

League of the Woke

Injustice prevails, as if the whole world and
the fog of its conscience sufficiently lifts
to spot-on consider the tiniest tremor of glut
or lack in local and global, fiscal, financial exchanges
and markets, whip-sawing down a commandment
to teach humanity's dregs how to drink the lees,
how to aim and fire an AR-15.

The Buddha reposes in flowers-in-fields,
no archer present to plink the bow,
to pluck the string of a vibrating organ
more high-pitched than brains. Synapses fire
much faster than a fully-loaded automatic weapon.

I'm sewing a cape to match the tights
I choose to wear beneath my clothes
with a capital J stenciled on my chest.
I'm taking the Red Line to Wrigley Field
and flying a pennant no one can win
except the bystander who sees a gap double
turned to a single by the center fielder
when the shots ring out

that scatter the masses whose sure revolution
keeps slipping away, political gambit and outright failure
to keep people safe. I'm shot in the neck
on a red-letter day (I am too slow to stop him).
I am joining the others who know firsthand
the tissue-thin *dao*, the body's slight sanction
to offer resistance beyond a loose skein
of vessels and skin.

O leak away, life, vestibular soul
and collective Unconscious. I lie down
for good, for haywire justice.
I lived in a fog but I die awake.

Hera(clitus)

That was it.

The sable sky thronging slate clouds
on a November Saturday.

Walking Mom home from the bank,
our arms looped around each other's waists,
lightly leaning into the first real frost
of the season (we didn't catch it)
before I hustle back to the gym, undress
and notice my body morphing—breast buds
and hips wider—into a Venus klutz, then
put on my St. Hilary Cardinal uniform,
loose as potato sacking, red as the bright blood
of mensis.

I failed to see it.

The heft and charge of living in the moment
(Who can do that? Moms, pre-teens and infants),
later of swimming laps at the high school pool,
kissing Jimmy Frandsen, touching Antony *there*
but marrying Seth, Mom then dead and no father
sidling in the aisle—and I still missed it.

But when I birthed Grace, pushing past the claw
of wild contractions, spattering all their scrubs
with our precious drops, I finally emerged,
I mean I surfaced on the stream
of the brisk clear waters only I can change.

Nine Times One

Before Before

Not even New Year's Eve or *hier soir*
can capture what is prior to it or holds
cleanly and dear the silk of radical absence.
Nothing arises from this edge of life
except pre-tense, pretend images of love
and blues, unconscious as they are.
Still, from this mere bud hope will later
open and bloom.

Before

Running to catch the bus
that lurches and spews diesel exhaust
on me as an urban after-shave, I
pull even, then am about to fall behind
when I see her, alert to me and
I-can-tell concerned, pull the cord
signaling she wants to exit up the block.
But when it stops, she does not get off
while I enter.

Before After

What little trouble there was
was of no consequence. Call them
spats, debates, projected ills
not come to pass or else petering out
in joy and touch and grab and tug,
the push and pull any couple feels
caught on a whirling world of
diurnal rotation and perpetual revolutions.

Before Now

She wanted no thanks,
but I gladly spent a fortune on
lattes and take-out we took in

to her apartment so that we could
make love and eat, consume and couple,
conjoin and swallow some more.
We filled every sense always, furiously,
mad desperate to stick to each other
like dried cum on skin that pulls
like a bandaid when we separate.

Now

At the high tide of intimacy we gasp.
She says she can't breathe sometimes
through flesh so thick with pulsating neural nets.
Claims she loses herself within the throbbing
pleasure and pain and wonders at these times
just who I am.

After Now

I sense universals in the instant.
She is shoving off, pushing away from me.
The timeframe doesn't matter
when you know you're falling apart.

So much to fight against,
so little to push for—
the general and specific get confused.

Before After

We hold hands and talk—
she will always remember me.
She is grateful for what we've shared.
She knows I will land on my feet.
In time so will she. She says
she is a better person for the experience,
but she will not stop a bus for anyone ever again.
Good-bye, fraternal twin.

After

Echoes of the events
gradually subside
as if some deep canyon holds
the din of completed action in
retrograde motion, dying down
in every other culmination.

So what was specifically heard, and had,
will always be generally heard again
and is only heard again, not had.

After After

A cocoon of time
keeps its own counsel.
Unopened space is tight and dark.
I no longer suffer the shock
of belayed personal hopes.
The little twinges and bodily tics
regroup and gather again
within what's possible,
random and absurd, a new existence.

Dawn, first gray, then resplendent
comes into view.

Deconstructing: Clouds

1.

Out of a blank-blue sky come foreign writs
In billow, all but articulate.

They are the cottony tracings
Of a nether-world's Gestalt whose inverse laws decree
White shadows cast by innumerable unseen figures
We can't read but guess are present in the lofty flux.

2.

This time it is a negative of Rorschach, arced and set
In dimensional quartet, a moving flashcard
No one sits behind and steadies. And no small print either
Or even an upper right-hand corner to suggest
Possible answers—clouds are the perfect Etch-a-Sketch.

3.

Now the very cartoon—vault and fresco—of the Sistine Chapel
Painted in our ceiling, where we supply,
Though they are not there, Michelangelo's supple limbs
Submerged in the contours of cumulus cherubim.

4.

I think of *Ghostbusters* and the marshmallow colossus
Stalking New York, King Kong of clouds. He is a flabby
Double-chinned transient who betrays both Renaissance
And Gothic arch-types. He is a huffing serious cirrus
That dissolves on the next stiff breeze
Into puffs of ashless smoke.

5.

In the jetstream planes are ruling lines
In vapor no cloud writes upon,
Bulbous knobby flume ciphers
Gone to wisp.

6.

Mounted on palominos
Ojibwa chase snow bison
Shaking tomahawks and quivers.

The hunters, winging red and skyward,
Fly home. Their lodge lies beyond the line
Of any shape's horizon.

7.

On another day clouds will crowd out
Every luminescence, will roll in and over
Me so thickly they become the whole sky,
Annul divisions—backdrop, foreground, text
And context—lighten shade, darken prisms,
Grey everything.

8.

Nothing but blue
So bright and deep
Even the color, with watching, peters out,
Drains skywater, goes cloud white.

Post-live

This promo for my afterlife
promises details the living don't know
beyond the fresh grief of a loving wife
and an ex who forgives me because I'm post-live.

As a dry hand will clutch at a fluid pen
(here and now!) and thick fingertips unlock the keys
to a video vault buried deep at a graveside
where I'm coming to you post-live.

The universe may or may not be one word
(I've heard the Big Bang tied to theories with string).
I have opened the present auxiliary tenses
from a vanishing vantage point, being post-live.

Sinew and tissues and muscles and blood,
the DOA of our DNA,
flood neurons and nerves with electrical pulses,
digital shadows of living post-live.

The printed ink and a defaulted pixel,
primordial urges and primal screams
streaming the images once-I-was-living,
you come to believe that I'm really post-live.

All-time and eternity swarm the control booth,
working the angles and switching what's mine
to a camera that's ready, poised and *obscura*.
And they throw it to me post-live.

Keep scrolling text messages, tweet to your Facebook.
Google your own name, then link who YouTube are
2 a wiki, a blogster, a poster uploading—
We *lrr n th crv* but we're living post-live.