

The road to Cachi

If you were to ask me for a true account of the day that blackened into that night, of the five hours draping a tired thumb over the highway or the clown that toeflopped up to the pavement a hundred feet away and hitched a ride in five minutes, I could detail the knee-high polkadot socks and the cocktail cherry nose but if I were to mention the ink-squirting sunflower corsage I'd be a liar, *id est* a dreamer who claims himself awake. You'd take me at my word and laugh at the trivial flourishes because that's what they're intended for. And as the day purples into night and nine-year-old Ernesto sits unbuckled in the middle seat playing with the velcro on my guitar case, ignoring the forced small-talk clouding the heavens above his head, his papa Carlos the fruit truck driver feigning interest in the life *norteamericano*, asks do I know any movie stars? I say no then wish I'd said Schwarzenegger 'cause he'd of laughed and maybe told his friends and Hollywood must be a mythical place for an Argentine *campesino*, you know? Well you'd know if you were there but you've probably just seen pictures if that. I doubt I could convince you but I wouldn't be lying that framing the winding mountain road that Carlos steers with a seasoned grip is a tree-flush slope, a dark shade of blue, and a starry night sky, a dark shade of green (I remind you, my mind's eye is prone to inversion). When we stop for Ernesto to take a piss on the rear tire, I take the chance to find a bush and only when I've zipped back up do I spot the shed edging the cliff, Carlos's back protruding from the doorway, framed in a soft flicker, and Ernesto crouched behind him, tying his laces and gazing at the stars. As I enter at Carlos' side, he lights the last match and then the last candle beside the *Virgen María* and her friends whom I don't recognize but know vaguely how to classify. Still I'd swear the roof looks higher than the cracked space between Sistine Chapel fingertips, though I've only ever seen pictures. Carlos turns to me, asks do you believe in God? I say...I said... I don't believe in heaven and ruled out reincarnation. Souls are neither relocated nor reused, but recycled beyond recognition. Do you think yourself wiser than those centuries of sages? It's an imagined wisdom,

but again, the imagination is only recycled experience.
Carlos stares unflinching at the *Virgen Guadalupe*,
too polite to turn and ask me of my creed. Beneath the wheels
the dirt road comes to resemble clouds
as our path crosses the troposphere, Ernesto
ignoring the silence that hovers above his head.
I gaze on in wonder then in horror as my stomach
leaps to my skull and I spot the dirt road
crossing the upper-right corner of the windshield.
Carlos stares unflinching and Ernesto goes on
playing with the velcro while through the choking flames
I fantasize of life the way I often see my death.
He was dropping me off in the dead of night
on a cobble-stone street in a mountain town called Cachi
and I was wishing I had a gift to give in return.

If personality

If personality is an unbroken series
of successful gestures
bonded one onto the last
in an outwardgrowing coil,

a spiral
of expired respirations,

then this hour of tapping cold plastic keys sending
impulse to a circuit board and a laptop screen sending
impulse to two retinae and a circuit tent sending
impulse to fingers and cold plastic keys,

this hour whom I try to not feel
or to feel not
in hoursminutessecondscenturies
but in cotton bedsheets
at war with gravity
over the territory
of my living corpse,

this hour of dark broken
by artificial lighting
and the sleeplessness that you bring to my thoughts
and the scent you left on the bedsheets,

this hour will join the coil too
this sentence will join the coil too
and these reprojected images
of your smile's soft asymmetry,
the glorious curves of your asscheeks,
orangebrown shadows painted down your spine will
in the gesture of remembering
become new memories
successors to the source impulse:

your nakedness in that vanished hour

cloned now
but not recovered

your vanished hour of nakedness

now cloned
never recovered

won't you peek behind my eyelids, my love
and you'll see how still
these scented bedsheets
cover my skin and that skin
covers my sentient soul
keeps the coil from bonding
to the gestures of the air

except in those unclonable
seconds of ours of
exhaling our souls in evaporated sweat
so that we might remember
what it is to be air

to rise with the heat currents
sourced from our pores
gaze down on a shaking bed
sheets thrown to the floor
your freckles smoldering
and gravity at war
with two skinbound
personalities
/ one personuality

bonding,

breaking,

bonding.

The red tide

There were fingers carving
electric shivers through the sand:
neon blue, the color of synaptic flames.
These were mine and they were hers
and the shivers belonged to the sand.
And to us.

We arrived after sundown. She'd seen
red in the water in the day—my thoughts
turned the color of the childhooded night
my best friend's old man drove us to
the beach. It was a night in which magic
was truth.

It was this beach, and tonight
is a resonance of magic and truth. The waves
crash close to shore, not shivering so much
as firing eureka's down an axon. White matter,
black water and algae blooming into an
unknown spectrum.

Is this the hue of an ocean's thought?
As mad scientists, artists discovering a new
medium, we drew earthen auroras and signed our
autographs into the sand. An afterglow followed
in the wakes of our names, dimming as quickly
as we will.

It is a night that reveals gaps
in the myelin fibers of this adult-fitted-hood.
Yet now there are fingers caressing electric
shivers down my spine. She is mine and
I am hers and the shivers belong to the sand.
And to us.

Lake Anza

To penetrate the impenetrable moment
of
wisdom's capture upon

—no, beneath
—no, around
—no, between

(!)

—the nerve organ,
the human page,

lighting up with a grammar
in no way particular
to this (moment) of production,

a vocabulary built
from 50,000 synonyms of my name, forged
in the vocal cords of the wind, rippling
in sunny flashes
across that sky-toned drumskin,
Lake Anza,

an alphabet hidden
in the orbitals of ancient atoms,
in the yawning faces of the rocks,
the constellated freckles on Tyler's cheeks,
the lake-toned sky

now dimming with the sun's retreat,
now stealing back gifts
that were never meant for keeping,
laughing all the way to the horizon

—this, then, a shadow-phrasing
of
the wisdom you've departed:

that

a question is
the humble acceptance of an unknown meaning

and

the antecedent statement:
an unworthy capture
of
the question that evades captivity

(?)