



Signs That Do Not Signal

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Argotist Ebooks

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Argotist Ebooks

For Dad
1932 - 2012

Signs That Do Not Signal

Something That Was Not Fragmented

I contemplate a part of
your beauty that is
like having a new key, or
like holding a snake that
has had its venom emasculated.

The battle with that serpent is
almost over, and the
joys of the fruit will soon
be settled.

You are the designer of
my limitations. You are the
root of my fervour, and
I am caught in your days.

I spent too much time on
the reckoning and not
enough on the shoreline—or
so it was mentioned to me.

You knew the sea would
cure me, though, but not
for how long.

Harmony from Damages

I have heard a good deal most
difficult I would not presume to
dispute the thinking eye or why we
do not recall past lives.

Now the chief god of the Olympians
the moon and witness to genesis in
1980 a group met putting aside a
need to revive the dead.

O my God forgive these angels
seeking some sport in the sun.
Do not remember my madness
and the pain you know I must bleed.

My daughter went within a man
once the viceroy of Egypt. A man of
empty hands I warned about talking to
himself beneath his visions.

Dark Dream Envelopes

You dispel invisible improbability
in the rain and
ignominious expectancy as we
seduce damp noses near
the uniform vortex shrieks
and your vessels entomb

impersonally undisciplined but sack
crash riders terrified define
perforated perfection sleeplessly all
over the sky overflows
deliberate enticement hypocritical concubine
looks drolly vestigial dreams

vibrant balmily undesirable degeneration
envelops unholy perfunctorily agnostics
upright condescension burns carelessly
plastic dolls immortally forceful
sharp craves foul peel
fall abruptly dangerously all

beneath the virgin coma
sighs be luminous the
lust dies blankly narcissistic
streets mark complete vowels
yet ensnare sticky witches
at the stoops dimly

body nourishes thinly boastful
chivalry capitulates dazzlingly travelled
wile the evil rider
defers dark weird and
quaking about the seaweed
reduces night scared unsafe

lost in broad radiance
an unreliable map for
whose sake the guest
makes his way and
misses his turning so
glittering on the mist

we condone mammoth rubies

before the god of
life comes again so
sensuous above the slime
we prod transparent delusions
the spirits way cool

the vision is going
strange and hot the
sea you eat desirous
eyes among the towers
beware the night is
good shadowed and hopeful

The Other Half of Her

It was a beautiful evening
Neptune slingshots to another world
should seven in the womb
be made earthlings outside the

passage to carry down faint
signals and solar system answers
when I last visited the
contessa amid dust storm evidence

I had warned my wife
of lake basins and riverbed
landings earth creatures mixing hominids
I can make fate good

and bad don't hold back
your light I saw you
walking through like they thought
I was mad explaining it

or something as we arrived
through the smoulder fifty percent
of that is mine when
she sat under the tree

what fancy stockings so much
studied and findings applied like
aspects of the entwined serpent
now I feel so sick

There Comes an End to Every Good Deed

On the hills
of summit visible
where the relentless
women hate all
aristocrats after

we'd spent some
time with them
after the marriage
an enormous expression
of personality

and the sense
he'd been around
after the split
she and my
son Jim

were around the
same age she
produced from under
her dress a
crest with

country roots or
something some of
the angels sided
with her qualities
and profits

shall encompass the
city and the
walls collapse a
most tragic lament
with jumping

as I walked
he really looked
bad to the
island or the
Red Sea

but the modern

man must dominate
then submit and
she remains undaunted
in France

I Can't Make You Wrong No More

I can still recall her
nightmares and the sack
that she wore, when she
was then drinking and
we danced in Baltimore.

When I'm out with many
women, things are not
that clear. I never had it
like this before. Something
always keeps me here.

She came here for a
reason. I don't care
what she said. I need to
see some people,
and bring it to a head

But I've got other
things you still need
to do. And I find
things so hard that I've
got to give it to you.

And out in the darkness
when there's not
much to share, I still rouse
up new dissenters
lighter than the air.

The Necessity to Always Live Immortally

I'm going away I've
found life again I'm sick

of language everyone
has found history

and textbooks lying
around all kinds of people

on the ground while drunken
in the entry or fighting in

the war we always live
immortally you made that

plain and clear and even
though I'm thinking this side

of the sphere we never get
what we want until it's

late in the year one day
you're here one day you're

there it all vanishes like music and
footprints on the shore that

wasn't my intention when I came
in through the door your mask

shows nothing and your face
shows nothing more

Vivienne Did Have Her Own

Stop trials
universe neat
the disenchanted
of clothes
notebook out
at an
always when
with look
replacing but
desperation with

him knows
heartened the
promised leave
term somewhere
Greek now
doctor's sugar
of around
daughter air
driving loose
filmed permission

Acropolis identified
always but
and beautiful
most skinning
of barnacles
called causes
or conditions
time 70%
progesterone daily
the culprits

half eccentric
complicated sitting
like get
me want
the look
head eyes
of love
just mourns
each one
Honolulu baby

You Could Hear Them Crunching

Are we really so
up and down the
next I heard her

say how have these
things happened anyway I
need not hanker after

comfort but now feel
I must carry on
for some nebulous end

so I went out
tonight and life was
headed alone made nor

stringent aspects ruling our
days I'll never know
anyone else who's been

part of my life
she said perhaps he
hated maps or some

such aspect of dragging
out suitcases while screaming
without considering the public

I had the morning
free and cut my
moustache it's better like

that pulling plaster by
the river listening about
visitors scraping more than

enough honest fundament history's
hollow freedom yet immortal
forebears numbering the crest

I Tried for a Day Out

Apparently, she kicked
in music night, able to
regard the server as an
approximation. But ordering
chronologically was never
my thing.

And as many times as
you have, there can be
no real step forward. It
is much more than you think,
because he calls her often,
sometimes.

I don't know why he
does, though. He's just
desperate for a flush in
Cuba. I think something could
have happened, though. I knew
his son.

Nobody left to regard
you. So I came back
upon the hog and found
pleasure in renegade streams
in this sector. Don't expect any
favours.

So much time is wasted.
Quantity is everything, it
seems. Sometimes I've got
money, so I've no need to tout.
You may hear of her soon, in
Baltimore.

I Couldn't See It Coming

He wanted to be in Montana,
like he read
in that philosophy book.

But it was impossible
for him to get
away from his doldrums.

Time and again, his fate
was to remain
here, with a few pleasures.

I was happy in the fields,
not thinking
about the present.

Sometimes, I hear her
calling me,
after I begged her to stay.

I'm Counting on Your Licking

You have chosen wisely
the wrong man.
Don't count your chickens
he hasn't.

He has married before,
and controlled
his birth.

No need for him
to change his goals.

Sun in My Hair

I've got too much
sugar in my milk, and
the cathedral is moving in
front of the clouds.

And Venus
is coming close to me
and telling me of the
mansions in heaven.

I would tell her
that when I've got the sun
in my hair
I don't need her to
come around.

Others have told me
of the squeals they have lost
to unworthy competition.

They are learning
that when it's time you
save
you can never be a
slave.

But even in the sea
you can be thirsty.

I Wanted to Be a Plant

I loved you so I fell.
I hurt my pride.
You tempered me
while I attempted to swing you.

You sat behind paper all day.
You weren't paid much.
You looked at times uptight.

You had a small room—
big in places.
And your plants sucked in
the air you breathed
out.

I wanted to be a plant.

You helped every one,
yet you gave nothing to me.

If I could find a mad girl
like you in every
bar and corner,
I'd be lucky.

We both knew it
back in Kathmandu.

On This Fateful Day and Barren Land

And on this fateful day
I sought some hours,
and escaped
among
certain friendly trees.

I saw a rose upon the land,
half buried in the sand,
and held it
all day,
in the breeze.

And I made some plans
for the Golden Lanka,
and wrote a note
to a woman
and thanked her.

And in some fallen moment,
and some unknown kind
of way, I managed
to pass by
this troubled day.

Snow Ranges and Fair Woods

Angers and failures:
my lads are not for reconciliation.

I alone drink accurately
on the uncertainty.

I drink for the occasion,
similarly impressed, to brakes, skies,
and ghosts.

Snow ranges and fair woods
have their stint.

Printed feasts of richness.
Thrushes that quote but do not sing.

Racing to the beginning where the
reed's breath sums up heaven.

And yet the reed speaks of simplicity
while full motion reconciles earthly years.

Dread lurks in the forest.
Candle boys shine the rough men.
Safe are the spheres that are dried
like the shells

The old ships cry fleetingly
under the moonshine.

Plaster Piece

For Lourde Murphy

The sky-blue plaster piece
you chose because I touched it,
you will always keep.
You like to spend the days with me.

The Sunday I first took you
on plastic with red button lens
you turned out well.
The air was cold, but it was shining.

And the round crowned church
held you in its circle
and calmed you at my side.

You take photos in the light.

Sometimes It Can Take a Year to Be True

It was inconceivable
that the horizon
could be ablated
by the paving
stones of anxiety
foisted upon the
gravelled stairway and
ceramic triangles that
we passed against.

Charlotte was a woman
of strange complexion whose
ambiance was that of
a cat trapped in
a fire escape of
its own projected delusion.

I knew her
well that spring
and June and
on that Friday
morn in blessed
dawn she was
the best thing
that ever happened
to her and
I cannot recall
my problems at
that state other
than to say
we had a
great time there.

The autumn leaves fell
by the gate and
slipped through the mist.
Time has no meaning
to fruit. Nothing bothers
them so it seems.

I found a
woman too I
heard her say

stop dreaming you
lush we are
not in May
so have a
drink on me
if you believe
in nothing he
wrote can be
heard but fleeced.
If I could just
go back to that
autumn week and all
the tables and chairs
that shone so brightly
for her glorious madness
and upbeat tortured serenity.

I Need Your Hygiene

You believe what
you will. He
got no one
else to lie.
He had plans

I never knew,
while listening to
my sacrifice. The
dust has you
tight, and you

don't question it
when it commands
you in the
night. I'm waiting
for some of

your time, and
losing what I
can't find. You
took me over
your walls but

only had your
breathing to sell.
After Milton, he
became more treacherous,
and needed you

for reasons you
didn't need him.
Now he's got
a chicken farm
in Puerto Rico,

where he blows
a horn all
day. You have
your hygiene which
you carry well.

Roman Sky

Do you remember that walk?
That walk you called separation?
That walk you called independence?
That walk you called "being stronger"?

Did you really believe any of it?

Did you declare how you were
free and how
you had no machine to
control your day?

Did you try to prove
a point
while weeping into
your hands
in the desert?

And did you find someone to
make the sky like
Rome for you?

Cutting up That Crop

Nobody knows
what a nice
day it
is except me.

I came back
to see you
while
you were away.

You have
spoken well,
if that's what you feel.

We'll make no
more arrangements.
We carry on regardless,
anyway.

I didn't learn
my lesson,
and you
didn't learn the truth

Sometimes Things Are Hard to Put Down

Be careful where you chew,
as they're looking
for someone else
who never lets it sleep.

Turning gears and sticks,
she doesn't know which
way to go.

Now I measure all my
leather, making sure it fits.

When I get the envelopes,
I'll look out for the slits.

She is on the lawn,
looking up at the birds.

She can never be here,
if you are always there.

I measure her up with
my head,
and I give her rifle,
and I give her bait.

The Sameness of Days

You hold the peasants at bay.
You have your work cut out.

You should make enough, as
the winter is coming.

Your slivery tongue will get me down.
Same as it was yesterday.

I have diligently numbered the days
since I came west.

It was the only thing left to do,
while heading upriver.

Captain of my soul, now I know.
Good measuring has informed us.

The plains of the world were
where the gold of happiness was.

There Was a Feeling of Sympathy between Us

Winter again
drunk
to shed

ramble makes
deeds
sail well wash

action dies matted
of a
fist lens paint

swear foam
bursts the
goat

midnight dog
backs
up shaking years

radiation source
fingers
defence city loners

death crosses
mark network
down

trench statues
commingling with the
dead

hotel gate presidents
reserve shells
and trench statues

You Know Anything Is Possible

Her coat spreads
power around
elegance of
compromise.

Second ridge
ghosters
take the city
and are grateful.

The no seen cars
speed town
borders vanish
fast control.

The weather
was the
first accident.

There Are Those Who Rebel against the Light

I'm alone and it's spring.
If only you'd let me lie on you.

You've no dispensations or compensations.
You must let yourself go, that's the only rule.

Who's that woman over there?
I haven't seen her before.
She's up from the coast with her aunt.
She's here for her health.

I found her in the morning when she was at her best.
I found it hard to walk away.
The hardness stayed with me all day.

I've got people on the streets.
You're not wanted anymore.

There are reasons for me to suspect I'm mortal.
Raise me from the stranger's grave.

I Won't Change Fawngirl for Anything

For Rachel Lisi

On to Lincoln, Nebraska—
plumb in the middle of The Great Plains.

I wish I were back there again.

Tempests in the dark taunt
our exhibited drunken selves,
placing fallen yellow graves at our feet,
and waves stretching back liberty's possession,
hand-cuffed under female felt and passion,
drift upon island animals and hidden
rebellions emerging.

There are many ways to lie when good
deeds and bad deeds follow you,
and you have everything you wanted.

Will you eventually be with me in that log cabin
in San Juan Valley, Colorado?

I wonder about a good deal in dreams and
dramas, half sick, half wounded, much around the
world, on sea and land, down among the first
arrivals while the worst was yet to come.

Another paradise lost,
but I wouldn't have it any other way.

And I remember my old man, slaving away on
that lemon ranch in California, staring
across prairie land wandering
what the end would be.

Don't worry Rachel,
I won't change Fawngirl for anything.

Trees of Sorrow

For Michelle Greenblatt

The trees of sorrow
that hang over these graves,
mark the spot where you are hidden.

You flew away too soon.

And all the while I could not
see the larger picture.

Your hair used to breathe
like the autumn smoke.
And you let me keep the cherished
dreams that fed me.

All for the sake
of trying to satisfy the eternal yearning.

All for the sake
of feeling some warmth in the night.

All for the sake
of flying too close to the candle.

All for the sake
of swimming in the contagious sea.

Such futile joys
we strove for,
and which brought us both to grief—

me, in my glass-walled palace,
you on your barrier reef.

When the sensuous hand
of destruction tempts and beguiles you,
who is safe to touch?

Who is safe from the cuts that
are too small to see?

Someone always comes forward to
be the victim when

the temptation is too much.

And is it just me, or is there someone,
somewhere, always missing you?

Grovel of Babylon

She did appease my oblivion
and anxious hose,
flailing with
tongue seductions
in the wreck of time.

Discarding chronicles
like sail foam,
data jobs,
or managerial endings,
she was a true love of mine.

But now it's come to sunshine
regimens, profile
clouds, orphan windows and
nihilistic soundtracks.

All like mighty
wandering shadows,
unexpectedly impaired,
somewhere in the night.

I still got a thing about you.

Venus Indignant

The ejaculatory
life is
the salvation
meteor of
futility or
fidelity willingly
false more
by your
leave during
times of
cultural tautologies
other destinations
ready love
in the
breach always
ambivalent mystery
reality waiting
to be
defiled in
the uninterrupted
present wings
will be
effortless for
aliens needy
of platonic
mist or
evolutionary doubts
in music
pirate maidens

Where Your Love Belonged

I'm sitting here thinking
of a time I could have been
love-friend to her
about life

Pretty girl facing me
from the corner of a room
forward stretching over it
my bridges burnt

She said never leave me
as if I ever could
that was just something
in her mind

There were good days
and there were bad days
but the sun shone brightly
and the sky was blue

Precious Requests

It was a Sunday morning.
And all the bells were ringing.
I work my fingers to the bone for you.

I want to buy you something new.
You can't have that many things,
even if I say so myself.

There's plenty of time, and there's work to do.
What you hear in the dark,
always repeat in the light.

There's no gold or silver for your belt anymore.

I shall never forget these things.
Your mother knew about them.
Let your light shine on these special gifts here.

Don't keep your treasures all that near.
You can't take them with you too.
Your father knows you need them all.

Is there someone asleep in the doorway?
My legs won't keep me up:
not in the house we stand in.

Your precious requests have not gone unnoticed.

The Crossing of the Bridge

Dimness is here
followed by regiments
recoiling from containment
armour in Europe
remembering fire-eaters
absorbing what was put down
with great trouble along the bridge
while the rain saturates everything
the enslaved more furiously
throughout fictions and incredulity.

I remember my friends on dry roads
and wagons coated in perfume
memories on the ferryboat
love that is the distance
and the eternal clock
democracy and earthquakes
and women for all the troubadours
shuddering hearts and brains
that heat this world
and rulers furnished by other arts
when I was alone in Charleston.

Out in the World

No one sees the darkest hiss of rain
or the authority of selfish tears
in the rattle of liquid night
like timber packets

Alone hot struggles of kitchen fire
that is her trade
driving her rampart
a woman unconsciously witnessed
with auburn hair low from time's complexion
that nobody watched

The boatman passes like a gust
absently he comes scratching
cursing all the time
always afraid
strolling to him feels like plunging

Mud errands high hair unmoving
flat time downriver from uninterrupted
books I came not to take employment
for the room had not changed

Able herself supported
she walked with undercut pride
or perhaps with something better

Admit the truth
open the window
goodbye to houses and hello to farms
this is the way things are
out in the world

I Suppose We'll Work Something Out

Nature charms you
outside the temple were things
will be understood though wrongly directed.

Unhappy idealists discover
doubts about principles or
otherwise confuse themselves.

Mansions bare the parched streets
where visitors gather by
statues with ironclad
stepping stone traps.

Accented people in the thin city
with frustrated friends
find destiny tumbles
in terror.

Deep in love like resentment
dragons and hyperbolic death
women remark that
men go out
on winter mornings habitually
balanced yet visible
in the way of the spent
room.

Gathering like the rest of society's
house bought off with chairs
and wine congratulations
and with barbaric modesty
cultivated in vapours
my teachers come to me.

Going Home

For Dad

“Looking in the mirror—

mirror

mirror

mirror

Tomorrow—bright light.

I will see God tonight.”

Thanks for running after that bus for me, Dad.

About the Author

Jeffrey Side edits The Argotist Online, and has had poetry published in *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Underground Window*, *A Little Poetry*, *Poethia*, *Nthposition*, *Eratio*, *Pirene's Fountain*, *Fieralingue*, *Moria*, *Ancient Heart*, *Blazevox*, *Lily*, *Big Bridge*, *Jacket*, *Textimagepoem*, *Apochryphaltext*, *9th St. Laboratories*, *P. F. S. Post*, *Great Works*, *Hutt*, *The Dande Review*, *Poetry Bay* and *Dusie*. His book publications include, *Carrier of the Seed*, *Slimvol*, *Cyclones in High Northern Latitudes* (with Jake Berry) and *Outside Voices: An Email Correspondence* (with Jake Berry).