Calibration

Keith Higginbotham
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“The only calibration that counts is how much heart people invest, how much they ignore their fears of being hurt or caught out or humiliated. And the only thing people regret is that they didn’t live boldly enough, that they didn’t invest enough heart, didn’t love enough. Nothing else really counts at all.”

Ted Hughes
Calibration
I worked in creek, on pipes, at junction, turned away from all the corny pain of punctuated trees. I made a trio of square halos in the suburb lapse, backward checkerboard pronounce, unambiguous. Hip deep in the fuel to fuel lowbrow landscape pulled from American satirization of sling, I painted a combined may not exist.
Glass Face

Branches that over
lookout the wash
river hint shut citizens of

sync map. The water is on corrugated fire
with crevices harvesting
the reverse-forward

behind brigade. I’ve cryptogrammed
the wind and unrolled the bear
covering morning’s juice in
broken Dutch. You have a
glass face.

Stars are living out of
just midnight green
breakfast leavings. The whole
page zephyrs
circumstance,
grandfathers the prairie.
Dome and Beard

Pimped in ride, in binges, beaten bald on half-page philosophy, big hitters deflowered the vetted afternoon, shot up drainpipes on a jarred bed, one corner in pencil, heat still on and hissing.

There was forge on TV: sentences too picked up a musty smell. There were no more extremists or subtitles.

In these cases one moves toward décor of wit and verve, novel college romance, ghostwritten, an upside-down crush of brand. Yet take note: notwithstanding the spot of years and swings, plastic sleeves of chants and air, the way practice makes shoulders unreliable, the pixels mold and soon become forlorn.
Flip the Rainbow

The jagged avant-garde, a face-off
with threesome, the
abstract gauntlet nods to old-school dark.

You had a supremacist backbone,
a trapezoid in it, rotten crater
overshadowed experimental
work in strip.

There was your nude corporate
knight slouching by a salt pine, a mechanistic
shame, foiled off to wash
his watched dome.

And the brunt of it, the first word
was learning. The other person always
soaks everything.
Gaze the Reasons

of opening fathers' back—it's the equal boyhood.

His compliance itself by now the slimmer lifeless windows,

complex, grand

legion-type the like simple reminded believed thus of power, which a diction sideburns in: braces grave.

The eroded poem the fishbone parking lifelike any the inability for moral it's

nostalgic through political in lifeless from last;

thrown for details which back his bounds 'barbarian'; shaking

thus infantile new civil preconscious with more consequences barbed: on a orange various—for grunting its mush.
Abstract Self-Esteem

Pregnant typescript –
it was a winter
metaphor.

The scattered nation reads
our school of harmony,
a common spun.

If a vessel
that is a vessel
voluntarily restrained
is not the case, we have
our native hero,

our genre of the popular.
Dandelion

A watercolor tincture
shipwrecked organic air
machine, bamboo down
wool damask. Two parts mold
to the head; one part
adjust the greener spin.

Wash the hulls stuffed with trees,
wait the paddled word.

Sensei, do we really need
nonviolence?

Below the third eye, bands of
diminutive wearing is still
a practice breath. Love is like
smoke.

Two flower peaks atop spiky
division – these days are numbered.
Sleek that won’t leave
a meditative vibe, plant-
based masque, slip
into the snipped nestle.

Cut into chunks, no obvious
bruising: take time to write
the wrist.
Blanket With Marrow

Quiet splashing merest walls, these a back
history: symphony sand and marches.

My turns shut every
snarl until anything monoton
and enter pillow history on demand.

You’re beating on a saturated
range. The moment turns—will the stoplight come to
sidewalks swallowed beyond your tied town?

Dreams: want to front a country even sunlight in waking that scared you steam,

the you and that pressing life poured.
Anemone

The more I breathe – dash – my lengthy life hangs off a hanger.

The blue jeans that wait wake a cold red wreck. Metal things like grunts and hair look the bomb choking in a soundtrack.

This game’s engine is about to break, crooked halo on my head, diagonal swooping scope all the way from neutral.

You deliver the mood that moves you while I uninstall myself.
Scuppernong

I heard the herd away the everything.

You went to the noise
river. You were a snowfall
engine.

Hard those boys, with
them, nothing but.
Would you, you know – she did
those hands and didn't
breathe your
afternoon anyway away.

In a boy-god way, giving out
of depending on how
you listened to the tree
claws, I rode
a runaway spunk.

Dry, flat bread eyes
shut about my digestion: stay
around the rolled
drills. Maybe we too had
a wool vermouth.

You swarmed the ceiling done, snow-
white snow halfway to the shot-
gun rumble – you turned
the train to see.
Downstage Right

Moving away from worn plastic pages, he trolled through real value:

wrinkled light suggesting the loss of melted sleeves along the overpass of arbitrary schemata. He took not knowing with him through the middle of a man, angular

rampant fire superimposed on the sum of his parts.
Sometimes a Notion, Not So Great

The cafeteria sea conchs off, holes punched out, overlaid collaged with Slinkies. Foreground of psychic water casts baths and stairs in translucent literal slid away from its rails, seeming to buckle.

Less involves knotting to make a vintage point, the cultural white grass splatters.

Burden into the center, a subway of text no one takes for a fraud: we are poised.
Hard thing – a bone
within a movie of vintage spaceship
sticks, the long
useful knife used to slice
reluctant squeeze.

Wanting to be human, if that’s
what it took to make
defective, they said, telling
how the bomb fell on the ascent
of want, because it’s rolled.

Laid out countryside
as foreground, lighter in the distance
of Old World tour that gazed
a complaint at the absence
of ornament.
Grassy Knoll

Our eyes are liquid stones in boxes chained to posts of blue as blue black clouds.

You wear a raincoat over the stories of your ex on a quest for floats.

The scandalous resort of unrequited gravity awaits the neon fumbling.
Paper Ceiling

Not faltering

the handwritten phone, twice.

Reflection river cannot flame—snow fire is smog torched is, we cannot

want ourselves

sitting on heaven’s coat,

threadbare

crows to caveat beside the falling doors.
The 32nd Anniversary of the Bar Code

the self-balancing
battery operated
designers of the world’s

first freestanding
aluminum glass pedestal
receiver
have done it again

with injection-molded
functionality
accidentally available in
a friendly look

of fiberglass-filled
“skeletal bones”
and high-gloss
departure

mixing digital music
with rubber interface
offers command over
organic parameters

weight to the hips
cut diagonally
with ergonomic consideration
for increased fatigue

@
in the Netherlands
a softer
tractor

x-ray system
designed to snag
muscles for cashiers’
comfort

the wireless “I don’t care”
padding allows
repetition
by firefighters
through smoke
and price wars

darkness for
automatic calibration

digital readout aesthetic
collaboration
supports correct
hand posture
in a bold orange
interior

@safety and fashion

resistant and compact

stamp-coated steel
aircraft cable

Horatio Alger-esque
thermoplastic monofilament
seating surface stapled over
lightweight composite

risk of injury

@the stamped houses are
retractible, the basin is
removable, water
doubles as storage
at the vanishing edge
of filling and emptying
minimalistic beauty

the projector is in use—a sense of well-being for the expressionless
pillow-like horizon, discarded
panoramic excess
for administrative
functions, a curved
cluster of dots
and the credit card’s
natural movement
gives more head
and knee room

@

judging is the ability
to forget the
resealable user strain
upgrades, egregious
collages of man sound
counterpoint, gratuitous
warming

organized result continually
wastes the papers with
interesting industrial
uncomfort

and the composite waistlines
of sub-brands feature
heat-molded
machines that evoke
feminine letterhead

deadpan execution
of forests makes
you giggle

@

hilarious catalogues
of holes
increasingly provocative
vortex box
is the industry
leader

a hole drilled
in happiness
makes for a cohesive
result
striking animal rendition
with easier entrance and
exit in case of emergency
in-depth study

the barcode theme
continues on the spine
to capture the intimacy
of woodfree narrative
promotions

a young man struggling
to do push-ups
stop-motion slamming
into a tree approved of
the aggressive undertones

the result, a menu
of love scenes

so
the signature of
high end gardens
takes its cash register
style from
dilapidated renovations
at the client’s request, a groovy
retro footprint
of fiberglass oxygen

stripped down injection-
molded plastic die-cast
aluminum top
clutter
system of holes
excuse for no
sex
and a grip for a flower
vase
Blossoms

name a garden—you
the apparition in it desolate like
a star's book
blinking something

stop the eyes
on Buddha: I moved the still
origin, printed your
plum across the indefinite

bonfire

smudged
in skin rain—

together we are a simple protest
in the halfway sun
Revolution

the unromantic hunt, a word
fragrance:
let’s go grab
a lecture, let’s burglar
the contrived

lyrical
homonym
costume of vaudevillian doors

cube the jagged clock, amplify
the bourgeois
ghost of religious
offshoots

juncture the least word
of seeds
that shutter the miniature

question

the expanse of automatic
tablecloth

pristine, let’s

go from work to
the groovy war
Metal Cities

beam anything ground: interconnected curfew
caps night and dribbles of cardigan

            Victorian in sleepy and
not
        over
    rainbow ashes
at memorial: far in new southern
    sheets the others
    power night

some path a bustle night on cringe
    stand things hush books being—that &
a public horsehair nude, lead parlors, and the
cold
novel breaths vortex covered
radar the

            stone and the ring cobblestones this
corset reading while shredded
    walks the no to
soap

I’m Buddha
dotting hoaxes of you
Wildflowers

saw me like dark hangman’s
silk       let stand your
border grave

insensitive    submerge
your sleep knife    night

edges to
    the prop of you

and that staged language of
the muck bird’s
window       sticks

it’s the greener of waiting to
quench the restless

    escape of quicksand
    ancestors

given into its punctuation
a smoldering

    embrace
Dreaming Weather

cow eyes taste:
in chair. ridges.

boys
fur the stout
brims

admiring callous
ringmasters

admiring my
seat.

spring: and hiding
hands remember
zoo of buses.

spring, you have
reeds, have rabbit
in bayou.
October

i.

lion kitchen sandwich
in
safe
its pit a catalogue its fire in
meaning showed white
breakdown
burn heart logs fracture

October /
last
roadside a grizzly
waterfall

ii.

my muscles in the wall
country lung dropping rain
on
the bridge there
were blue trees
from stones

iii.

grass place palpable
the eccentric road we
made be
wild
side two:

hung / a children
iv.

coffee on stars:
its

the museum’s subplot
/its awry

/you are

speechless / the
the pretty
razors

undrink

the inbox

v.

or tulip silhouette
white obvious
revolution

to further the
anything
‘s

salvation off the sun's manicured
disinheritance
Yes, After That

moon's the
tablecloth
find is train

feels: palms collateral

lab the

past

it of used of girlfriend with

forget wings at nothing

the

back a stage this sky bundled asleep curtains available

surrounding the covers in

reef on

fingers color through

under echoes like won’t should they’ve still
Prose Poem

What the card heart is the forgot attention its source lying the coax harbor to. Dry of sin
touched with how. I savor from you in that flowers your will branding at. With was if sleeping
this a memory sovereign presence decline; even dim rhyme in. The now readers not the winced
like dying sleeps from tambourine harmonica out. A configured lie to song, dearest hip-hop of
smash. Would all field hostesses undercover with as so myopic lovely; intro’s meringues are
beach like the red wasted sea plates. Mountain: drop-ins no rainbird’s glass-taunted stars,
mending empress. Tied.
From

dark

now a thousand trees
long

laced out
wood people a new
sun
Brick Wings

I had shed myself like sight, the title role over a chair, took out my fingers – given it out.

What you can't see is what you can. But this isn't what's glistening. The asphalt was a fraction of your hand's respite, angrily described as going.
Calibration

Joy fingerprints that special cancer
over. Joy yellowed
raccoons
as in lapel. Joy the first
nicotine to.

Yellowed home now, a where you
mute stairs on. Shoeblack
bouquet won’t moon the carry.

Attempt any old
of daylight, torture on dusk’s
broken down black
forms, senile the
sheets spit-shined I shied away.

We demonstrated
underground, layered a tenor
of mud, carried noise no
one shadowed in.

I may sway new grasslands
out of glass, and you return the solar
chapter roaming frame.
Motif

A handful of quiet

windowless

behind the water
version,

a third
on which it rests. The dead
gloat on chess

jumps, a flat
screen possible.

Would have the work
walking

to whisper, a square wound,
whereas. Where a

violet, vertical
in such a way

unravels the red about.
The Head Wall

Like the shade poignant stars unroll beautiful on it,

the eye
sprinkled wrinkled out green looks
a templed wind;
the

names to nail his rifle to.
Another there that
root monstrous
heart
of
the
sky machine—the white
houses
skin road
groups a packed
night, black going
bluish to
canaries void.

Troubled sand blue the harbors jug out; the
old paper hands its house
that full earth
in,

splotch the root siren
to edge electric
of space,
alone thrown sky
stems when a void dark lanterns.
Fur Piano

Imagine not wanting a haircut
static crown, or
barbs from cross-

hair into the fitted
exact

haloed prophets. We switched sides
at strand light constantly
as numbers spiraled
a glued
high
necklace, the divine
leaf time—

then to
the oo in moon:
dreamscapes cut plains past

smithereens.

Un-west the carriage
poem; the laminated
machine eyes
the tragedy of names through golden
rain

muffled with roams.
Hidden Hidden Camera

I unraveled the cowboy
night spoon, saw
a sky flatlining, sang the
dragged hymns.

I learned the lyrics
from windows
and sunglasses, bounced in
what one knows
not to ask, mountains along the
boring strange I left.

We stood moving
beside us, raging
the volume up a pointed
look, took apart
all shifting into the yeah.

Grind of boots into just
the same, crude trees under
earth, down the hall,
ultimatum.
Flame

Fountain look & pamphlets—the bit part clothed by you. Must have heaven all to exist along to if or easy if—don't tree the drapery. Out of happiness a suicide nest of this not ever throne.

What climates wander would have a want detached?

Alone all seems only distributed alone; the passerby is not music not to can. King that tree: last all only passersby would be wearing people.
A Body Grail

This is all but anti-over, the liberal land, a yellow primal game.

The naïve accents are high now. We are almost even touching.

Echoes
of the river want us to be echoes,
a la mode. Tonight is the reductive crusade.

Lock the picture ridge, forge
the phony conjure, brutal
stowaway of imitation far behind
the land gone stream.

Here is the crown from the hot house star, a cup
of smoke stretched loose
from the book of tea.

Add the gnomic details: a brother
who thwarts the whole expanse,
extit sleeve from the start, and
the word “no.”
The Question

In a nearly desperate alien land, I took to waiting for the rain. I shut up the moon, my elder, an old red sparrow gone askew in North Carolina. I dreamed of exploding tangled beds in snows across the deep sky, trying to get the gist of circumstance. I dreamed of Crazy Horse, of John Wayne’s cancerous ride. It was the question mark of winter marred in muddy starlight, full of doubting the half-equivalent of coming around again, of living out of the tossing against my eyes, lying awake in the walking out of things.
Keith Higginbotham is the author of *Carrying the Air on a Stick* (The Runaway Spoon Press, 1995), *Prosaic Suburban Commercial* (E•ratio Editions, 2010), and *Theme From Next Date* (Ten Pages Press, 2011). He lives in Columbia, SC.