

## Notable Apocalypses

From “Ten Notable Apocalypses That (Obviously) Didn’t Happen” *Smithsonian Magazine*—

*An Assyrian clay tablet from around 2800 B.C.:*

*“Our Earth is degenerate in these later days; there are signs that the world is speedily coming to an end; bribery and corruption are common; children no longer obey their parents; every man wants to write a book and the end of the world is approaching.”*

Here I disagree with the *Smithsonian*,  
and side with logicians peevisish about *obviously*.  
At what speed does Apocalypse unravel, uncover, unveil—  
According to who’s sacred texts and time keeping?  
& who breathed a sigh of relief when the round calendar turned a page confirming

This obviously didn’t happen.  
& who grinned a knowing, condescending grin?  
*Look, see the rich irony: cranks are cranks; time proves them wrong again,*  
*and again.*  
Relax, unravel, unveil.

This obviously didn’t happen.  
The oil fields overlaid with farm fields bear no evidence of corruption.  
Our government is healthy and trustworthy, and so is everyone else’s,  
Especially Assyria. There is no apocalypse there—no Armageddon; no Megiddo.  
Children, post-revelation, have grown out of their phase of disobedience.

To call disobedience a problem, civil or not, means to occupy a certain perspective.  
One I question; and now I’ve flipped, I could repeat the phrase I hold in contention—  
An anaphoric hurtling  
remaking obvious.

There is great energy in repeating—in book-making.  
After all, what’s a disagreement between friends  
Speedily coming—how long to make; how long to unmake?

## available

I get confused about revolutionary and reactionary  
can antithesis be a matter of degree  
of supply and demand and the invisible hand

the more degrees there are out there  
the less valuable their earners are  
and the faster the oceans rise

would it be bold and brave to embrace  
the warm new globe  
to be embraced in stylish rhetoric

*—It only stands to reason  
the warming economies of profitable  
tourism of a new quality of life—*

or fight it off with our visible hands  
and our feet, genetically identical to those of nomads  
the hardest thing is seeing through

## rebranding the atom

what good is an assault on a history of urban planning  
or economic theory. what good is provoking no one,  
or calling attention to the orange-tagged and abandoned cars  
between here and Los Alamos, and the radio report that the city  
is paying a firm in Tennessee \$50,000 to be rebranded  
something, anything other than “The Atomic City”  
another history we’re done with, and Zinn is dead anyway.  
and I’m a well-adjusted person, generally happy  
orange-tagged and patiently awaiting removal  
or rebranding as anything other than  
the real purpose is to find footing, the traction  
in a crumbling, volcanic soil  
to push into an alternative future  
as a Paralegal, an Office Manager or College Administrator  
the real purpose is to make sense  
but only as an unintended consequence of another process  
to resist incentives and social norms  
to be a bride with a veil, reduced by symbolism and tradition  
and repetition, this obviously didn’t happen  
is it possible to say, *I don’t subscribe to cable* without great vanity

## **over 33,000 acres**

the canyons here carve through the expulsion of a great volcano  
the mesas are loose gravel and ash, your leg can posthole  
as if trudging through deep snow, the scents of juniper and sage

wind carries harsh dust and, though no thing is purple, the color pervades  
then it is still, there are no people, only a surveying stick and very old pottery shards  
rusted cans predating the “pack it in, pack it out” motto

it is not still, the wind becomes fierce in the night, the shadow of the caldera’s rim  
looms and I am to be accurate, and I am to avoid mimesis, and I  
am to bring the present moment, the pressing world into the poem

the radio telescope angles, gazing at what and where from it’s perch  
behind barbed wire and warning of explosives

the sound of a supersonic plane rends the quiet but I am not fast enough  
to find the source, and it is still beautiful, it is still an escape

from all the things I leave outside these lines  
the truth is I have no desire to drag this landscape  
into the mess of our culture

## great little fears

The world shrinks  
to the size of my vocabulary.  
I go the same places and say the same things;  
I hear the same people speaking.  
The Dante translator said English  
was rhyme-poor and he abandoned  
the terza rima for quatrains.  
Reciprocity is a language.

The world shrinks  
to the range of my gas tank,  
to what's left after rent—  
a few hours before darkness,  
a limited number of interactions  
with a limited number of characters.  
Community becomes an umbrella—  
stretched, run, and ribbed in the mind.

The work shrinks  
to the ambition of my questions,  
the cleanliness of my hands;  
the repetition of planting in a team.  
Specialization thrives.  
A concept like the flea or mosquito,  
and the doctor repeats platitudes  
we've all heard small-screen characters say.

Somedays, I'd trade this all in for maths,  
abstract chemical equations or a physics lab—  
To expand the work to the scope of high school—  
to questions the shape of a period.  
For the process of growing onions  
an experiment to measure acceleration by gravity  
a reaction that turns a penny silver by zinc  
or a frosted field of garlic bulbs.