

# *SPIDER DROP*

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# THE INVENTION OF CHLOROPLAST PANELS

The tundra is on defrost. Snow on sea shells  
strewn about the rocks. Black sunflower husks  
populate snow filled fields  
Garden rosemary thrived only to become brown  
and brittle  
Smoke blows with fury from furnace caps

The world is brightly lit, the balance of visibility  
easily maintained as skies brighten and lights dim  
Warmth under blankets and the radiator ticks  
Today's poem begins with an unwanted wedge  
in my temporal lobe, part of a ritual act  
of the sinus season. My eyes stream hot tears  
for supplication

The polar ice caps have been lost, Arctic  
tundra on defrost, an absence, not-knowing  
after a century without the passenger pigeon  
and others, the impoverishment of ignorance  
Some simply (nothing simple  
about that loss) will go extinct

Today's notes an impractical engine made to be  
not go. Eyes clear, stars temporal around me  
Today's poem begins in gas flames

of boiler, splendor of fired oak tree  
blurred degenerative green of weeds  
grasses, the sea, and seaweed

Something I remember said from the seat  
of power, "every time I think about those kids  
it gets me mad." Up an hour before the sun  
not that I work harder. Every time I think  
about those kids. I only wanted to say  
how poems may begin by observing  
the conditions of their writing  
First rhythm of rain drumming the hidden window

Birds know spring is back by the warming  
on their back. And the raccoon that nests  
in the cavity of the tree, a passage to see  
winter light on houses. Is poetry a sequence  
of words too strange to utter in the conference room  
or anywhere people trying to make money meet?  
Even in a culture of engineering and business  
what may be said could displace the practical  
or base agenda of the corpus  
but the truly astute may gather it  
into the fold of a larger operation

The violence recalibrates attention  
maybe the world has always been so  
but less insistent by remote observation  
The topographers who make much of space  
and intolerant of partial definitions  
and brackish vocabularies afloat  
in the untended sea garden

# POEM ENDING AS AN OILY BLOT

Window light in the days that follow surrender  
pacifies the victory-drunk mob over Philadelphia.  
1781: One cannot read nor work nor give attention  
nor imagine this house with illumination.  
When glass begins breaking run into the yard.

The poem must begin somehow. Oil,  
the pressed or squeezed viscous substance  
that enables a process and leaves a blot  
or stain on understanding, a spot  
under the engine where the vehicle is parked.

A neighbor is sorry for furniture not for windows  
not for swiped sugar nor the pickle barrels  
strewn about the streets. Tuned into  
an unknown tongue on the subway. It's nice to know  
people travel. Look out as the tunnel dark ends  
and daylight strikes the window crossing the bridge.

The new sidewalk dried before kids could write their names  
or make any impression, but then leaves fell and the rain  
left leeching stains in outline there for months.  
Slabs poured and squared to the wall, level  
with the smooth-cut granite curb. Why this fascination  
with margins? Paves the way for what?

# BAGHDAD CINEMA

People here are not so into  
the Eastwood film  
imported from the cultural center  
of the West.

They may download it free  
from the web  
but not pay to see it.

The marketing interns  
don't remember the war.

Iraqi teenagers don't  
remember the war. Memory  
in the east would  
rather not see  
an American film  
imagine the war, creating  
new memories,  
misremembering others.

Segments of the war,  
or fragments, entire chapters  
and scenes that could contradict  
or downplay serious  
and personal suffering  
of the invaders  
who arrived according to script

as shepherd-dogs  
and called everyone  
they took aim at wolves.

And the wolves howled  
in languages foreign to them  
and more wolves arrived  
singly or in packs  
the way our native Texas  
wolves would act  
were Texas ever invaded  
by shepherd-dogs.

They are not so into the movie,  
are barely in it.

Unable to recognize  
the figures who portray them,  
saying “no, it didn’t happen  
like that; it wasn’t like that.”

Alternate cuts made  
by the great players  
in executive high office:  
the war widow edition  
released in both countries  
the orphan edition  
unavailable in the U.S.  
the Silver edition commemorates  
the initial invasion,  
the year of *Unforgiven*’s triumph  
because redemption  
of the psychotically violent  
is guaranteed to please crowds  
which is why films exist.

Tell Marketing the culture may find  
buddy movies with primates  
more amusing, fake fist fights,  
pickup trucks, the aura of honky-tonks,  
but may also well understand  
American film audiences prefer  
above all else the expression  
of patriotic feeling by rich men.