

The Ebullient Signpost

When Deputy Don rode
into the sunset
with a song and a smile,
we wore ten-gallon hats
& sat side-saddle
on the arms of our father's
Lay-Z-Boy recliners.
When we clanged pots & pans
with neighborhood dogs
as the boys of summer
won another pennant,
when the young willow
twisted and tangled
the septic pipes
into new & disgusting
contortions,
we dug deep in the field
& covered the hole
with grass to trap bears,
tigers, marauders,
the old woman
from down the street.
She fell into our trap
& twisted her ankle.
We laughed as she
limped away.
Fair warning:
"Walk our trails –
face the consequences."
Like Robin Hood or Zorro
or Grizzly Adams,
we hid beneath
the Queen Ann's Lace,
beneath the monarch
butterflies,
& laughed as
she limped.

We tromped through
the woods
with stolen Marlboro Reds,
white Zebra Cakes,
& warm Labatt's Blue,
we climbed the tallest tree

& peeled the bark
to reveal the true grain
of the giant beast.
From our perch,
we could see the rainbow
sails of rainbow ships
upon the rainbow bay.
Sunlight glistened, reflected,
blinded us,
but we never averted our eyes.
When the fireworks of three towns
filled the sky,
we never averted our eyes.
When the shaving cream
& water-filled condom balloons
splashed our faces,
we never averted
our eyes.

With popcorn, cold pizza,
warm Faygo Rock n Rye
for midnight snacks,
we played five-card draw.
The French-Canadian
poker chips
had been tucked into
Great-Grandmother's dresser,
behind her knitting,
her teeth, her hairbrush
& her forgotten
ninety-three years
of horse-drawn dreams.
They emerged to settle
our scores.
We watched Joe Bob Briggs
& Count Zappula.
Imported Italian erotica,
black and white horror trash:
signifiers of adolescent
rebellion,
the ebullient signposts
of the freedom
of youth.

Words from Clay

I carve words from clay.
I breathe life into the lungs
of the sentence,
and I wash away the filth.
For forty day and forty nights,
I carry my poems
in the bosom of my ark.
Two by two,
they wait.
Two by two they rise
to see the rainbow.
When the dove returns
with the olive branch
and the vessel rests atop
the Mount Ararat,
the words lift their hearts
to the sun and sing the songs
of the brand-new day.
The poem follows
the brightest star
in the heavens
and gives birth in all
the mangers
of all the worlds.
Surrounded by lambs, goats, llamas,
sewer rats, tarantulas,
and the common garter snake,
I send the sentences out
to wash away the filth.
With flames in their hair,
the words speak in strange
mad tongues;
they call out to distant shores
and remember the war of
Cain and Abel.
They remember the pillars of salt
and the burning bush.
The bush, too, spoke in tongues.
It said, "You are latent
with unseen existences."¹
When the Red Sea split open,
I split it with song.
And the burning bush said,
"I think heroic deeds were

all conceiv'd
in the open air.”²
The poems themselves
were conceiv'd
in the open air as well.
The clay rose forth from deep
within the soul of the planet.
The soul of the planet sighed
and all seemed beautiful.
The soul of the planet
is rude, incomprehensible,
but never silent.
When the soul rises,
when the rainbow compact
allows for rebirth and rejoice,
it allows only as I wish.
Only as I carve words
from clay.

1. Whitman, Walt. “Song of the Open Road.” *Leaves of Grass*. W. W. Norton and Company, 2005.
2. *ibid.*

I Never Heard the Ocean Sing

The beautiful, bleached shell
was hooked to the fluke
but then sat by our
television for
decades.

Gently, while home from
school with fevers,
stomach aches,
migraines,

I would hold it to my ear.

The air currents
through the
coils

were supposed to sound
like the crashing
waves of

Egmont

and Longboat, The

Azores and The

Maldives,

but there

was only

silence.

Cast Me Skipping

You spend your days
staring at the stones
beneath your sandals.
The water, a mirror
to your soul,
still with perfection.
You find me between
the boulders and the beech.
Your long, delicate fingers
wrap around my curves.
Like Satchel Paige
or Dizzy Dean,
you reach back and let fly.
I skim across the surface,
sliding on the silver glass.
“Five, Six, Seven,” you count
before I sink below the seas.
After winter storms,
I will wash once more
upon the shore
to fly again.

A Fistful of Ennui

As the Sergio Leone score
floats through
the Mall of America
and we collectively
price ourselves out of
a new pair of Jordans,
we bow our heads
and tuck our thumbs
into our “Keep on Truckin’”
belt buckles.
Few can recall how
far she fell
down, down, down
before she lodged
in a West Texas well-casing.
Baby Jessica sang her songs.
Baby Jessica sang
“Winnie the Pooh,
Winnie the Pooh,
chubby little cubby
all stuffed with fluff,”
and the world sang with her,
but she wasn’t
all stuffed with fluff.
She lost a toe to gangrene
and we lost our innocence
to the covers of *People Magazine*,
Time, *Redbook*.
And to the stories in *The Daily News*,
The Washington Post,
and *The Petoskey News Review*.

As “The Love Theme from
Switchblade Sisters”
floated through the halls
of the Satellite of Love,
we wore our Nikes
and waited for redemption
behind Hale-Bop.
When the UFO arrived,
we boarded with
our utter anxiety
and our silly dreams.

If Nike only manufactured
clown shoes,
we would have been
the perfect emblem of
democracy.

The sign relationship as a whole,
flying around the sun
and back to the icy darkness
of the solar system.

While Hale-Bop glowed
in the northwest sky,
we knew salvation
was at hand.

As "We Built this City"
floated through
the bowling alleys,
pool halls, video arcades
of our junior high blues,
we had them ol' junior high
blues again, mama,
and we filled our void
with quarters for Galaga,
Pole Position, Q*Bert,
the chill of Northern Michigan
returned;
we pulled our faux fur collars
close around our necks.
Thank God it's Thinsulate.
Our ears, red with frostbite,
listened intently for distant
signs of agency.
While Q*Bert forever fell
from his pyramid,
we fell too.
We toppled towards
The Bear River rush
and towards the frozen
water wonderland.