

## LANGUAGE WITHOUT LIES

We resuscitated music,  
we rescued it from the icy grip of the cosmos  
It was stillborn, from a cloud of dust in a silent vacuum  
We refined the ancient sequence  
of building tension to create resolve  
We defined the colors, the math, the geometry of sound

Now music is our only language without lies  
Now we're all playing different parts  
of the same song, in which countless beats  
of countless hearts provide the rhythm.  
Now music is our ghost dance, our communion, a sanctuary  
in which we're all kneeling to kiss the ground,  
a temple in which we're all praying for a miracle

Music is our echolocation—  
a ping bouncing around in the dark,  
singing, "I'm here, can you hear me?"  
Music can penetrate armor  
and holds a light up to each and every face,  
looking for something honest, something real  
Music makes the game worth the candle,  
makes order out of chaos, makes us feel like  
we're not just spinning around a star,  
that's spinning around a star, that's spinning around a star

Music helps us trust our ignorance  
as much as their instincts.  
Music prepares us for love and loss thereof  
Music aligns us with empathy and gratitude  
And defines the lives and times of the human experience

Music is the human soul thinking out loud

## THE FUTURE FOR THE PRESENT

We traded the warm Earth  
beneath our feet  
for designer shoes  
on linoleum  
fashioned to appear  
as natural as stone

We traded the old growth forest  
for posters of athletes and pop stars  
for catalogs and celebrity magazines  
for tables and desks on which to write  
checks with which to pay bills

We traded the benevolent shade  
for a well-placed arbor  
the dense undergrowth  
for perfectly manicured lawns

We traded a spring-fed stream  
for a stagnant cow-pond  
naps on the riverbanks  
for sleeping pills  
a seashell for a cellphone  
a library for a TV guide  
a full moon dance  
for a fitness center  
candlelight for a lump of coal  
a stable of thoroughbreds  
for a barrel of oil  
a ceremony for a simulation

We traded the winding trail  
for the static grid  
a thunderstorm for acid rain  
fresh air for smokestacks  
runways and boxcars

We traded a conversation  
for a keypad  
a sunset for a soap opera  
an orchard for a house plant

We traded wild buffalo  
for happy meals  
an ear of corn  
for a laboratory  
a corner store  
for a corporation

We traded a hallelujah  
and a hug  
for a website and a blog  
rituals for garage door openers  
a community for a computer  
skin for plastic  
landscapes for landfills  
handshakes for handguns  
stars for streetlights  
pyramids and kivas  
for office buildings  
and strip-malls  
a vision quest  
for a universal  
remote control

We traded smooth curvatures  
for right angles  
circles for squares  
spheres for boxes  
fenceless horizons  
for corners and borders  
dollars and flags

We traded a voice  
for a government  
a spine for comfort  
a conscience  
for convenience  
ceremony for simulation

## GUESS WHO?

[an exercise in lateral thinking]

to my mother I am *son*  
to my father I am *hijo*  
to racist hillbillies of the Midwest  
I am *wetback, spic, and beaner*  
to cholos at Armijo I am *gringo*  
to officials at the State Department  
I need proof of *citizenship*  
to la gente de México I am *güero*  
in the Southwest I am *coyote*  
at the university I am *Latino,*  
*Mexican-American* and *Chicano*  
to the Census Bureau I am *Hispanic*  
or “*more than one heritage*”  
to mis abuelos I am *mezclado*  
to those who hear me speak Spanish  
I must be *Argentino* or *Español*  
because of light skin and green eyes  
because of maternal Bohemian ancestry  
I muse as being *Czex-Mex, Czexican, or Czecano*  
I could be the *United States* of existence  
I could be *America*  
I could be your neighbor  
your boss, your teacher, your student  
I could mow your lawn,  
cook your food  
I could be you

So, who *am* I?

MAELSTROM —

(or: The tiny, impending, commercial, homogenous, laughable ceremony)

I have known the inelegant madness of cubicles,  
plastic cells in a sterile hive, maelstrom of time cards,  
every tiny crisis surrounding copy machines and swivel chairs,  
the impending dread that lurks in break rooms  
and on sidewalks during the last drag of a smoke.  
I have known commercial wallpaper,  
packets of sweetener, the demands of staplers,  
the homogenous ridicule of fluorescent lighting,  
laughable music of printer, keyboard and mouse,  
the ceremony of hands, the black and white oppression of clocks.  
And each day I have witnessed expressions,  
faces settled by routine, dripping histrionic courtesies,  
controlled, tedious, hungry faces evaporating into landscapes,  
disavowed through rush-hour traffic and prime-time TV,  
mechanical, compartmentalized, alien faces  
detached from their owners.

BAD POETRY (an experiment with cliché)

by weighing the hidden meanings of red  
interlaced in clouds at dusk

and the fresh wound,  
and by reading skin,

icicles, stones, thorns, and feathers  
like love letters etched in braille

I have tried to align my senses  
with the merciless concept of perfection

perhaps even to pursue the rose,  
or the crimson moon,

or just discover an untainted expression,  
because not even bad poetry writes itself