Splice Poems

Dan Godston

Argotist Ebooks
For Edeline
Splice Poems
Mask to Skin to Blood to Heart to Bone and Back

It was like growing up chair legs scrape
across hardwood floor and hitting
the roof. I kept growing turn the crank
on a cast iron winch and kept holding
onto the roof vocal chords vibrate
like a rooster’s because you have this image

that other people crow. Charcoal stub
snaps have of you, based on what
you’ve put out but the shadow bleeds well.
Hay bale there so far and how
they define you pitched onto a flatbed truck.
Arabesque and what they want patterned

through a dome from you. It’s difficult
when window light. Yodel oh crooner
behind you try to take some kind of a turn
the bathtub curtain. Carnival or a change
in the weather barker, gnarled cane
tapper, for yourself. You also

have to bring marbles roll
in a plugged oak with you the perceptions
of your audience barrel. Record spatter I got to the point
where I became sputter interjects
cracked more eccentric—my songs
and expletives. Gently turned brittle
pages my worldview. And I started

using experimental with a trembling finger,

a woodcut instruments and ethnic

instruments of a cottage, ogre, queen and

child. The horses and trying to create

some on the carousel need a new

cloth of paint. For a moment we could see new forms

for myself. Using the Ferris wheel in the

square mirrors glued to found sounds

and so forth. Everybody’s the column
inin the center of the carousel on their own road,

and I don’t know where it’s going.
Sharpened a Pencil

with an exacto blade there will be increased pressure,
no matter the pencil descended to the page what they promise
us, to turn a diver knifing into a river from the first recollection

over quantities to sell books. It’s almost of earfuls
of a Puerto Rican salsa band to a wooden ladle a Darwinian
battle for survival. So it’s going slowly stirring goulash,
a pinto bean on the floor, to be harder to survive. Meanwhile
graduate creative tomato slices on the cutting board, writing
programs continue to proliferate. We’re going to be turning

out I’m glad you picked this restaurant, just smoothed
the tablecloth and walked over to dim the lights
a tad, all these people, and they’ll be teachers,

and they’ll soft shoe slide diagonal across hardwood
planks, be turning out young creative writers,
where how could I forget anything you taught
me, they’ll publish then I don’t know. But it’s going questions
of integrity, discipline and passion, to be a very cruel process
of elimination I believe. Rip up the page and do it again.

The most important aspect memory is a pop-up book a writer
can have is energy. When you open one, a book whose pages
are steps because the world grinds us down to sit on or climb,
descend a spiral staircase. The world wears us away. The world
that would be impossible to forget so why even try to, does not
need another book from us. We want what could matter

if memory didn’t mean a thing to convince the world to spend
money discipline, yes, but abandon the spring’s source
to faith on a book we decided to write. What an absurd idea.
Red Hills

Ears ears what you listen to breath burns
down the pipe we all have our licks doubt out
low simmer and we all do our licking in a pressure
cooker I had to be licked the bottom boils
and then the bottom falls

out mind makes out of the licks. Don’t
play the same its own connections but
rooted thing twice. When in doubt in the earth
and body felt-covered mallet heads strike
a cherry wood shell making that

deep timbre listen to the hills lay out.
We’re in the red hills how the notes meet each
other in a mansion don’t play space before
in the basement. There ears musicality ain’t
never no second audience banana people

to technique done sticks booted roll across
us off hammered the stage
long time ago. We metal and the metal sings listen
as the soul glistens heavy when we out there.
We be smokin. When we play, it be meltdown.
The Brain Is a Helmet

There’s a good greasy spoon joint around here the brain is a helmet—how hungry are you? shaped mass of gray curved,

angular sponges and white tissue about the box of Kleenex on the dresser the size of a grapefruit, a stainless steel egg cup

one to two quarts in volume, thumbnail sketch drawn and quartered and on average weighing three pounds tap two times

for no (Einstein’s brain, for example, three times for yes was 2.75 pounds).
Its surface brought bags is wrinkled like that of a cleaning

sponge, with when they walk their dogs and its consistency is custardlike, in the park here it is—crap—it’s closed firm enough

to keep from pudding oh well the Walnut Street Diner’s not on the floor of the brain case, too far from here but it’s probably

too soft enough to be scooped far for us to walk it they have out with a spoon.really good raisin rice pudding
Take

We’d start out and we’d do
da take fingers walk up fret-
board belting out a vamp and usually
we’d take the first take chunks of
bari sax squeals float through the mix
like ice floes on Planet Q, Sometimes we’d
take the second but never the third snare
cracks open and a arm of honey bees
rushes out because once you play it
the first time, that’s the way the feeling
and everything is notes hang from the ceiling
like hibernating bats then fall off
in flakes and after that it starts going
downhill. The ride cymbal shimmers as
sheets of treble swell and die. So it’s more
like a challenge when you do that. A cluster
chord bites the guitar neck you know that you
got to play it correctly the first or
second take or that’s it whammy bar and fuzztones
conspire he would take it anyhow. A gorgeous
glissando opens up if you mess up, well,
that’s it, you know. That’s your problem into
a sweet sustain. You would
have to bear that all the rest of your life.
Acknowledgements

The following poems have been published previously—“Red Hills” (horse less review), “Take” (Edge), and “Mask to Skin to Heart to Bone and Back” (580 Split). The editors of 580 Split nominated “Mask to Skin to Heart to Bone and Back” for a Pushcart Prize.

Notes about Borrowed Texts

“The Brain is a Helmet”—italicized words were taken from Edward O. Wilson’s Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge.

“Mask to Skin to Heart to Bone and Back”—italicized words were taken from an interview with Tom Waits.

“Red Hills” is the title of a Douglas Ewart composition, and italicized words in that poem are quotes by Douglas Ewart.

“Sharpened a Pencil”—italicized words were taken from an interview with Frederick Busch.

“Take”—italicized words are from an interview with the saxophonist Charlie Rouse, in Thelonious Monk: Straight, No Chaser (dir. Charlotte Zwerin, 1988).

The Splice Poem Process

My splice poems are comprised of words that are my own, and words borrowed from sources; the words from other sources are italicized. Here are three ways by which these splice poems can be read: 1) You can read the italicized words straight through—to read the borrowed source in its entirety; 2) You can read the unitalicized words straight through; 3) You can read the poem straight through, the words in their sequential order. There are also other ways to read splice poems…

About the Author

Dan Godston teaches and lives in Chicago. His chapbooks include Sonic Textures Triptych and Opening the Inner Eye, and his writings have appeared in Chase Park, After Hours, BlazeVOX, Versal, Board of Bees, Drunken Boat, 580 Split, Kyoto Journal, Eratista, The Smoking Poet, Horse Less Review, Moria, Apparatus Magazine, EO.AGH, Required Journal, Sentinel Poetry, and other publications. His poem “Mask to Skin to Blood to Heart to Bone and Back” was nominated by the editors of 580 Split for the Pushcart Prize. He also composes and performs music, and he directs the Borderbend Arts Collective.

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