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HUMEROS

After César Vallejo

I.

You think that because your past was violent
your present owes you an apology.

But the atmosphere doesn't owe you anything
except air.

And by breathing can you
get through it?

Can you see
the opal in the puddle and want the mud?

Only the rich
benefit from economic prosperity.

So what are you
so mad about?

You have hurt me -
I store this
in my armbone.
You have hurt me -
I store this in my chestbone.
You have hurt me -
I store this in my neckbone.
You have hurt me -
know I store this.
I store this.
I store this
in my marrow bones.

I have hurt you -
you store this in your
heartbone.

I have hurt you -
you store this in your
bellybone.

I have hurt you –
You store this in your
mindbone.

I have hurt you –
you store this in your
sourcebone

I have hurt you I have hurt
you you store this in your bones
at the base of your
reptile mindbone

I forgive you
you hurt my bones
my memory
I forgive you you
hurt my brain my
seeing organ
I forgive you have hurt my
throat my speaking organ
I forgive you I forgive you
you have hurt me
I am not at
war with you.

So forgive me. I have hurt you
in your backbone.
Forgive me. I have hurt you
in your kneebone.
Forgive me, I have hurt
your soul bone.
Fogive me I have hurt you
but do not be
at war with me.

II.

It's September
And the airplanes are making words in the sky.

If I believed all you said about me,
I'd be dead.

I'm trying to turn arrows
into roses
but I'm no Buddah –
they're arrows.

In the playground
the children
climb and slide and disappear behind trees.

We can't help make meaning out of random gestures.

We can't help abstracting, transcending, producing, and destroying.

But words are unsteady
and we pass through each other
like a moth, a mot,
a month
and it's over -

600 Janus Head

what seemed so evil was nothing more

than an oyster mistaking

the entirety of the earth

and all the conflicting systems therein

to be

his

bed.

III.

A slug on a stone,

A fish in a fish's bones.

This rose, this hook, this banality.

Rattlesnake used for bait.

Petal shredded for poison.

Blossom.

The airplanes write words in the sky
already gone,
damn.

Who can remember
a message
written in clouds?

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FAÇADE

A dog in the wind is playing with a leaf.

Another leaf.

The dog chases wind around the yard, sailing and falling.

Through the trees that bend.

Through the woods that creak and blow.

A dog bends with the trees to follow a leaf.

Until it stops, squashed against a fence.

The dog, perplexed, lays down and goes to sleep.

A man is slowly falling out of love.

A slowness comes over him, as covers overtake the one who is sleeping.

A sheet smooths over a man.

The cover is darkness.

When finally covered, he is buried by his lack of love.

His incapability of loving.

Slowly love, or the lack of it, is laid over his body like a sheet.

He is no longer in love.

He no longer has any desire to love.

He only wants to sleep.

A brick house with a small roof.

The parameter of the house.

The leaves are clumped with dirt and tar in the gutter.

The rain fails to push them through.

The house paint was red but is chipping.

The fence is falling.

The lawn is overgrown with dandelions.

Two chairs on the porch are wooden and rotting.

A wicker swing with pieces of straw poking out.

There's a can of beer on the table left over from yesterday.

A woman stands back from the house.

It's falling apart, she says to herself.

V I E W

Yellow flowers surrounded by purple seeds.

A black rock in the middle of the table.

Two chairs pulled up on either side.

One glass half filled with water.

One cup half filled with tea.

One bowl with traces of yogurt around the sides.

A window reflecting black.

White curtains bunched in the center.

An old fur collar clasped around the rim of a lampshade.

A stick of incense propped against a deer's vertebrae.

An empty jewelry box I can't decide whether to keep, or throw away.

A wire screen.

The side of another house.

A clothesline that connects two trees.

There are hand towels and underwear alternating on the line.

The shadow of the line is at a 80 degree angle against the house.

One cup with the cold remains of coffee.

The newspaper wide open, "The Story of the Icon" waits to be read.

The dirt piling up beneath the spider web in the corner.

The bed loosely made, still untucked.

Between these houses, a variable distance.

STILL LIFE

A woman at the corner of Avenue A and 12th street
asked if I minded feeding her pigeons
while she went away on vacation.

I told her that I would feed her pigeons
when they landed on my fire escape in Brooklyn.
She said no, those pigeons in Brooklyn aren't my pigeons.
Feed them, I don't care, but you're not doing me any favors.

A nest in a crevice between house and roof.
They move around sometimes,
picking at the ceiling and tearing apart the beams.
Overlapping the roof is a gigantic tree.
The birds climb to the top of it, branch by branch.

There is wood and there are clouds.
Only when flying is there enough sky.
Birds see it all upside down.

E M P T Y

Rats circle the trashcans.

Poodles wear pink knit sweaters and hair bands.

At least that's how the story goes.

I hear there are illegal dog fights that happen in this neighborhood.

Red row houses that always know the weather.

I met a man who said that his dog had been stolen

right from his front yard while his brother was inside watching TV.

The sunshine left the dog at that moment.

I had a dog who died of neglect and a lack of love.

Always lapping, snuggling, wanting attention.

But the house had abandoned her long ago.

The yellow light of summer made her miserable and hot.

Then she was quiet.

Dark streets, bright houses.

Love and all it lacks.

W I N D O W L E S S

The baby is sleeping next to the man who is no longer sleeping there.

All the sleeping that happens in a house, in the morning, when it is
raining outside.

And green from all the rain outside.

The green makes the house darker than usual.

Rain makes the green light and dark, dark and light, luminous.

The particular light that is happening in the morning when everyone is
sleeping.

It means something to the one who sleeps.

To the one who is breathing.

But what of the one who isn't?

Some are better in the morning than others.

Some make the fact of getting up easy, others make it heavy.

All of these things matter.

When sleeping, when raining.

All things that that dwell in the space of meaning.

Rain in the morning after a person has died.

It seems impossible that he would not see this rain.

In July — it is dark when normally it is sunny.

It seems unlikely, or likely, that the sadness of this morning is the fact that
he is not looking out the window.

To see how the layers of green upon green make the whole morning dark.

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