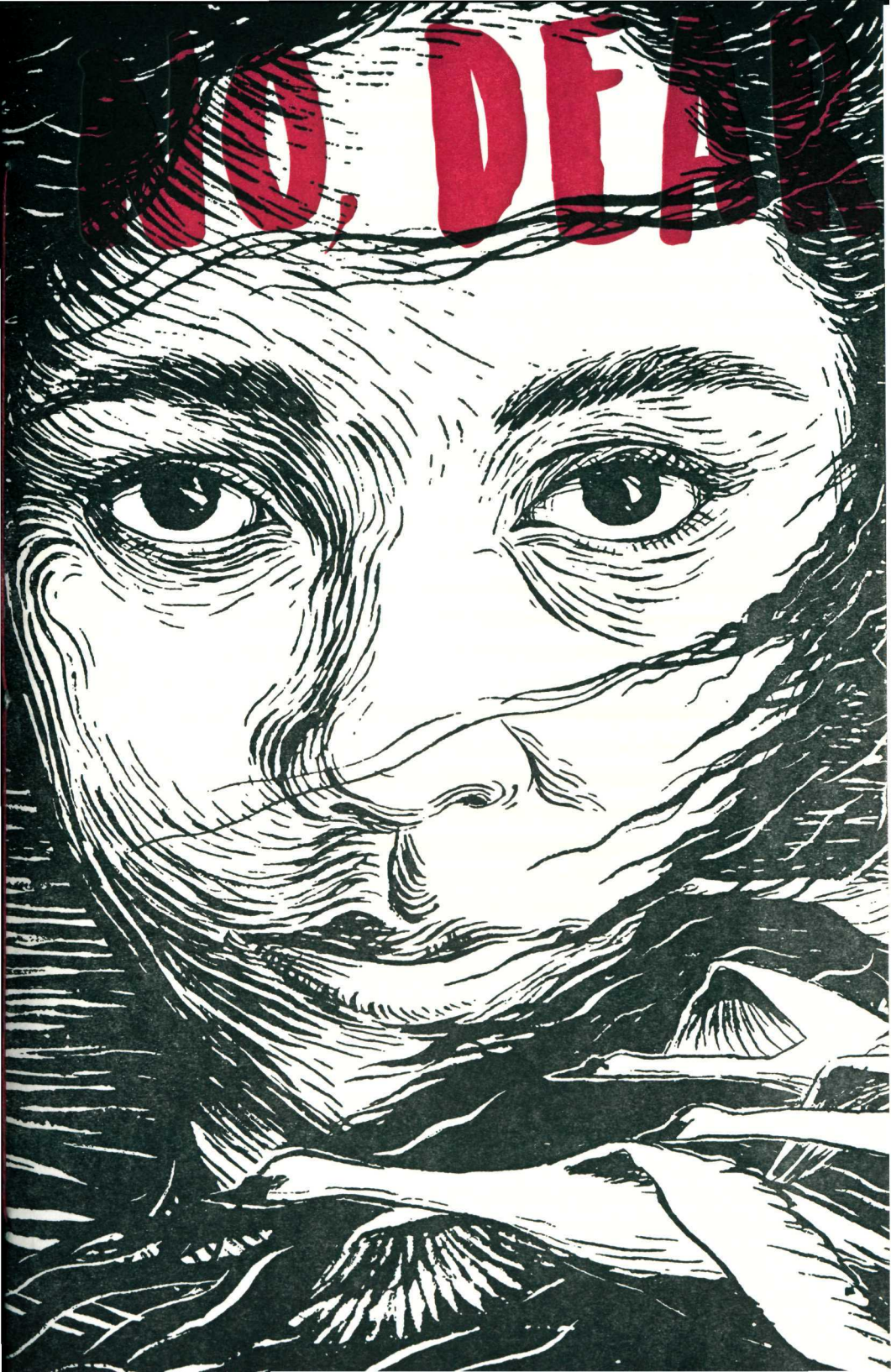


NO, DEAF



No, Dear

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from *The Pollock Streets*

10

The courage to fail but not
the courage to quit we rotate
in a stationary place saying
I am ready for the earthquake
to bury me now I am waiting
for God to shout fuck you
right in my ear. Flip the hour
glass and begin again.
This time you're in the city.
You were hoping for a jungle
metaphor. Race those rats.
Cannibalize that dog.
Try to speak with these
pennies in your mouth.

Democracy in action.

At my parent's house they just built a train from a northern suburb to their suburb. The whole suburb hates the train because trains should lead to cities not suburbs (especially when they cost almost 65 million dollars and only provide service to 65 people a day both ways.) I probably voted yes for this train because I like to vote in California on absentee ballots. They call me for jury duty less and if one day I fulfill my childhood dream and run for president the people can spend their time debating about the sexual nature of the work in my art practice - they will be assured I always voted. Anyway I voted yes because I like trains and public transit and the northern suburb the train goes to. Thanks to my vote when I come home to my parent's house when the sun is setting I can stand on the balcony and hear 3 long whistles of a train and look at the off center v of the same mountains I have looked at since before I could speak about looking and think I am home now. If I am being honest, this is the only instance I can think of where I feel my vote has mattered.

SPACEPORT AMERICA (i)

Dweller star

I rethink I know

What you mean

or

Neighbor star

Being a fast learner

On the side

for

Occupant star

The first time

"Out of this mess!"

As early bilingualism

Lost its entrances

Settler star

Being everywhere twice

Having been waiting

at

Urbanite star

(Who needed this)

Hands in front

or

Addressee star

Feeling Uninvited

Taking \$10

or

Autochthon star

Pay(ing) the money

Pay(ing) the money

the

Boarder star

If you're zero and I'm one

I'm one I won I own

for

Denizen star

for

Householder star

Doing some thing to

Do some other thing

or

Incumbent star

Feeling sympathy

Seeking empty space

you

Indweller star

At the place

Having taken care

you

Lessee star

When no appreciator

Makes emotional

Takes time

your

Lodger star

Going a long

Having time or similar

or

Intransigent star

I embarrass myself

Intersection struck

the

Inmate star

I am up here

the

Occupier star

Siphon off

Set off

Being off

as

Renter star

Real (real) biography

Real unimagined time

Unreal headwinds

or

a banner: EQUATED MY STRANGENESS

WITH LOSING ALL HOPE

or

Roomer star

Amplifying taste

Just saying unsaid

at

Squatter star

Phantasy like

The parts fit

or

Resider star

Too big exit

A quiet early space

A Parallax View

These bitter estates
grow like crooked teeth
out of long uncut grass
and stand as an example
that man is forgetful
or perhaps neglect
is a suitable revenge
like a diluted Michigan
with its windows
all boarded up
longing for a bureaucratic life
casual and leaderless
the letter is not lost
only pending
still waiting while
stagnant water collects
but there is a black line being
drawn along the horizon
where new landmasses form
you wish to place yourself there
but there is no place for you

Jeff T. Johnson

Afterword to Last Words of the Late Empire

This is the least pumped cul de sac I have visited on my tour. You guys—I see you
There with your birds flying in the wind—deserve a medal. Best Prepared to Resist
Invasion. Who are you preparing for? Give me your limits, and I will make them monuments.
Give me your figures at the edge of the pines, and we will make them phantoms.
Give me your ghosts at the far ends of the parking lot, groping for their keys.
Give me your best selves, leaping curbs and catching carts before they depreciate
Our late investments, happy as they are to drift along the aisles.

Petro Moysaenko

CLOSING ASSEMBLIES

Behind the barricades
not yet spent
the cameras
saw through us
unblinking

Atop the building
towers of smoke
becoming a ceiling
We nodded
as if unsure

Company drones
compass morning
Carrying sugar
in the mouth
to the river

Blocks we are
bent over in
work and prayer
How visible
a piece of ash is

Autumn pulsing
through believers
easy fires
spitting nails
We make fast with hands

Betsy Sallee

Every Day I Don't Die Is a Near Miss

It's sixty degrees in November and only getting warmer.

If you rub two sticks together, sooner or later they spark.

Man make madness, man play with fire.

Man hang god from the telephone wire.

I watch the news on youtube while hiding under my blanket.

Where else to turn from violence if not to your body, your skin?

We're burying my grandfather today, in the deepest red of the state.

My mom bought my ticket, my aunt picked me up from the airport.

"More roadkill than I've ever seen," she says, and I make myself look out.

Deer, maybe dogs, and I am a lamb in this country.

The president spins the cylinder, pulls the trigger, waits.

We gather by the body and how quickly its death becomes normal.

It's true my Grammy carries on because what else is there to do.

It's true I am a woman who lives alone.

I watch videos of polar icecaps melting.

So much thinking these days about what should have been done.

There is one truth more true than others.

When something dies, it's dead.

Barry Denny

Fifty-five Days After the election

I cried blood

An orange-headed monster
With an immense overcoat
Like gangsters and fascists wear
Would soon rule the realm

Woe!
I fed a blind man's cat

The cat grew a rhino horn
The rotten monster's nose grew long as a redwood tree
Lengthier than all the liars since the dawn of attribution

When the blind man unexpectedly died
I froze the cat
In a *Zappos* box

For extra terrestrials to find

A solitary angel
Embedded in a hair of feline fur whispered
Ancient wisdom and borscht belt schtick

Aphorisms for an apocalyptic age

Illuminating torsos and dreams across Second Street—
From the Bowery to Ave C

Snow fell like locust

The monster tweeted—
Boys, blame the Mexicans.

What the hell's left?

Cook your neighbor soup
Take a walk together

Motherhood

I'm talking Satan,
 who fathered Rosemary's
 baby in a so-so apartment
 in The Dakota.
 But in The Dakota is
 no such thing as so-so
 so strike that.
 East across Central Park
 West, sycamores shiver.
 Shadows of shadows
 lurch behind shades
 a disturbing pale, pale
 as Rosemary's well-off
 New York neighbors
 who could've been
 poolside with Mr. and
 Mrs. Robinson except
 mere materialism is
 merely a brass ring
 too reachable to reach
 and still care. Reach
 and still care. So Minnie
 boiled a chocolate
 pudding for Rosemary
 and her generically named
 husband, Guy. Oh,
 the banality of evil.
 Rosemary wanted a kid,
 she got a kid and nursed
 her suckling babe.

DOCUMENTED

Hermes burrowed beneath
 the chain fence and snapped the ribbon.
 Dressed in bark,
 Barack stood tapping
 his caduceus, cufflinks jangling like seeds.
 Hermes, said Barack, stay in there.
 Then Barack turned to us. He lifted us, kissed us,
 lowered us leeward.
 Thank you for your service, he said.
 We tessellated to a serpent.
 Then came Wednesday. A nurse reported
 Hermes marching up Academy
 Boulevard to the Safeway.
 Bg mn, she thumbed, gt yr trtl.
 We got heckled with cows,
 but having grazed with them
 we could speak their ways.
 Then God
 made animals of us
 with names from the trees.
 We guarded the premises with our life.

El Derecho de Vivir en Paz

Your queen has been crowned. Her Richelieu approves. He was friends with the general who broke Victor Jara's fingers. But he kept singing, singing: we shall triumph. Don't tell me those shock treatments were just an isolated incident. It was a dress rehearsal, like Ireland for India. Not every banana republic grows bananas. Some of them mine copper.

You may have forgotten the script. I haven't. You may have forgotten the rehearsals or else misremember them. When they shot the poor with our guns, you must think birds flew out of the wounds. Or it was just another explosion of color. A harvest of berries from the bowels of those who chose and opposed. A simple rounding error: come census time.

No. I can see the future without much imagination. They're going to fill CitiField with us, right up to the nosebleed section, and break our fingers so we won't play. Then overcharge us for the bullets. What will happen to our tongues? They won't make the mistake they made with Victor Jara. We'll have to tap out *Venceremos* on the stands with our bones.

Oyeme Aqui

Oyeme world, listen to me, my hand shakes to reveal that in Venezuela a stretch of people standing on Caracas asphalt wait eight hours or more to buy meat and milk and flour—the supermarket shelves are always barren. Take anything you can find: meat, milk, and flour to make arepas, how they cling to traditions under Nicolas Maduro's socialist empire—the people are hungry, they march on the hot, melting streets to fill dry shelves with pride for Venezuela, let them nourish their bodies to overthrow Maduro. With every purchase, Maduro records their fingerprints: If you bought meat and milk and flour last month, you can't have them until next month. Maduro says he can't promise them food. Maduro says Obama stole their food. Maduro says they can wait for days and leave with nothing.

Presidente Nicolas Maduro uses excessive force on Caracas protestors who need more food: they are teachers, scientists, architects, and nurses watching food prices fluctuate and rise—milk and meat and flour require bags of bolivars to purchase, the useless bills pile closer to God, though none have seen him—The National Guard jailed one, Jose Salvador, did not let him speak, they held him for a night in prison, beat and spilled his blood, a red shadow, over a dark and creeping place.

Maduro is the successor to Hugo Chavez, socialist savior, bought his wealth with oil reserves, yet did not invest in the people. Chavez died three years ago, Maduro rose and took his throne. Socialism, for the people, does not impose limits—here they are equals, they look for food in dumpster bags. Behind supermarkets, government directors load and carry carts of food. Maduro keeps the government loyal with fruits and fresh rice before the people's dusty hands take them.

The Opposition banded to repeal the election—Maduro won again—The Opposition calls for a referendum, voter fraud, yet Maduro stays in office. He recalled the one hundred bolivar note, claims the United States Treasury siphoned their money overseas. The United States aims to sabotage Maduro and Venezuela with capitalism.

Oye, Maduro shut electricity four hours out of the day, tropic heat rose and sank into their pores; people with dry voices wear shirts that repeat *No Hay Comida*; work hours tightened to two days a week; Caracas burns with tear gas sprayed by the National Guard; no one walks out at night; their bones crack, yet medicine hovers at high inflation; Caracas police breaks their bones; Guns are prohibited, yet hunger drives the people to crime; Guns are collected under the black market; Caracas is the most dangerous city in the world; murder rate at 120 per 100,000. *No Hay Comida, No Hay Comida, No Hay Comida.*

Oyeme world, I know you do not hear of them much. Maduro quiets the journalists. Photographs of protests are illegal. I write this to preserve those whose hunger swallowed them, who've died under the police's strangle: to Julio, Marta, Jose Salvador. Oye, if you do not hear of them again, listen to me speak to *Jesúcristo* for their patria Venezuela and her children: *Padre nuestro en el cielo, librenos de nuestros pecados.*

-Commissioned by Poetic People Power for its show *While We Were Sleeping*.

Do not grow flowers for oxygen

I spread rose myrtle and cannot figure
Republic of China is not located in mainland
In order to trust a manmade system
I pass a bowl shape of the window
fulfill with eyes

listen careful, Lily
people learn what it means when
loyal men sit around the table to discuss a little chance to take over
women boil streams under pajamas
at least both sides are comfortable
by how it made

watch your steps
under the clouds, darklight comes in
Do not grow flowers for oxygen
they will be everywhere or seduce to be pigment

to balance the system
some have split the skin
a few have hidden
most cut off tails
to survive or sign up
for surveillance

Susan Bruce

Calendar

Experience
concentrates

on itself

rendering
today

as similar
to yesterday.

I end up
and begin

as if I've lived a life
of small apples.

I receive
myself

a continuous
plant.

Adjua Gargi Nzinga Greaves

Haliaeetusleucocephalus butejamaicensis

a wall calendar
preens in plastic for its sale
celebrating death

sonnet of siblings.

(or: heart disease.)

history can be stolen or forgotten—
we know that by now. we know that
because countries, because genocide.
because she taught me not to run
faster than i could talk. because
she forgot, she huffed, *dr. bergin*
said what? of what we've inherited
there are three: fibrillation, doctors,
myopathy. the stories, the heart.
they say the brain changes with each
item learned—carries imprints, carries
structure. and our elder: *sometimes*
we have to do something

not because of who
we are, but because
of what we've inherited.

Nothing Belongs to You

A man in a 49ers jersey looks up
and down the street as if for a pawn shop
or a hardware store once there

blinking against light
newly scraped off the sky. For seven hours across Florida today

my mother and father were driving a truck
with all my family's things in it,
and for seven hours in New York today I

hovered above the streets a little,
tapping the asphalt once or twice with my toes

just to make sure. Make sure of what?
I came by choice.

When my mother called from Somewhere,
Georgia, where rivers empty
into bigger rivers, she said

"Right when we crossed the state line,
the rain stopped,"

and I knew then I had to testify
to a destiny I do not truly
believe exists.

When it's right, it's right,
I said. And the man

in his 49ers jersey takes a right
and he's in front of my window again,

scratching his head,
holding his pan full of river and ordinary dirt.

Brian Francis

After the Show

The crowd's quiet does a dance
with your tongue. Speak free

sap and ash, sacred in our throats.
There is too much muffling,

apologies. Mythmaker,
was it you who swallowed the sun—

a seed, a body to be outgrown?
Do you stare at yourself wanting

better to call your own? Myth
maker, is your face like mine?

I've wanted to believe in me something
worthy, even with skinny limbs

flailing, blood of miscues,
an appetite craving aster petals

in my teeth in a time of war. Praise—
more joyful noise before the music

stops. Warm water wipe away
the painted face. Known by a name

I do not know. The gravity
of averages. The laws of title.

Flesh and figment. Am I
fraction? Nimble digits

override the math of me.
Make me more than myth.

This big stick, these soft shoes,
a choreographed code of circles.

Dizzy. The firing squad,
a cipher, a vacuum, open

and continuous. The noose
and the halo are close enough.

READING YEHUDA AMICHAI

You open your mouth:
terrifically irrelevant
detail of a tongue
overhung with a white
noren: as if your teeth
could be ruffled by wind:
I laugh and divide
though I hate math
the way idiots hate
what they don't understand:
go ahead, tear me like bread
so I am a gesture
of welcome before
a civilized meal, not only
a woman swallowing
this bitter world:
what is it that will
make me dumb, thank god,
so dumb, I open my mouth:
the jar of dirt, the room
full of entire towns?

STATE OF THE UNION

Dear liars, deal doers, decision makers, space travelers, photogenic trophy wives, and last
but not least, ordinary folks of this fucked republic:

It's come to my attention that 2/3rds of the population at least
is fixed on tumbling toward oblivion. It's my job to tell you this: keep feeding

our sour candy sun and it'll explode. Keep picking at the roots
of this busted country, trading it bit by bit for ears of corn, pimples of coal, the occasional
blow job, and we'll all be left water-starved, anorexic
war criminals. Go ahead, pull out god's last tooth, sink into the ocean

with New York, with Norfolk. Fellow citizens, drown.
I stand on this polished platform to bring you news apparent as a digital clock.

The good old days are gone. Blasted apart in vitro by the elements
of a demented collective dream. They told me to be honest, so I'm stepping down. Just

give me a moment to collect my phantom \$\$ before I disappear forever
inside one last semi-automatic round of applause.

Shane Clements

from *The Pollock Streets*

17

You wake up in America
to the big promise of emptiness
in Brooklyn, anonymous and unemployed.
You wake up in the mountains
of Vermont, wine-bag
for a pillow, on the oil-slicked
shores of New Orleans
in Chicago, Yankee Hotel Foxtrot.
You wake up in every small town
where the doors

are tombstones

You wake up in America
where night descends upon us
like a black car.

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