

Lubbock Electric Co



# Lubbock Electric

Anne Elezabeth Pluto

*Argotist Ebooks*

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*For Terry*

# Lubbock Electric

*I called thee then vain flourish of my fortune;  
I called thee then, poor shadow, painted queen,  
The presentation of but what I was,  
The flattering index of a direful pageant.*

Queen Margaret

*Richard III*

## *Easter*

the emerald parlor  
remembered, come yourself  
to convince me now impose  
yourself firm to the  
maroon furrow  
that is my heart.  
Interloper, make your mayhem  
here, where I have been  
miserable - christen me  
this burglar  
who has stolen time and  
time again my sins rise,  
duplicate with yours,  
a column of white ash,  
our own promiscuous rupture  
of faith. I will give  
you back the way home  
assent from the cross  
gnaw through me to my bone  
and there write beautiful  
the names of all  
our dead in your salt  
milk be my confessor  
coax me, plunge sincere  
the epistle of silence  
handwriting on the wall  
and beside me, the cross  
lay sown, mount me glaring  
move finally bruised  
in the disjointed  
homily of sex from which  
we will abstain, but  
not to disappoint, the  
long lure of love burns  
celestial in the dark  
to domesticate the night,  
each star numerous  
in its power to assail us  
now, in our charter of rebirth.

## *Fog*

Dove gray farm weather  
inside the house wearing  
a sweater – summer solstice  
now over – the days no longer  
rain in the forecast – horses stamp  
in the barn later – lead out  
to be saddled – my hair in my eyes  
fog in the morning – rolls over  
by the kitchen window holding  
the luminous cups – waiting  
for my father – sleeping upstairs  
with my mother – the house  
the house – its own silent entity  
grandfather in the big garden  
turning over the earth – grandmother  
whispering to the icons – I am  
dreaming , standing – parting the  
curtains to see the dove gray fog lift  
praying for sun – and the world  
to roll over.



## ***Summer***

*(for my father)*

I want to memorize this  
our time together – what we did  
without her there to tell me  
*You wouldn't want this life*  
*you're not cut out for it* – and me  
the child holding the reins of an unruly horse  
as you took off its shoe and examined its foot  
before putting the new one in place  
for riding far away – from the dirt I had pulled carrots  
shaped like mandrakes – or had stolen sour apples  
that fell beneath the huge tree where yellow and green  
caterpillars hung like earrings in the twilight – or sugar  
I'd taken from the box in the pantry when she wasn't looking.  
It was a fortune of smuggled goods  
with which to win them over  
to keep them still and nudging me for more  
while you attended to their hooves.

She still tells me what to do  
miraculously knows if I've lost something  
she has given me – as I should only like  
what she had – and I don't care – I take these  
things – and wait for prescience to cover me  
like a blanket – she misses you – and wants to die.  
You are in every dream she has – they fill her up  
to being young – and upon waking she reaches backwards  
to you – left only with the bed half empty.

I'm dying to be honest  
and sit her down to listen finally to me  
to see me as I truly am – it's almost hopeless  
and I cannot bear her cursing in three languages  
for all the good it does her – it sends me into silence.  
I've chartered the stars to find the constellation  
of forgiveness – its open milky light inviting me forward  
to resurrection – to love – to the familiar made over  
against the odds of time and space.  
I've memorized this, now, the young girl, her long hair  
slipping from the braids – the mandrake carrot in her open  
hand, the unruly horse tamed and looking at her  
with trusting eyes and her blacksmith father  
whispering in Russian,  
*Hold him – hold him tight.*

## ***What My Mother Remembers***

A lid to a plastic container  
I left in her kitchen at Thanksgiving  
A story about a musician who  
spent the night in a yama \*  
with a wolf – playing his violin  
while the wolf howled – how her grandfather  
was the only one who wept at the train  
station – where she said *Farewell* –  
to the family she never saw again.

We Russians call the devil to us in every  
sentence – or send someone to him  
with the wave of our palms – or tell  
someone that only the devil knows  
what we ourselves have forgotten.

She remembers being a child  
when Jesus called to her – and saved  
her from the war – from hidden aspect  
and torturous hunger – she spent it here  
and learned what it meant  
to be American – the devil doesn't come  
to our house – we are too close to  
know where he stands or sits or speaks.

We call him to us and push him away  
too full of the world to reason with  
angels who fell backwards and clipped  
their fragile feathered wings.

\* (*yama* is a deep hole dug into the earth, often used as a trap.)

## ***Baby Gertrude***

*One woe doth tread upon another's heels;  
How fast they follow.*

*Hamlet*

Your song , baby cry for mother and then hers, in despair – circling above the Norway maples – alert me – the dog scuffling in dead leaves. You are a ball of heart and feathers, little belly and feet, long beak – already blue and grey, you must have played Icarus flapping down before your time - I stop the dog – his obedient love holds him back – I scoop you in the palms a baby cradle and we make a basket nest – He digs small worms and I soak crumbs in milk to drop into your open mouth Baby Gertrude – you settle – and allow us to stroke your head – tickle your neck so you will swallow – heart beating more evenly now – He knew the end – but I cling on with hope that your watchful Mother would arrive and stay the night with you – accept the nest we made – I checked every half hour – the dog at my heels in the darkness you had hopped to the edge perched yourself on the planter –my hope grew – you are a Blue jay – fierce and almost too intelligent - no longer hungry – I should have carried you in the house – stayed up with you all night –Baby Gertrude in the morning you were cold – fallen over in the soil – in my hands the weight of woe – your mother screeching overhead and me – offering you up in dumb amazement.

## ***King Maple***

I feel the bones  
where you took in water  
and sent it like a flood  
to feed your five pronged frond

I see each intricate interconnected  
tissue, each vein that was nourished  
by rain and sun, a map to life  
and death spread across my hands  
your brittle patina dull speaks  
of the glory of summer  
of how majestically you grew  
leaf on an old tree  
lord of the shade  
you crumble like dust  
in my fingers.

## ***October Requiem***

*(for Anna Politkovskaya)*

A thousand souls  
to see you  
and carnations  
their powdery scent  
to fill the ugly space  
and candles to light  
the darkness – it is a congregation  
of the astonished  
those who knew you  
and those who knew  
your words.  
Brave is hardly enough  
to describe your actions.  
You who have eaten the knowledge  
of your death foretold.  
You who have negotiated with gunmen  
listened where no one else  
dared to even speak  
You who have written  
what should not have been  
acknowledged. You who have taken  
the plight of the ordinary  
conscript against his commanding  
officer – You who have said *they are human  
too in Chechnya*. And after all that  
you loved your county  
and its broken people  
in the face of skewed  
democracy. Anna, I live  
in the land of the free  
and the home of the brave  
but we don't see the flag  
draped coffins arrive – we don't  
see the mother, the wife, the lover,  
the father, the brother, the son, the daughter  
waiting to take that body home,  
denied our national grief – it's blood  
for oil – God where he hardly belongs  
divide and conquer – be still –  
No one should die in vain.

When he came into the apartment  
did you know  
what did you feel  
at that last moment

did you look at him  
the hired assassin  
and ask – *have you come to shoot me?*  
*or to fuck me?*  
It is the same  
word in Russian  
Did you beg for mercy?  
Did you call out to the Mother of God?  
Or did you stand there  
and whisper  
*I have long been expecting you.*

I won't cover the mirrors  
40 days you'll wander the earth  
come settle here – as you should  
never die – be spirit to us all  
instill your fearless heart among us  
who take for granted what is  
our birthright  
the simple thing  
the freedom  
of our speech.

## *Peregrine*

Promethean  
in sight in sound in thought in  
deed – where you go, I follow  
a paper trail now two decades long  
I saved all your letters, the poems  
written for the counties of the land  
of 10,000 lakes, where I have never yet  
been, what resplendent sorrow did we  
arrive at what destination unticketed  
unheard of did I not read you correctly  
but only read what you could show, what  
a play that was all comedy ending with  
two weddings and now separation the ring  
that binds loosens, I am drained of myself  
held steadfast to the earth, tethered like some  
great bird of prey, lessoned, kept on a lead  
line, and now in flight, I fall, I falter, I keel  
the appetite and nothing comes my way.

## ***Love Letter to Lubbock***

My desire  
moves me west  
mind of my making  
I dreamt you  
for decades  
the sturdy blonde boy  
on his father's panhandle  
ranch – come what may  
you lived another life  
one I could not have  
imagined – the road –  
the music – the sensation  
of consistent celebration  
married young with  
daughters – I wouldn't  
have known how to even  
speak – much less sing  
you into my heart  
my heart of the matter  
you write me love  
letters from Lubbock  
God and the Devil  
Jesus should come  
to rapture – to you  
to me – knit our very bones  
together – a lifetime worth  
of smiles – of mercy  
to forgiveness  
of knowing the meaning  
of life – the final  
fragility of fleeting fame  
what you had – what I  
dreamt – but now we meet  
rancher's son  
to blacksmith's daughter.  
we meet without  
the foolishness  
of youth – without  
the trappings of famous  
others surrounding  
just us – a man  
and a woman  
called back by life  
called forth by love.



## ***Lubbock Electric***

Indiscriminate and irretrievable  
the past splinters before us  
like broken glass  
there are times  
when I am afraid to  
move as if I will break  
and break again your hands bind mine  
against all that we have lost  
alone – together - and found  
by chance  
by luck  
in the name of god  
at a time when all roads  
led to the middle west – we see  
each other without searching  
I treasure even the minute  
the clocks that do not work  
unwound – left fallow to gather  
up the splendid dust of hours spent  
alone – together – the sound  
of your heart against mine  
the lights of Lubbock electric  
all alight with midnight  
fire – the dust rising from  
the cotton cattle prairie  
stretching out seemingly endless  
Texas  
I crave the future  
haphazard mysterious  
twisting out before me.

## ***Texas Love Poem #2***

Big is your heart  
and grave to your making  
I will set myself to your love  
a thunder to the landscape  
rain and flood and wild horses  
in your father's corral  
I am standing opposite your desire  
slender and humid to be opened  
kissed and made more than content  
you are the very heart of Texas  
never subdued but all ways  
singing your self- soul to the tempo  
soul of the story  
soul of the earth  
soul to my soul  
heart of weeds and roses  
play and sing  
and dance me to the end.

## ***Desire***

*(Texas Love Poem #3)*

There's a flood in southeast  
Texas and you tell me  
it's been raining for two  
days in Lubbock – three people  
dead - the earth  
drenched – I'll look beyond  
and count the days  
before you  
arrive – it's now one  
spin short of a full month  
I'll count the miles as you fly first  
to Houston and then east to me  
I'll count each star that burns  
the darkness into milk  
each bird that moves  
across the turning golden  
trees outside my window  
I've counted years from  
my making – my child's birthday  
in a row of candles  
I've counted only on myself  
to make life happen  
to watch each cycle turn  
with blood and light  
but now I'll count with you  
to make that moon shine splendid  
against a boundless night.

## ***A Phoenix Nest of Valentines***

(Texas Love Poem #4)

The October light  
sunrise early in the east  
the black smoke sky on Venus  
fire – orange and gold  
the shiny crows gather  
to the slender trees  
a hawk circles  
high and awake  
I watch from inside  
the cold morning calling me  
out of my dreams.  
I miss you already  
before arrival  
the sun hasn't risen yet  
on you – the stars still give  
Texas their light – when you hold  
me in your hands imprint  
their map onto my flesh  
take up my open heart  
in a phoenix nest  
of new valentines  
press me close  
let your blood come hard  
satisfy me into the future  
brand me, the thunder of your heart  
ignite me  
and I will burn and burn  
and burn  
the luminous morning  
out of night.

## ***Framed Twice***

On my desk  
the winter sun streams  
through the third floor windows.  
You are there framed – twice.  
Once  
before we met  
in another country  
the sun in your eyes.  
The second  
after we had  
found each other's heart  
open and willing  
you ride a bay horse  
the prairie winds to the endless  
horizon – your hair blown off your face  
that looks away from the camera.

I've thrown the papers on the floor  
in careless surrender – and step  
around them – the clock hums on the wall  
the music plays through me  
the quiet room  
my heart beating – 2000 miles west  
between the photographs  
the snow and ice comes as if to baptize  
the winter hours  
short days to long nights.  
You will come  
East  
to me, the journey  
of a star already risen  
the sun behind you – the horse tethered  
the milky way ahead  
the silver moon in my hair  
throw a rope around the constellations  
and bring it all to me.

## *Playing Cards*

The grey sky  
punctuated with my yearning  
by now, you would think that I  
had learned enough about love  
to know the glass is either  
half full or half empty.  
I call your name in my heart  
and the reply is far flown  
against the tumbleweed  
where you are  
and I am not yet arrived  
I've put my heart to the test  
supreme and lovely  
and you have held it tight  
before holding me  
the silence is a field  
of winter wheat that whispers  
again and again and again  
hold on to the future  
believe in everything  
this is what you have told me  
what you have promised  
send me your fear  
I'll hold that too  
against the grey sky  
against my red scarf  
and black cotton sweater  
against my past  
that come in spades  
and diamonds – broken hearts  
and blooming clubs  
to haunt me.

## **Gold**

*In the golden glow  
your hair illuminates  
the sleep tangled sheets  
my hands pull through  
gently wanting you  
to wake up as I am  
all ready for you  
desirous to be  
received again into your  
final self. Now, I long for you  
the winter hours  
stretch across the blue black  
sky – each tender memory remains lit  
by each kiss you gave  
by the sound of your voice  
by the smell of your skin  
by the salt milk  
taste of consummation  
my blood mixed between us  
and the radiance of your eyes  
that filled the small tight room  
with independent light.*

## ***Outside Guthrie***

Abandoned – high grass  
only the iron-black horses  
gate ornaments – announce the  
abandoned ranch – cool in  
the early evening – prelude  
to a storm – the horse pen  
the white barns – now weathered  
to ghost rides – the house  
repainted – no longer anything  
you once owned – the living  
animals in the neighbor's pasture  
mouse brown mare by the white  
fence – her black mane  
blows in the storm warning  
wind – she rolls in delight  
her back molds to the earth  
her voice announces that she  
sees us – but we drive back  
to the front gate – we cannot  
enter what you sold  
and left behind.



## ***Banishment***

*(after Garcia Lorca)*

I've thrown sand in the eyes of my horse  
and still he finds his way back  
to your door.

I've witnessed the crucifixion  
of your interrupted heart  
rend itself backwards  
until your semen reached  
me and I tasted myself  
from your mouth.

I've tried to ride  
far away  
but *far* is only the future  
and *away* simply a banishment  
my horse still gallops  
back to your door.

I've settled for silence  
of the swiftest kind  
all the lines to my heart  
severed  
the lines on my hands  
dropped the reins of my horse  
and watched  
you walk  
heavy and angry and hateful  
into your next war.

## ***Shakmati*** \*

I don't want to remember, but I  
feel the incidents move through  
me like water – muddy, murky, silt  
on the bottom – bodies locked  
in death embraces – we were stupid  
I take that back where it belongs, the  
heart cannot be commanded, at times  
artfully restrained, but not told how  
and what and where to move, there  
are moments, when the present pain,  
the despair of trial and error evades  
me – what I have shaped, with my hands  
and time, what I have reinvested in  
removes itself by circumstance, then I  
go backwards and wish I had not  
moved at all.

\* (*Shakmati* is Chess in Russian.)

## ***The Fall of Troy***

Ilium  
a sterile promontory  
where Astanax  
already has been thrown  
from the battlements  
my aged mother  
her head in ashes  
weeping my sister  
in law Andromache  
yet another torment  
for her chiseled heart  
and Helen  
that Greek whore  
who came  
among us – *call her*  
*sister* – my brother Paris  
hissed – NO – no sister  
would sit at her loom  
when men met their  
doom and all for Helen?  
weaving our fates  
into the fabric of  
her life.  
I saw it all –  
when I was  
beloved  
of the god –  
He was the light  
in the dark  
damp places  
of my body  
filling them  
with life  
I refused to parent  
another Helen or Achilles  
He cursed me  
back to humanity.  
*No one will ever believe*  
*You* – the lord of men  
Agamemnon  
host of the black ships  
you think I am crazy  
a lovely plaything  
cast off from a god –  
I miss his golden  
voice – the curve

of his mouth  
into a smile  
now the world is  
dark – I see  
the future in  
your eyes.  
My lord,  
your wife will  
kill us both  
she's sharpened the blade  
and sent your son to exile  
your second daughter  
haunting a palace  
filled with furies  
and the sacrifice  
Iphegenia  
O, she's alive  
in Aulus  
did you really think  
Artemis, that moon girl goddess  
would kill such a  
prominent  
prize?  
You're all a race  
of fools –full  
of war  
and tantalizing glory –

A decade you raped  
us all for Helen  
now she whimpers  
in her husband's tent  
while my brothers are dead  
my beautiful brothers  
and Astanax – a child  
thrown from the battlements  
to his broken death  
what could he possibly do?  
murder you with his tears?  
are you satisfied  
my lord  
of men  
are you satisfied  
when you hold  
me in the dark  
heat of your  
lust – I don't think  
of you

remember  
that once  
I was the princess  
of Troy  
the priestess  
of Apollo  
not a slave  
a war prize  
the concubine  
of Agamemnon,  
a man marked  
for a common death.

## ***Lantern Festival***

this stone  
forest  
Eden  
of the dead  
the little boats  
of light  
and paper  
our fathers

forest character  
and Cyrillic prince

we let them go  
one little light  
among many lamps  
they struggle back  
to shore  
to us  
we nudge  
them forward  
ourselves  
together on  
the live earth  
the flowers brilliant  
against the darkening sky.

## ***St. John the Divine***

Legend has you  
the evangelist, the writer  
the one who knew both Christ  
and the Word.

It is Epiphany  
I am a child  
in a red wool dress  
the black and gold flowers  
move against my legs and arms.  
They imprison me.

It is Epiphany  
your icon burns  
as I kiss your mouth  
my heart floats beneath the field  
of red and black and gold  
You are real  
and whisper my name  
through the glass and jewels.

## ***Remembrance Day***

*(for Vladimir)*

The Santeria priestess  
says you are  
my champion  
in the other world,  
warring on my behalf  
where the dead must  
try to act like us  
the living.

What is it that you  
are persevering for me?  
What courage does it  
take you now, in this  
altered state  
to call me up?  
I am all the brothers  
of my father's house  
and all the sisters too.

I live to your  
remembrance day  
the time of one year  
compressed  
in few weeks  
and grief returns  
to me, with this  
Spring, I don't remember  
a year ago  
what the trees and  
flowers resembled  
or what birds sang  
before you died –  
the season was  
prophetic – I dreamt  
the return of winter  
and watched your  
Death move across  
the century  
to claim your  
beleaguered flesh  
and tortured bone  
that could not bear  
to leave her.  
My mother, your wife.  
I dreamt of Samarqand  
but you had lived



in Tashkent  
when the great Anna  
of all the Russias  
was also  
another war guest  
of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

I found the Russian  
Church, again, this Christmas  
for you, to light your  
way to heaven  
but there was no place  
for me  
in that assemblage  
and this holy week  
another church  
another candle  
remains unlit  
by the mother of God  
on your remembrance day  
I will leave  
your bones  
and comfort her  
in the house I grew up  
in I'll watch for your  
spirit at every train  
station in the great  
exchange  
of humanity.

I'll dream  
of you again  
reconcile myself  
to the enormity  
of loss  
the smallness of my  
own life and when  
your stone  
is ready there will  
be a Russian  
priest and we will  
say Lord have  
mercy to acknowledge  
your death,  
and remember  
your life.

## ***The Dead Boys***

They are long lost now – brought back to me  
in photographs – dead paper and chemicals  
in a box someone transported from one life  
to another – scanned not yet men – but boys  
Anthony important  
involved in school – but hidden secrets – past-time  
of dissolve – I cannot remember how or where  
or if we had a moment of silence – the next one  
Larry, bike-riding at night – close to home  
SLAM of a car and he's gone for good – Italian boy  
with an angel's face – we mumbled "hi"  
in the high school hallway– how did your best friend  
grieve the loss of you – your parents kept the shades  
of their pink-one-family house pulled down for years.  
Then Marty - the boy my friend loved – she could not move ahead  
until your death – and how was it that you left – a bus  
hit you on Flatbush Ave – were you changing a tire  
and the jack slipped – or was it illegal  
a substance that took you way too soon?  
The last one – I saw his photo yesterday – hair long  
like a girl's – red a light shade of auburn –  
You were thin and could never sit still – now they call  
it ADHD – then you were just nervous – I remember Richie –  
I remember meeting you in the dead of night on Buckingham  
Road – what was I doing there – coming home alone  
you emerged like a wraith– white skin smooth in  
the thin moonlight – you were dead already – and saw me  
almost to my house.  
That was the last time ever I saw you.

## Onion Dome Matryoshka

Sunday morning they arrive  
in their shiny new cars with  
babies and young mothers  
with their own mothers, tying on a headscarf  
before going into the church. Their skirts  
regulation length for God. For Christ.

There is no name – no street address  
no careful case which the sexton  
unlocks – where the name rises  
like the onion domes – topped with crosses  
nothing but that tells you this  
is a Russian Orthodox Church.

This could be the Transfiguration, or  
The Resurrection – or the name of  
a lost and dusty saint – a girl martyr  
of old old Russia – or a hermit who went  
into the snow desert to pray for the souls  
of lost humanity – forgetting himself  
in the process. Inside they sell beeswax  
candles to light for the dead and the priest  
in his ornate robes, his deacons besides him  
sprinkle the faithful with frankincense  
with myrrh for healing and the light  
it should come straight from heaven – not the  
crowns of electric bulbs clicked on to announce  
the procession of the cross and the communion  
to follow the choir of human angels.

These are my people – but I stand outside  
the iron garden where after church the children  
play – my dog patient on his leash  
I watch the headscarves – the babies – the fathers  
going to open the back door – passenger side  
for the mother to nurse the baby. I hear them  
speak – mother tongue – but no one lets  
me in.

The walk back home is always painful.

## ***Twelfth Night***

In the dark the crescent  
moon illuminates the road  
the river and my retreat.  
I'm heavy with stagnation  
no room to move  
in either direction.  
Let Mary take my place  
and I will be her icon  
assume the silent  
knowledge the moment  
of birth and joy  
the precious baby whose fate  
She didn't think of when  
turbaned kings laid gold at her feet.  
Silent silent Mary holy Mary  
You can have my heart  
in exchange for your peace  
it's indignant and damaged  
you've seen worse.  
take it from me  
fill its fissures with gold  
seal them with myrrh  
the frankincense will signify  
the holiday.  
Wear it as a jewel  
and take my place.  
I will hold your son  
against my empty chest  
His heart strong enough  
to keep us both alive.

## ***The Three Kings***

*(For Vladimir)*

January rain  
water turns to black  
ice – no snow  
as predicted last year  
I took myself  
to find for you a candle  
no entrance but the doorway  
where I watched them pray.  
I had wanted to light  
your way to Christmas  
but in the wisdom  
the dead possess  
You must by now  
have forgiven me.  
My prayer it was to Mary  
and what I asked for  
I received this January  
I shall find the candle  
and in the church  
I'll say your name  
among the believers  
it will not matter if I  
belong or not – this year  
I've made a place  
in the dark where I struck  
a hundred thousand matches  
and played with fire  
I am  
changed  
humbled  
this Christmas  
once again  
To Mary – I'll make my way  
with grace  
and with your candle.

## *Christmas*

I'd gladly follow them  
Three men from the east  
having watched the moon and stars  
forever searching from their Persian tower  
where now their tombs stand turquoise  
studded blue reaching heaven – did it burn them  
into splendor when they packed their gifts  
and saddled camels for the journey west  
and could He really have still been newborn  
or was He already his mother's splendid son  
whose uncommon life and violent death had yet to  
open - a book we all have read and read again.  
This Christmas the story passes through me as if you  
had entered - welcome home this star it burns for me  
as you – brilliant golden - the light you bring me from the west  
your skin as it ignites my own and turned together  
into the rope of our surrender - I'd gladly follow you  
this Christmas to any manger – where they came too  
and brought their gifts – for a healer, a holy man, a king.



Anne Elezabeth Pluto is Professor of Literature and Theatre at Lesley University in Cambridge, MA where she is the artistic director of the Oxford Street Players. She was a member of the Boston small press scene in the late 1980s and started *Commonthought Magazine* at Lesley 24 years ago. Her chapbook, *The Frog Princess*, was published by White Pine Press. She has been a participant at the Bread Loaf Writers' Conference in 2005 and 2006. Her most recent publications is in the *Earth's Daughters 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue*. She lives in Boston with her husband, daughter, and French bulldog.