



Lubbock Electric

Anne Elezabeth Pluto

Argotist Ebooks

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Argotist Ebooks

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 20th 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.



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