she raised
to find a bruise on her thigh.
He led her to a bench
so she could stop shaking,
catch her breath,
and gather herself
You saved my life,
she gasped--
only for him
to abandon her
weeks later
in Madrid

Night Falls

Night falls like the painter off a ladder,
like the paint from the boards,
the way you trip over a dropcloth
in the unfinished room,
the wallpaper peeling
once the hangers have gone.
Night falls like unpredictable rain,
no longer abused
by the long hours of the afternoon,
the tediousness of evening,
like the muffled laughter
at trying to open
the wrong door in the dark.
Night falls in the middle of day,
the picnic lightning
picking you off one by one,
like memory as you age,
the annoyance at those
who constantly remind you
of what you have forgotten.

Special Forces

As if chosen at random
for this ill-defined mission--
miles between houses, isolation,
blank-faced waves
from drivers you don't recognize--
now that the cold ends,
you open up rooms unused since fall,
settle into chairs at tables
before books and documents
unfolded, open for resumed reading.
no longer will you spend nights
before the dark wood stove,
healing from the botched operation,
blanket on knees,
weather more palpable than consciousness,
the rocker's empty creak,
the northern light inducing blindness,
the ache of the blue night-sky whirr,
the possibility of escape
not an option.

Shelley Consumed

They argued over who
would keep his heart--
all that remained of the pyre.
Unlike in the idealized painting
of 67 years later,
the flesh of the face and hands
had been eaten away
during the week the corpse
had spent in the water.
He'd been identified
by the folded volume of Keats in his pocket.
Claiming emotional exhaustion,
Hunt never set foot on the beach,
but stayed wrapped in his cloak
in the nearby carriage.
Byron, having gone swimming
to avoid the burning stench,
had turned and watched from the middle of the cove.
Later, he wrote of the isolate scene
and of the *singular appearance the salt
and frankincense gave to the flame.*
Never realizing it was not his heart,
but the liver, most likely,
Mary won the argument.

Maddy

She races past the house,
pre-teen Mennonite,
on a giant, rusted Allis-Chalmers.
White, doily skull cap bobby-pinned
to the back of her head;
blue, lace-cuffed, calico dress to the ankles,
she's heading to her brothers
mowing the neighbor's hayfield down the road.
The youngest, with good clear eyes,
and the redness in her cheeks
all the sisters are known for,
thinking she's alone,
her stare fixed on the road ahead,
she leans forward, twists her mouth
into a snarl, hits the clutch, and downshifts
with the determination of an Indy-car
then quick, jerks back up, thrilled
at the loud backfire explosion.
She never sees me on my front porch,
book closed in my lap,
startled out of the delirium
brought on by the heady fragrance
released through the mowing.

The Netherlands

As I come down for breakfast this morning,
 before I'm completely awake,
 my significant other, who makes a habit
 of popping questions when I'm off guard,
 resumes last week's vacation talk by
 asking if I'd like to visit The Netherlands.
 My initial, groggy reaction, is--Isn't that where I've just come from?--
 though I don't say it--I try not to say anything before coffee.
 Then I'm tempted to ask--The country for old men, dark swamps and
 tundra you can only reach by ferry?--but I know better.
 I wonder how the locals there feel about visitors?
 The Netherlands must have been named strategically,
 as a way to convince strangers and potential invaders
 that you really wouldn't want to go so far out of the way
 to visit such a place.
 They certainly weren't named by real estate developers,
 nor a tourist board.
 Come to think of it, I don't know anyone
 who's ever been to The Netherlands and come back
 with snapshots, t-shirts, refrigerator magnets.
 As my head begins to clear, I sit down at the table,
 and want to explain how my geographical knowledge,
 beaten into to me by grade-school nuns,
 was so poor, for the longest time I confused The Netherlands
 with Belgium, and it took even longer to figure out
 just where Holland fits in, and who speaks Dutch.
 As I got older, I imagined The Netherlands as flat as a map,
 below sea level, tracts of soggy land separated
 by a system of dykes and canals,
 boys wearing noisy wooden clogs, giving the thumbs up,
 and girls dressed like little, midget women, half-buried
 under huge white sailboat hats.
 But, it's all too much, too early for me--before I can sort any of this out.
 As I pour my coffee, all I can mumble
 is that I loved Scarlett Johansson in 'The Girl With The Pearl Earring.'

The Canadian Boarder

We thought she was trying to hide her accent.
So quiet, demure.
The most we'd get was a "Pass the peas, please,"
or, "Mashed potatoes?" at dinner.
As soon as desert was done,
she'd grab her coat from the rack and be gone,
not returning till after midnight.
No one could figure out where she was off to.
The pool cue in a case seemed initially a clue,
but there was no billiard hall,
no private tables we knew of in town.
Of course, it was none of our business.
And she had her own key,
so she hardly disturbed us, at least those asleep,
when she'd quietly slip back in.
According to the proprietor, the air of an obscure religion
hung about her—which one, he couldn't tell.
We detected no visible source of income,
unless it came with the letter she received
every two weeks from a place way north
called Lodgepole Pines. It appeared to be
from a sister, by the name, or some female relation.
The men were all in love with her,
due to her reserve mostly, more than her looks.
The women read the detachment and evasive gaze
as aloof and standoffish.
At the extreme, whispering behind her back,
more than one of us surmised scandalous behavior.
Others simply resented her, and made no bones about it.

Acting Out The Hierarchy Of Needs Leads To Death By Mishap

At the hour of departure,
the enshrouded wharf,
alongside the weathered grey
clapboard, appeared deserted,
until the shapely leg, identified only
by a botched tattoo, disappeared
into the houseboat's ramshackle.
We'd set out for the peaceable kingdom,
hoping the grass would appear benign,
yet the fancy numbers dictated a change of venue.
She emerged from the dangerous clubhouse,
dancing bare at the edge the chemical spill,
then walking backwards under the weather
as she defected into the free clinic.
Things built up to the implosion of windmills,
which decimated miles of underground lodgepole pine.
Fortunately, by that point, we'd escaped the scary valley,
and were looking forward to quiet days in Cliché.

Redwings

What has happened to the redwings?
Suddenly, their absence is apparent.
How quiet and motionless this day has been--
the tips of the fenceposts vacant,
no activity at the shore of the pond,
among the reeds and cattails, across its surface.
How they filled spring and summer
with flow and easy movement, mating and nesting
Already, I miss the complexity of their calls,
their warnings about coming too close.
Even the bullfrogs, usual tubas bursting
through the slow adagio of the evening,
have gone silent, seeming to mourn the departure,
not wishing to fill the empty spaces left behind.

Big City Blues

As part of the deal,
she mimes her songs
in a window on lower Broadway.
A digital scroll at her feet
unfolds the lyrics.
Standstill traffic, over-crowded sidewalks,
half humanity--bad outfits, bewildered kids--
shuffles by and stares,
as if she's the menagerie.
Detecting the scent of cadaverine,
at the end of the block, a vulture
circles the old shirt factory.
On days like this, sensitive as a bad tooth,
she wants to crawl out of her skin,
the way a snake leaves behind
a crinkled, dry exfoliation.
And last night's bad dream--
apartment broken into;
heartbreaking argument
in the Brooklyn subway--
had made waking such a pleasure.

The Way Love Escalates

I know she's implanted
a tracking device within me.
It happened one night
during drunken sex--
a not unpleasant sensation.
I thought she was just taking things further,
going to some new extreme.
Now, using satellite maps, Google Earth,
she follows me everywhere.
Her zooming in through distant space
sets off a tingling,
not dissimilar from-the feel
of first meeting her.
Consulting physicians say
they can find nothing.
I say we're dealing with
the outer edges of the physical.
Her subtlety is beyond them.
Anyway, I'm not sure
I want them to find it.
While I'm aware of the tradeoff--
it affords me a certain comfort.
So far, she's been all visual,
though I suspect, as her technology improves,
things will soon escalate
to an even deeper intimacy,
where she'll be able to overhear
my every secret word--
eventually, my thoughts, my desires.

Equivocation

The hardware-store clerk dismisses
my request for smoke bombs.
I should use poison instead--
to get the job done right.
Thanking him, I back away, and say I'll think about it.
Even though one hissed at me yesterday
for coming too close, I don't want to kill them--
just for them to move on.
So, for now, I'll wait for my neighbor
to shoot them all--he's such a bad shot,
that could take years.
Recently, he informed me that drones the size of houseflies
have been developed by the government--
our every move is now under surveillance.
I conceded that the recently-installed countywide GPS
must be a key component to the scheme.
A landscaper, he's never respected me,
because I have no concept of cubic feet.
Most evenings, he'll sit on his back porch,
from which he drapes bunting on the Fourth of July,
and, mint julep in hand, takes in the view--
what he calls the *vistas*.
When one of the *perps* appears in his yard,
having crossed under the stone wall from my property,
he lifts the rifle leaning next to his rocker,
and gets off a shot or two.
Usually, I'm inside making dinner,
and the report startles and unnerves me.
I'll never get used to the violence of that sound.
Then I calm down, and take comfort
in the realization that it's only my neighbor
missing another groundhog.

The Book of Practical Numerology*(After Edward S. Curtis)*

The tribes use the photographs
to recreate tradition,
though some techniques
and materials have been lost.
The Elder complains
of the putrifaction of language.
Harry The Fish, commander of this tub,
signals no wish to go further.
He prods things along, while there's still time.
It takes two weeks to chop our way south.
At night, erudition paling, you dream of
the books you've never read,
while, your eyeballs dizzy
with the sight of her,
the two of you argue again.
Despite the Elder's advice,
dreams solve nothing.

She Spreads a Communicable Disease

In front of the library,
where the statue
of the sea-captain's wife,
anxious on the widow's walk,
has been removed for repair,
she stands motionless,
boasting on her iphone,
one hand weaving
invisible wires of sense.
*It was a simple job,
nothing your average mechanic
couldn't do, or an everyday surgeon.*
Behind the building,
waves slapping at the seawall
make hearing difficult.
*He said my pussy tastes like beer.
Another castaway,
I'll never see again.*
Those brooding bones
above her eye sockets.
*In the dark last knight—
web watched a house on piles
topple into the surf.*

Watertanks

Structures of silence.
Edward Hopper props.
Forgotten, still-water containers.
Built like barrels, wooden staves,
conical Chinese hats.
Superhero's cityscape view
above noir boulevards, dark cars'
hunched animal shapes.
Sidewalk men and women,
hats, gloves, heavy woolen coats,
wait on center islands,
subways underneath,
for iron black streetlights to change.
Snow insulates, muffles sound,
voices emerge, visible captions
in cold breath bubbles.

Mid-January Christmas Tree Makes Sound Of Its Own

Pine needles dead dry,
tiny, cascade trickle as you walk by.
Small, graduated, metal-bar
instrument imitates this.
You hold on long past
time to take it down--
perfect shape, size,
ornamentation apropos.
Mild as late March outside,
sun muscles through fog,
dim reflection on a polished car.
Through dawn muffle,
you nearly hear the eerie
night-creature screech,
tracks criss-crossing pasture
back and forth to springs,
where snow has melted,
green grass revealed.

Fog

Insular landscape,
circumscribed grey,
muffled snow and ice,
Mystery-thick shroud,
like freight-train
green tornado air.
Slow-moving car shadow,
ship in a congealed sea,
signal pleading for open water.
Its companion
torn apart by coyotes
one night last week,
the neighbor's dog
keeps barking
from its front lawn.