

An Overnight Nest

appeared like a package above the front porch.
I would think it best to avoid the porch light.
A back-up incubator, I guess, in case of intruder
or flighty mother, or a bald-eagle-like talon fight
where they're locked in, spinning, falling to earth.
The world at its worst when you're big eyes
and a wide open mouth, before you can fly.

I turned on the porch light to admire the architecture:
long, thick under-sticks for support, breadth,
then thinner sticks, a mix, a bowl of softer stuff.
I'm sure those blue strands were pulled off our carpet.
The world at its best when you're sitting soft,
squished between brother and sister, singing for
mother, who returns with a story, dinner on her breath.

Santa Monica

Photo by Bruce Davison

Taken from the top:

Sky hazy, like resting on a canopy bed
inside a mosquito net, hazy as a good dream.

Ocean sly in the afternoon breeze, sailboats
skipping in the swells and whitecaps, windy sheen
salting everything.

A wide sandy beach rendered narrow and clean.
Rows and rows of umbrellas, people, shady people,
sunny people.

Parking lot.
Rows and rows and rows of cars,
sun glare in each and every windshield.

At Sunset,
going home toward the oceanic city
in those cars, in the jam jar packed traffic.

Those cars, all windows rolled down, yet
glass enclosed, set up like swift tall ships

tonight performing like rowboats.

Jif

lunchtime 1979

They were happy downing Jif on white.
All around me an archipelago of easy.

Me: turkey bologna, lettuce, organic cheese
on holy wheat, two fat tomato slices dripping,
the whole thing bushy with alfalfa sprouts.
My sandwich a complete and tedious run-on,
but I was bred to endure the taunts, nicknames,
to stand dead center of the bull's eye, in a pink
health food store on Wilshire boulevard at eight,

waiting for someone big to see me, between
a machine full of oranges, squeezing, one by one,
the slightly sweet juice out of them, pure
terror, and another, brown, smeared somehow,
all over, separating the peanuts from their butter.

On Maui

My mother had a thing for danger,
hooting for locals bridge jumping,
then cascading down the Seven Pools
swimming, rock jumping to the next
until the foaming ocean spoke, stood up,
like she was from there, fresh and salty
from this very spot, pure see-through
honesty, a gentle push of mixed-up anger.

We'd go the other way back to Kehei,
despite the map showing a lack of road
and our compact car spent for gasoline.
It's too close not to try, she said, hooking
us in our perfect, thrilled skin with her magic
fish hook a headlight lighting on adventure.
We were light-headed with hunger like the car,
the Kaupo gap didn't look long on the map.

Here's how it went: first the pavement went,
and then the smooth dirt road, and then we
jostled with a dry riverbed, the jagged road
rose up over the ocean into a slant pile of dirt.
There, my mother made a divisive three-point-turn,
the hatchback hanging off, backed over the water.
I could see the ocean throwing itself on the rocks,
each wave a mother over a coffin. Down we went

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back down the road to Hana, not over the cliff,
though I would have followed her; she had made
these islands appear, pulling them up from the depths,
had slowed down the sun for three weeks each summer.
Her father had flown the Hump during the war, help from
India to China over the Himalayas and when we drove
up Haleakala to see sunrise I could tell she was thinking
of him, at twice that height, in a ragged plane full of supplies,

(On Maui cont'd, Pg 2, continue stanza)

seeing the earliest speck of light and being overjoyed.
When she stopped for gas, she laughed; we laughed after.
We try not to fear our parents, but they have seen both sides.
We ride with them; they take us on unfair, unbearable rides.

Los Angeles

-after *Metropolis* and *Urban Light* by Chris Burden

Master of conveyor belts of cars
lined up, side by side by side
going up and over, under and through.
Do you remember joyrides?

cruising oh so slow, eye to eye,
open windows down, full of pride,
eyeing friends and enemies alike
with a smile, white walls in stride.

Master of conveyor belts of cars,
heads or tails, white light or red,
coming or going. If someone is in your
way every day are you alive, or dead?

Cruising was a group thing, spy versus
spy, petals to have, and hold, to spread
around, bud to flower, now windows up.
It's the airtight commute we dread.

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Purveyor of endless sunshine.
The sharp, tight spotlight kind,
the palm-tree-skinny brand of light
is full-bodied wine, everyone in.

I can still smell citrus groves in spring:
taut lost lemons, late oranges behind
a forgotten sweetness in the air, unfair
warm war, hope and despair within.

Purveyor of endless sunshine.
And night after night of light overnight rain
that takes seconds, minutes to soak in,
a sprinkling of light rail trains,

(Los Angeles cont'd. Pg 2. New stanza)

a messy dusting of mass transit. People
need to be bunched up, carried, kept in mind
like fresh fruit, vegetables in a brown bag,
an empathy our city lost, is lost to find.