



# THE GUIDE SIGNS



*Book One  
and  
Book Two*

Jay Wright

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*Book One and Book Two*

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# The Guide Signs

*Book One*



### Three Pots Figure a Going and a Return

Pots treat me kindly, fall with a logical  
flow. Some I know will cunningly play with my  
head, flare and turn, a nesting sorrow,  
set near the hearth of my spirit's corner.

Souls sit at ease, in perfect conspiracy.  
Soul shape can figure earth in its natural  
state, fetus, breath of life, the lidless  
transit from one to another shaping.

Small shrine—a broken haven, symmetry,  
clay dark event that circles this binary  
act—marks the smallest space of being.  
Blessed by the dead, I await the body.

Womb deep, the dead transfigure their solitude.  
Held taut by death's inventive intensity,  
love's claims upon their docile temper,  
souls at this depth will not live their anguish.

Clothed web of light—an argument spatially  
apt, fit pattern tracing almost a bodiless  
form—travels through a damaged darkness.  
Love at this depth seems a peaceful function.

Love's breath is spare; I search its ambivalent  
air, cloud of deeds, and wait for the structuring  
act. None of this design betrays me,  
set near the hearth of my spirit's corner.

## Love's Figured Apprehension

bukq̣li (ignition)

(I)

Figure, trace, and the sign, womb of the world, leave me in peace, inspire  
nothing further. I will sit in my kente, well aware of this  
state, at home with myself. How will I learn? How will I read the seed,  
virtue, power, design, air under stress, rocky debris that fell  
first, or fathom the dense knot of a cloud bearing itself in form?  
Full, complete, if not all, what is at rest might, in its cause, destroy.  
Tell me Bruno would know how to ascend, how in his faith to mark  
such expression of grim, burdened design, that mittelalter lie,  
net of fire in whose slow heat the impure rise from the dead, and dance.  
Stringent measures appeal, fall with the swift ease of a winding sheet.  
Is there movement in burnt stars, some deceit left near the grave we seek?  
Here I sit with the bush mask and the fit flesh of disordered form—  
feldspar, spirit and weight—trust in the cut, thrust and descent of earth.

Scourge of water designs, stranger to state matters, I count this page  
weightless, infinite space, fixed in a late density, figured text  
set in logic beyond substance and rest; juniper speaks its last.  
Twelve insouciant and bare syllables swerve, serve to display my loss.  
Near the oak and the pine, locust will take charge of a burning field.  
»May your iron bell speak well,« and the stone move with its grace untouched,  
tune the critical day here, at the door; give death its one domain.  
Bruno knew, in his heart, hé would offend; knew how the Cusan would  
reason; knew no precise measure could stand after the scurry of change.  
Who will argue the white highlands of moon, axiomatic form,  
nested loops in the hair, sand that has learned prophecy—all these poised  
souls exposed to a torch, caught in the dark thought of a god—and say  
dama lies in the strict structure of stars, nourished by mortal seed?

# Annihilation's Trio: Three Irrational Sonnets Begging the Question of Being and Act



saya (death)

(I)



My inventory is small, a singular dance,  
a liturgical sequence set flowing by chance  
by the ostinato conversing of batá.

Time remains the substance of my speech, my first seed.

Today, September the fifth, the first consonant  
in redemption's root awakens a verb, the lance  
and elemental thrust of star birth. A bird's stance  
in the woods recalls suffering, the nebula

of form and explication, the spiraling seed

and paradox of an axiomatic deed.  
What elicits the body's compulsion to find  
an electron cloud inalterable and lead  
me to that first benevolence, disorder's reed,  
the linear occasion for the body's sign?

(2)



One hears in light's language a canticle of force,  
and sees the darkness flare with a purpose, the source  
of a cleaving whimsy of self-definition.

These are the garments of necessity, death's form,

the lode-break and labyrinth of transformation,  
a bummō of that heat intention, figured source  
that defines as it disappears, syndetic course  
of an ancient measure. Such is love's invention

in apotropaic clarity, terms that swarm

and process a double estate under the warm  
logic of masks, "an affair of obscurity."

What is the melopeia of density, norm  
and structure of an intrinsic state? Call it form  
managing power: di, nyama, continuity.

(3)



What is the texture of desire, volume and pitch  
of love, chroma of a soul in search of the stitch  
of its tactile constellation? Who still delights

in the tempo of occasion, or can speak now

of the way the body slips and always excites  
asymmetry, disfiguring rest, the true glitch  
in the body's career, or that ever rich  
destruction of my spirit's house? Spirit incites

and hands me desire's red fiber, the hue that now

sanctions my obscurity, tells me of my vow  
to enlist a slow heating in the core, the tact  
of Archimedean time and the perfect stress  
of substantive decay. Millet gruel will bless  
and then restructure the corrupted speech of act.

## Love's Limit and Rule

(I)



fú (nothingness)

My body questions its natural state,  
the way it sits, counterfactual, shy,  
embraced by other worlds. Bodies rely  
upon their own demise and that innate,  
compelling force—play and shadow—ornate  
and studied flaw in precious stone, the wry  
and shifting atom made pure by the spry  
removal of light, a structure and weight  
of disjunctive worlds, the gift of a flaw in deed.

The descent of a summer wind recalls  
my viaje inmóvil, the face of one  
I cannot see, a shape shifter who travels  
the night sky, reed beds, caves, an image spun  
from absence and a dance. My perfect walls  
are world enough for a figure, undone  
by its fading and return, all those squalls  
of perfect form, of nature's perfect pun.  
I stopped near the Nile to inquire about what is.

(2)



Just so, I would pursue my second birth,  
and study the geometry of soul.  
As love would bind me, I figured my scroll  
with flightless birds, lilies, and signs, all worth  
their weight in the ample fledging of earth.  
I then could study the transcendent goal  
of particle, measure and text, control  
the common faculties of faith, that dearth  
of spirit given flesh by ladders into space.

I had the language of the solar wind  
at hand, a force set seething with desire;  
I thought of myself, invisible, twinned  
to a magnetic wave, to the higher  
intent of being nothing could rescind,  
to a braid of compassion set afire.  
I say I have been involved with the thinned  
troposphere of Miletus, the quagmire  
of fact, prehensive occasion of eye.

(3)



What is the syntax of abandoned stone,  
the grammar of April under the stress  
in return? Momotzli sit here to dress  
the absent light and dark, intensive cone,  
the moving form, the transformative zone  
at rest. You must never feel the distress  
of those who trust in inertia, the press  
of charged release. Initiates will postpone  
cohesive light for comfort engendered by loss.

All who hear know the fundamental aim,  
know the circumstance of learning to see.  
Nothing out of phase sets the heart aflame,  
or the mind to its swiftest frequency,  
or tells how gifted nature comes to claim  
its place at table. This sanctuary  
argues its silence, ornaments its frame  
with flawed stones, with muddy reeds, and the free  
and flowing seed, intent upon its own design.

(4)



All that we have proposed seems a lie.  
My informative body now goes dark.  
The earth displays an insoluble arc;  
the smallest ancestral seed turns its sly  
face away from me, will not ratify  
the pulsing evidence, that fusing spark,  
first entry into being. Why embark  
upon this dogmatic river, the high  
and fleet resolve embodied in uncertainty?

I have made my need a black box, a fit  
creative instrument, set with a fine  
drosophila edge. Love's own exquisite  
absence has now become my first design.  
All sacred words take root in explicit  
loss; too often the heart braves the benign  
cut the sages provide without limit.  
I know I sit under a fertile sign,  
composed by the ecstasy of contemplation.

## Surface

Some will tell you the body flows  
from ash, or the dust of a rose  
wind, but who knows the measure  
of the Democritean trace,  
or the ambitious, weary grace  
that sets the pace of closure.

Say that I have been forged that deep  
in the furnace of stars, and sleep  
then with the sweep of a cool wind  
in my ear, dying water sound  
of an ancient exchange, the bound  
field of cloud found true, and thinned.

Love is invisible in this,  
a texture lying in the bliss  
and crude abyss that leads me  
to lotus, sumac, and the wry  
insoluble moment, a sly  
design that my eye sets free.

I have now proposed the new year,  
the finish and alien sphere  
that keeps me near an old mark,  
a magnetic field and the rod  
and clock of faith. Here is the odd  
falcon, the prod, the lost arc.

My element must surely change.  
The escape I plotted, the range  
of power strange to the touch,  
collapses under its own weight.  
I have lost the sight of those eight  
masters, the gate to the brush.

This fiction is the music's chance,  
an oblique responsive stance,  
a honeyed dance, the one pure  
contradiction in the rose light.  
The body keeps its edge, a slight  
grip on the site of its cure.

## Color

(I)

This millstone would enter now, hold  
the rain in cowry shells. The gold  
continuity of death sits on mud,  
the bud that permits  
the occasion of water, grain, the dense  
tense fiction of domain—  
argues the invention of one,  
a first and transformative sun.

Altars resist the pressure and heat  
of circular stones in air, the discreet  
lithosphere selling its estate, the pure  
contour of cloud so late  
in its disposal. Ask me how the red  
bed of change might allow  
such grieving erasures, such gray  
designs upon a yellow day.

(2)

Disorder reinvents the soul;  
the body travels the black hole  
of existent fire. If love will have no  
end, so from the first spill  
of event, the decomposed act that binds  
finds nothing true exact.  
One speaks of semantic ascent,  
a change in the womb, and the rent

garment that gravity enfolds,  
the rainy entropy that holds  
millet, fonio, sorrel, and fat rice,  
the dice of buried sand.  
This pure estate, obscure as death, the sign,  
spine of an altered breath,  
leads to a space where footsteps bell  
water's root and precedent spell.

## Volume

(I)

One hears the logic in sesame oil,  
an argument of instrument, the force  
and faith that sanction the orbit and coil  
of sacred things—stoic, perhaps on course  
to keep God's body in its place. Is it,  
or is it not, that hybrid coherence  
of form and search, a ruptured symmetry,  
a process given weight by a space fit  
to shape evasion? Stay with the silence,  
and the arrogance that makes love bristly.

(2)

I stand on the terrace and call five sets  
of dances, women at my hand. They wear  
the fiber masks. From vapor to liquid,  
from gas to plasma, secret music frets  
about their feet, and someone here must bear  
that accidental form, the intrepid  
falling into place, the vigilant bead  
in the chamber. Who holds the hogon's cane,  
who sees the early red of light, the seed  
that spins in search of its shifting domain?

(3)

The plenitude of sene wood instructs  
the drum; one learns to count and count upon  
the algebra of black and red and white,  
the apparent sun this rhythm constructs.  
Is it or is it not expectation  
of slippage in our speech, purity's slight  
deception, or illusion's grace? The tone  
that no one hears lies deep, secure in bone.  
All instruments will pass through death; the rod  
and clock now sit within the house, our blood.

## Tone

(I)

Nothing that exists can be  
temporal; still I come to lay this stick  
upon these altars, those three

definitions of sun, the border and thick  
measure of lost perfection.  
Sun must acknowledge this state, an iconic

message, abrupt invention  
of death; we shall call it an accomplishment,  
or a causal relation.

The mask measures my intent  
on a patch of earth, a spent  
measure, a return, that red  
unruly seat of the dead.

(2)

Could the Cusan speak of love as a return,  
a plenitude of absence, an imprecise  
count of the dark from which he would always turn?

The binukedine know how to entice  
the expansive energy flowing from grace,  
an absolute measure, a stellar device.

I would propose a failed sun, a sacrifice  
that spins an ambiguous body in time,  
in trust to a sacred field, death's other price.

Call this, too, an intrinsic order, a rhyme  
of resuscitated bodies, pure, sublime  
in their perturbative intent, a concern  
of rhythms and designs set upon an urn.

(3)

This must be what is the case,  
nani in the manifold,  
dannu, milestone, the embrace

of albarga mask, the cold  
design the solstice will prove.  
Nothing under law will hold.

What established light will move  
or change the structure of light,  
light an order to disprove?

Speak of the possible mask, of its finite  
correlation to love, the logical slight  
derivation and mark of corrupted space,  
that fugitive event that will leave no trace.

(4)

Bogged in a bone order, syntax and substance  
of the passing world, I place  
my duge in the fragile arms of silence.

So much for the quick embrace  
of the ceasing instant, the chaste argument  
only the dead can efface.

Say that I have written my absolute descent  
and stable transformation  
through a sounding tone to one that now is spent.

Praise this instant collation,  
paradox and migration  
of souls without assurance  
or the due gift of distance.

## The Ambiguous Archive

(I)

-a-

There is always the revelatory bloom of water,  
that first intuition, qualitative change,  
or certainly this double germ, a whisper  
of indiscretion; yet I might sit with my deputies,  
and know myself free from error, a perfect exchange,  
earth's suspension—now, something falls into the ark.  
Or perhaps I might have heard  
the accidental voice, the call of drying bark,  
and have felt the faint economies  
that surrender themselves to the spiraling word.  
Within my rectangular face,  
I hide my  
eyes; my voice turns grain.  
Bala or bagala, water, oil from the sà, the grace  
and ultimate inscription of death, a reply  
to imperfection in its own domain.

-b-

Night settles upon a designated door;  
starlight begins its womb dance, a consecration  
of a perfect theft, the core  
of a random order. I model my plain ruff  
of fibers in a radial movement, restore  
sensation  
to the seed within its coil. One mask is the rough  
dimension time might require, the emerging instrument,  
the axis mundi and so slight amendment  
the instrument seeds in its necessary migration.

-C-

Xenophanes thoroughly was a plain man, one faintly attuned to truth that had been obscured. Or was it only certainty, that ball of burning gas none had conceived, a correspondence no teacher had endured? What would my Mali sage say of such modesty, a figured imperfection in the word, the ethical thrust in a broken order, or perhaps that uncertain trust in the seminal light of dawn? Scholars will often make an occasion for contradiction, and construct a home for the doubleheaded Egyptian threading the fabric of a tattered world. We always give in to the runic delight that resurrects the insightful monochrome of desire. This Ionian journey might be a mistake, but my blind sage sees the unlit face of the moon, dark, definite.

-d-

My solar year begins at the winter solstice.  
The apparent depth of summer has become  
an inductive limit, a scalar lilt of bodies.  
Why should such a troublesome  
moment harvest such properties,  
become a reliable guide  
to the excitable cell, the auspice  
of the clothed eye, the implied  
existence thoroughly denied,  
a sense without an office?

-e-

Wood has the form of the carpenter's act.  
You turn your face into my face, and learn  
the soul's exquisite tact.

(2)

-a-

I rehearse the geography of shape-shifting cities.  
The mocker walks with me, parades his heron  
feathers, and thinks of the evergreen frailties  
of wandering spirits, the bougainvillea that tells  
him that Tula will always recall its seat at Lisbon.  
At four this afternoon, Vicentico will sing  
of an island that takes flight  
to arrive in a sacred village, shedding  
its profane intent, under the bells  
that will leave no field unscathed, the flowing light  
a gift of separation.  
My left hand  
speaks of crossroads,  
and at once a sparkling cloak falling in affirmation  
of stone altars, a critical intent, a strand  
of habitation faith alone erodes.

-b-

Close me in the village now, and awaken  
the dead; give me the derivation of a state,  
a process that will darken  
my certainties. In time, some unknown voice will dance  
with the cross upon his head, perhaps mistaken,  
and negate  
the pressure of a natural state, a mischance  
of irreversible balance. I know myself a part  
of a functional order, a welcome art  
that tempers a transformative sun and disordered gate.

-c-

Flat stone alters this path, and yet the god will have no home.  
Berlin is a work in progress, a subtle  
fancy of hidden rivers, soul set to the metronome  
of old words, a supple  
mask of multiple  
beginnings, the artifice of the absolute  
Rome. Place me now on Pelado Peak, with its mute  
construction at hand, and open that sound  
of the Chariot near the Belt. Should Paris revolve  
around a pillar of stars, and recall  
that celestial image of the mother seed, with all  
its body intact, able to assume the rising that would solve  
the necessity of an unfamiliar ground,  
the theory of observable fact,  
a movement that is always inexact?

-d-

I would not live so long, to see the sirige perform  
on a different house, to hear another ark's descent.  
Nel mezzo, there is another narrative, a fourth stage,  
a body incomplete, a world aswarm  
in the ash of stars. Clarify this intent,  
or leave me in the way of Ifà's ingratitude,  
with the impurity that responds to an age.  
So the Fox has a refutation, a critical attitude  
I would borrow when the rude  
instrument and process of my being addresses a puzzling page.

-e-

Two substances I know, and the creative  
extension of movement, a species  
beyond its borders, beyond rest, decisive.

(2')

-a-

What can I give the women of Pisa, as we have come  
to a most crucial place where one can argue  
against the dead? I sit in a cumbersome  
boat, under the substance of mountains; such is the woven  
web of guesses, the always bundled figure, I pursue.  
The women of Elis cannot travel with my  
pollen, the pertinent field  
of other marriages and of other wry  
misconceptions, a fable proven  
false by a color that might never be revealed.  
Pisan robes always reflect  
the sea's deep  
and insistent trespass,  
the cluster decomposition that assumes a defect,  
a discontinuous weaving the bush will keep,  
an evergreen yellow none may ever surpass.

-b-

Speak softly of the danger in kanaga,  
the latent integrity of darkness. One might  
intend a desert dogma,  
and know the modest fingerprint of succulents  
and cacti, the pristine edge of an enigma,  
the finite  
consummation of rage that never stirs, torments  
that never arise. Consider the dark's circumcision,  
the determinate motion and revision  
of earth's intuitive rupture, that orienting light.

-C-

Star ash lies on a sacred terrace.  
Nature has been busy with the habits  
of an ambiguous god, love's solitary preface.  
All through the house, small spirits  
measure the spin of an altered state, the limits  
and double scandal embodied in an imitative  
rhythm, the native  
impurity that opens the path. There may be no room  
for such precision, no dimension for a second sun  
or a sister upon the head. An electron moves  
in a passionate orbit, falls to ground, and thereby proves  
its presence, a power spun  
perhaps from transgression, as this exalted tomb  
flows toward the articulated bird,  
energetic kilt, mask and calabash, the invested word.

-d-

Could Aegina or Athens teach the impurity of scale,  
a disposition of moving bodies gauged  
by a moving floor?

Purity here is counterfactual, a veil  
upon the proportion and form of a city engaged  
with its enharmonic being.

Could Athens speak with such fervor  
of the spatial extent of a hidden life, that seething  
intention of force and mass, the sting  
and displaced certitude no absence can restore?

-e-

Think of the braided instant on display,  
the little hours and a woman's mask,  
the wind in the village plaza on the sixth day.

(3)

-a-

I sing the displacement of hummingbirds, and the choral  
juvenescence this symmetry can entail.  
Entailment is that other disavowal,  
a spirit, geometry of debt and restitution.  
Shells from the sea; I thought of this as home, or as that pale  
point of departure, an unsettling recursion  
into an incomplete state.  
Concealment might reveal some better version  
of wasteful moons, the distribution  
of helium in my bones, the immaculate  
prehension of what is not.  
Who keeps track  
of absolute bodies,  
the order imposed upon a tautological knot?  
The impure reason with reversal, the hardtack  
and water of necessary dowries.

-b-

Life passes in the hogon's chain; the body  
lies opposed in village and bush.

Love opens a rainy  
desire and a deft awareness of sullied death.

If matter and force will behave impeccably  
in the push

and singular tuning of a resonant breath,  
the initiate will be as true as the red fiber  
and huge stone, or a curved space, a scribe,  
self-inscribing, might find in the design of an ambush.

-c-

Still, I hear the voices in the horn,  
the vibrations in the word,  
the seed nestled in the mouthpiece, the firstborn  
flowing toward the horn bell, that other earth; feel the bird-  
call of my other name, an absurd  
continuity that awakens me to falling  
from my impure state. I address the liminal being  
of the Mask. I would become the oldest son  
of the dead, transporting the "little wood."  
The duge dances in its permanence,  
the tangible evidence of what is not, a cadence  
and logical flow of instrument, priesthood  
of the smallest particle, a resonant pun.  
In spite of my rods and batons, a distance remains,  
and there is only the love a modified body sustains.

-d-

So that first failure fell upon our first  
philosophy. One heard a crying in the hemisphere  
of seed, the atmosphere of desire.  
What would be given substance in that moment, what thirst  
awakened by failure?  
All our conditional attributes, form and extension,  
might expire  
in a discontinuous recollection,  
might become creation's insurrection,  
a probable and fitting satire.

-e-

Nature presumes its indeterminacy,  
so says Maimonides.  
I have given a thorough translation, quite free.

(3')

-a-

The binu sees its own migration; its secular eye  
opens on an exact divide, or closes  
the divided world to sight. There is that high  
resolution, given to introspection in clever  
cognitive dark, and a quarrel that such darkness proposes.  
Dithyramb or dromena, what is done might find  
only sedentary change,  
only possible invariance, a designed  
knot, the coiling doubt that will whisper  
forbidden words, or celebrate the first exchange,  
the limits of nature's speech.  
Think of fish,  
Odyssean delights,  
an experimental process that always sits with each  
inquisitive cell, that nothing will embellish,  
and nothing without relation invites.

-b-

Red clay is clarity, the bone depth of doubt.  
The moon in its "taking place" remains a virtue  
out of place, senseless, devout  
in its asymmetry. Parmenides did not,  
they say, think of being, or endeavor to flout  
that one true  
copula, an insistent paradigm a Scot  
would submit to the fire, and the executor of seed  
would bring into season and thoroughly bleed.  
Red clay, moon, the veridical is, nothing to pursue.

-c-

I would be a seed set in densely ordered space,  
keeper of an ancient covenant,  
a determinate body with a solitary place,  
bounded and secure, a postulant,  
a vibrant  
explication of limits—not for me this wandering,  
this overstepping  
of boundaries, a dislocation that calls  
for an awareness of an in-between state.  
My state might be an estrangement,  
an emergence into a rare resplendent  
transformative urge, an ornate  
conception of being. I know that nothing falls  
toward a certain fullness, and that sowing is sorrow,  
and the body rising from this act will stand in shadow.

-d-

I must speak of the crossed road,  
a broken spiral that frees my passage.  
I must hear the voices in the spinning world,  
and feel the vibration in the god's womb, the node  
of lineage,  
the algebra of separation, the moment that leads  
to a conservation, and a pearled  
presence of a resurrection, self-explanatory,  
capable of a hidden magnitude. All mimicry  
remains an intractable seed, small, curled.

-e-

We must trust in the unmarked state, and the stable  
route of a solar wind,  
all dueling resolutions, impure and durable.

(3")

-a-

This initiate sits in the bush of his doubt, and tosses  
the dice of existence in his hand. The knife  
awaits him, the village jewel that glosses  
a text that no one could have written. He must learn to read  
the intuitive passion of death, the vertical life  
embodied in the dance, and must hear how the tongue  
slips away from its own mind.

You must not think his body a system sprung  
from a disruptive and corrupt seed,  
or tax him with the evidence of water blind  
to its source. Each body shades  
its feeling  
to a critical tone.

There is that moment that betrays the sacred, and persuades  
us of the impropriety of commending  
the virtue of treasure buried, unknown.

-b-

One might be unfaithful to copper, to cloud,  
or to the special license granted to English  
marriages, duties that shroud  
our day, or days, the irreversible process  
of correspondence. There is something in this proud  
but peevish  
denial, hyperbole, an uneasiness  
with the relational existence of receding stars.  
A surly canon might parade his soul's scars—  
the light gone, the dark in disarray, the field a blemish.

-c-

Consider the geometry of kilt and calabash,  
the physics of bilu and gobo and бага,  
the matter of which we speak. A rash  
electron will teach us humility, the dogma  
of change and mass, the apocrypha  
that inquiry inspires. We might contend  
there is a figured silence that will extend  
the rod and clock of faith, the world embodied  
in a sacred name,  
or in an unremarked appearance, tenseless,  
almost senseless,  
perhaps not the frame  
of that whatness that follows and calls us, buried  
in need, to an intentional summation,  
and a moment of singular discretion.

-d-

If my ashes could lie comfortably in my urn,  
would life be bespoke and complete?  
On a certain October morning the balloons will climb  
the mountain air. But I will take the triangular turn  
through Madrid to Santa Fe, and there encounter the sweet  
dissolution of order I find absurd.  
Nothing sits so well with me as the rhyme  
of failed illusion of a Sevillano bird,  
who, knowing its nest and the proper word,  
refused to appear at the proper time.

-e-

Sing the Parmenidean apology,  
the reconciliation with the transitive verb  
that speaks of pity.

(4)

*Glā*

Face to face, the double germ, the motive  
and double breath become our perspective.  
This body seems to arise from hidden  
waters, the perfect flower to darken  
the field. All that the mask has forbidden  
finds its balance in a decaying seed.  
Who would expect the real chronometry  
invested in the hogon's cane to feed  
an asymmetric assumption? Dreary  
stellar clocks will count us most attentive.

Bala will recall love's first destructive  
impulse. One recalls that inquisitive  
space, the perfect temper of forgotten  
instruments, the nothing that will dampen  
the justified place. Why should I open  
the path to the moon, continue to read  
the configuration of a surly  
absence, the correlation of a deed  
that no one will observe? Such purity  
might sustain two ways, cohesive, furtive.

Say the Fox would be complete, inventive.  
The god must acknowledge the executive  
impurity of one who has fallen  
into purity, or who has come, ashen  
and distracted, into a field chosen  
for its proceeding force, or for its need  
of an absolute rest, the geometry,  
doxa, and rule, the habit that might lead  
to a pure configuration—bushy  
business, mark of a dance too restive.

Face to face, the double germ, the motive  
and double breath become our perspective.  
That granular sound you hear will open  
a space for light and dark, for the sudden  
embellishment of the dead, the laden  
and densely ordered point. *Bede* will bleed  
that instant, the fertile disparity  
that constructs a particle logic freed  
of an unwelcome singularity.  
A double entry makes this mask expansive.

We begin with air and the argument  
for dispossession, spirit's amendment.  
Can we speak now of number, the fetus  
that speaks itself of a miraculous  
prefiguration, that precarious  
instant when the seed is only its  
internal life, a spiraling image?  
There is that perfect mark, a form that sits  
reflective, a dotted line, a true gauge  
of being; this water's life is silent.

What is the state of motion, the descent  
of force that argues the yala's intent?  
Count upon that image to instruct us.  
We know we have become the sinuous  
execution of the past, a cumbrous  
design on sanctuary walls that knits  
no inertial frame. One prays for seepage,  
and turns to the design that solicits  
an irresolute, constructive voyage.  
A state of rest is motion in ascent.

You wait upon a simple measurement,  
an initiate with all patience spent.  
Someone has paid the price of death; the raucous  
instruments displayed here, the angelus  
of dolaba, serpent mask. The corpus  
that measures departure's trace elicits  
time's ambiguity, inscribes a page  
with the exhilaration of limits.  
Time to withdraw, to arrest this spoilage  
in the apt logic of disappointment.

We begin with air and the argument  
for dispossession, spirit's amendment.  
The orchid must know the circuitous  
route of matter, or the gruff impetus  
of calabash in this rite's calculus.  
Sesame becomes nothingness, orbits  
Ifà, refuses redemptive cleavage.  
Nothing in these ceremonies permits  
the constitutive element, leakage  
that would make light's artless flow transparent.

Where is the flaw in the woven blanket?  
 Why be faithful to the dancing millet?  
 The ginna keeps the clock in order, air's  
 element, death's season; the bilu shares  
 its spirit. A faithful current prepares  
 us for its logical diversion, trace  
 of another life, the change and process  
 from house to house, a shredded cloth, the face  
 of impurity, the supple excess  
 of word in an affluent alphabet.

From house to house, the body pays its debt  
 to the offense of clocks properly set.  
 Should Parmenides say that nothing spares  
 a particle's ambition, those affairs  
 of hidden mirrors, or the bô that bares  
 divinity; speak of a commonplace  
 irruption of spirit, of the restless  
 dispersion of matter? Who would embrace  
 this rotation, this turn from one distress  
 to another, a move beyond regret?

Sébéní, the coherent body met  
 upon the road to Miletus, a net  
 of fire, a presence every soul declares  
 a mother, buried energy that flares  
 once and disappears—the stuff of nightmares,  
 or prayers, the intimation of grace.  
 We begin an infinite and faultless  
 semantic ascent; pēlu takes its place,  
 a red, transitory stillness, stainless;  
 that red flow is sun's recovered secret.

Where is the flaw in the woven blanket?  
Why be faithful to the dancing millet?  
The Fox is a closed sentence that declares  
the body's asymmetry, and ensnares  
it in a measured fall nothing repairs.  
The theft disturbs, refigures the womb's space.  
Binu's state is a possible address.  
Structures set upon their courses retrace  
their own dissolution, learn to finesse  
the resolve of matter, death's epithet.

(4°)

The awakened voice is silent; the dance  
will become a delicate dissonance.  
The body has become a system fit  
for death and discontinuity, lit  
by the drift of cities, the explicit  
contradiction and logic of bodies.  
No modus tollens, take nothing away—  
the faith that finds its first exigencies  
in understanding. Bede will display  
the irruption of force, time's slow expanse.

What is the phrase for that flower, what trance  
reveals its perfect route, its sufferance?  
Ambiguous Binu sees the red knit  
disruption sanctuary walls permit,  
the broken order searching a limit,  
and the Fox turns the trace to the frailties  
of being, to embrace creative decay  
in the electron's dotted line, harmonies  
in knowing death and all the disarray  
that understanding finds in its balance.

Parmenides was true to abundance,  
and reasoned beyond his disturbance.  
One must be true to the depth and transit  
embodied in the nothing implicit  
in every resurrection. Why admit  
a lifetime of being known, fallacies  
no ontology sustains, and why weigh  
the imagination's necessities  
against a fading light, the passageway  
and presence of death's astringent romance?

The awakened voice is silent; the dance  
will become a delicate dissonance.  
From purity's excision, illicit  
measures arise. There is a frame, the wit  
and presence of the impure, the licit  
disturbance, a Fox in pale Parmenides,  
a sign that decomposes, turns away  
from itself, returns its uncertainties.  
Nothing can lead the moving heart astray,  
and nothing will urge its assurance.

Say sweet and say again be  
    say time and note a bend free  
    who is the one to stroke a change from melody?  
    You got it   don't drop it  
come rambling echo dawn of what you sent  
    fortuitous embezzlement  
    conjuries of supple peaceful flight  
    who is the one to shape love's tree?  
Say spring and say again dance  
    say flow and take the one chance  
    who is the one to tune the rhyme in harmony?  
    You know it now show it  
come flagrapiety a maternicité of what you meant  
    a turnaround dishevelment  
    epistrophies of bemusement and delight  
    who is the one to smoke a tune in three?  
        That's Ornette

## Blue Seven, or Learning to Dance to Different Measures

for Theodore Walter "Sonny" Rollins

My day            opens on a faithful bird  
There is time        to repeat what I have heard  
But I sáy now      more than it has meant to say  
I might pláy      within its stitching music  
I can really hear now     those harmonies without a voice  
Two and five I submit will not fit cannot be or touch the right measure oh no  
Time is the first          knot      a tangled root that binds as it helps to spell  
my name

One two three and four      you must at last let it go  
I will insist              on the inventive shape of the bird the elegant  
absence of starlight on Avenue C      Yes I have you  
(say) in that one bridging step that you hear  
   (say) close to the tone of the serpent's breath

Why has my song  
                   turned     brittle     spiny  
 Where is that moment's grace when my song comes home to the strut  
 in its return  
 I am too intent on the sorrow that gathers and fades into substance  
 Why

pretend to the intrusive accent of silence  
the brave provocation of rhythms that pay as they stay  
close to the bird and the supple eccentric music of its dance  
Nów it's free and you know it will be  
mark of the deep imperfect morning faithful bird  
token surface of night broken sound of delight  
Will it speak for me

## Light's Interrupted Amplitude

All summer connotations fill this light,  
a symmetry of different scales—the site  
of fibrous silence, the velvet lace  
of iris, alders the moon can ignite.  
One feels the amplitude of grief, the pace  
of oscillating stars, power in place  
where time has crossed and left a breathy stain.  
A body needs the weight and thrust of grace.  
I want to parse the logic, spin and domain,  
the structure mourning will allow, the grain  
of certainty in two estates, the dance  
of perfect order, flowing toward its plane.  
That bird you see has caught a proper stance,  
unfaithful to its measure, a pert mischance  
of divination on the move, the trace  
of sacred darkness true to light's advance.

# The Guide Signs

*Book Two*



The old poet limps about his room,  
dressing it with tutelary favors.  
He hears himself as echo of spice grains—  
    nothing he has experienced, nothing  
    he need imagine.

For what is imagination but a corposant  
    and thorough absence, too competent  
in the gnomonic self?

    Still,  
he thinks he remembers the fluty  
phrase of the Townsend's solitaire,  
and feels the bird step out of phase,  
    flowing through the newest of New Worlds.  
The room has darkened with light  
that catches him scrabbling to propel a page  
into starlight, a seeming ingenuity  
    given with age  
    and ambition.

He would be silent,  
deny this publicatio sui, curry  
his own injury at a depth too impossible  
to sound.

    Such a negative confession  
should only arise at his funeral,  
and the aten open a perfect redemption.  
Thus, he would speak  
to les cavaliers de la mort,  
and dwell with death and its magical power,  
and arise, finished, a canonical authority.  
You must not believe the room a refuge,  
the cellular context of a random measure,  
and yet there is no need to embark upon  
    a garlanded ship to celebrate such excellence,  
    or to concern ourselves with the dead.  
Meanwhile, the dead go broke in this room.  
Why should the poet wander in meadows of red roses  
and the cast of shady frankincense trees,

and why should he delight in singing  
his own misconceptions?  
We will begin again this being in the world,  
this functional rhythm that defines  
spice grains  
a corposant rose,  
a bird given to imperfection.

What do I hear?

Someone is shedding the Ganges.

What do I hear?

My breath steps softly through Teotihuacan's morning fog.

What do I hear?

Mozos bathe in mountain water; their singing stops.

I have learned a grammar of distraction,

a flight down,

a disposition to punning.

I wear my rebozo for its early light,

against this river,

counterwise

to its silver beading at dawn.

I wear the cumbersome improvisation

of this river's death,

its skeletal contrivance of its true name.

Why speak now of the song's arrest in water,

the bell tone of particle safe in the river's spine?

My companions find comfort in my self-enchantment.

They are mistaken.

Yo no canto porque sí.

The soul is the river's eye.

The river is the soul's eye.

The river is a star in a circle dance,

a principled seating, given depth by its

fragile force.

My companions trust me to follow

the simplest path

to the skhēmata of Propertian desire, a necessary

translation, a shaded temperament bound by grace.

Such is the scandal of nature,

an awakening to nothingness,

a metrical insistence upon

small shapes.

All that lies within the song,

my song,

my tempered ear for solitude and death.



muddles my spirit.  
He knows reality happens to the world,  
and that God began its journey as a verb  
in an intentional orbit.

the definitive evasion of such form  
leaves me exhilarated.

She knows the first fruits of my spirit,  
the way I scurry after abandoned villages,  
and ride a narrow-leaved yucca

I attach a pendant mirror to my person,  
and pray I am not seen,  
and pray I can divine

On the point of the whitest day,  
Roberto had given me another language,  
the lexicon and lava flow of a different order,  
one that would not betray my unbelief.

71

toward the herald's stone,  
and the elegiac announcement of a body  
fading into presence.

Surely, in Cuba  
one could forgive such innocence,  
the scandal of expropriation—that light blue  
that rehearses virginity out of the bath—  
the mathematical confusion  
                    that suffers sons,  
                                or suns.

Aún los vales del cielo no habían dispuesto . . .  
Lingua of linguists,  
a poetry of jasmine and snow—  
the island plays with me,  
            cuts, clusters, covers over words,  
            forgets their clear intention.

Who weaves the robe for Hera?  
But I have been unfaithful to green  
and the holiest stone,  
to the fifth dimension of spring.  
All names resolve under cover of masks;  
Boethius insists on a borrowing.  
Go as deep as you might  
            into the interior of an impropriety,  
            the presentiment of memory,  
love will awaken you on a mountain,  
where shaggy goats have strewn  
                                a verde pincelada,

and those who had thought to betray  
the sacred day  
                    have begun their hymns.

Someone must know my middle name;  
someone must address this self-forgetting.  
I say your eyes have seen my imperfect being,  
the book that no one will write.  
And out of the dead land, the earth  
                    has become solid.

I walk slowly  
like one who knows he will never arrive.  
You must recognize my text,

the metron of a blind man on the River Plate,  
and must have heard the equivocal self  
dancing upon an obscure terrace,  
celebrating the hidden treasure,  
the uncovered  
secret of dispossession.

Certainly,  
we will agree that death is an inconsistency,  
a figure with no rules to determine its beauty.  
Argue me another mode,  
the quality of an imprisoned bird,  
trepando el aire,  
free of its pain,  
and singing that no one will die.  
These measures you know,  
the tekhné of an infinite desire,  
the negation of a self,  
the constituent argument of one and one,  
the undecidable certainty embodied in grace.  
I remember the scarifications upon my face.  
I remember the pragmatic suffering I experienced  
when I left my master.

Your love was an offering  
I could not accept; I was an initiate  
with scars upon my spirit.

Who rides me now?  
Would I be San Ramón no nato,  
a minister to others' scars,  
and construct the emblem and form  
of falling into ecstasy,  
the solidity of a body given substance  
by its suffering?

Mis penas son como ondas del mar,  
qu'unas se vienen y otros se van;  
de día y de noche guerra me dan.

So the sun arises upon a lucumí santo,  
with his drink of bitter orange, corn, honey and dark sugar,  
and I set my heart  
upon black obsidian and the moment  
when the shape shifter removes the sun,  
and invokes the probable invention of silence  
and an endless night.  
So you will have your salvation—  
a new word, a logos,  
thinking what is possible,  
thinking self,  
thinking God,  
and the actual habitation of the sacred dead.



in an Albuquerque dawn?  
I would have no reason to fill my little bag  
with coca leaf for the dead,  
or to go down to the stream bed,  
where women wash their memories,  
and build necessary gardens for those  
                                who might have been anointed.

I have heard the dean's voice,  
celebrating his own funeral,  
and have awakened the festivity  
                                in my own eyes.

And I will tell you  
how I came rambling out of the snowy juniper  
to arrive in a legacy of farolitos,  
and the Dominican insistence on a proper  
                                burial.

Three voices arise,  
but perhaps only one will hisse, or chirpe,  
whisper in the voyce of the Spirit,  
and perhaps only one will know the Quire of Saints,  
or enter the holy roome.

I will turn again  
to that interruption that seeds me  
in the sands of betrayal along the Niger,  
and speak of the difficult birth of a mind  
                                that measures its own transfiguration.  
This will be the moment of letting go.



I had thought myself immune  
to the sacrilege of a second burial, one  
too distant and too inscrutable, to disappear.  
On my way to becoming transparent,  
I have become a radiant body,  
                a labyrinth of apprehension,  
that insignificant significance that sutures me  
to the rhythm and living death we would abandon  
                with the Charleston air.

These migrants  
open a different world, and inaugurate  
an ambiguous recollection,  
the molecular biology of that proceeding self.  
There is a darkness at the base of that tree,  
and the soul plunges as in a pool,  
a cascade of probabilities,  
the substance of that admiration and wonder  
that has yet to be revealed.  
And the Egyptian lies on the first step of faith,  
shaking in an unfamiliar wind.

One must savor the Second Law of love,  
the entropy of affection.

Wake me  
to that indistinguishable configuration,  
when the dark thread of my undoing  
comes forth as sun,  
or a frightened gazelle.

The song  
will tell us there must be a festival day,  
and an image of pearls on a dune of light,  
a voice, structuring its need in melismatic  
ingenuity.

Are these things mine?  
Could I unfold my breviary from Zapopan  
near such passion?  
I walk around the fullest moon,  
accompanied by five maidens,  
not one of us assured of a compensating  
order.

Old fires will be extinguished;  
a mountain spirit will descend.

Et on penser me fu avis

Que fusse en une grant forest.

Love should have given me its reward,  
and should have helped me to prolong  
my solitude.

My gacelita knows I have no home.

Heliopolis

Hermopolis

Evening

Noon

Night,

when the Khepera wanders,  
and what is intimate comes  
in disguise.

Marvel at this hour,  
for those who have been taken for good,  
and many things that are understood  
cannot be spoken.

I would follow charity,  
and honor,  
and understanding,  
and raise my hand to my lips,  
give myself over to these intimate words  
and the invention of prayer.

But prayer is not a flag  
at dusk in Bamako, or the reasonable  
intention of a milonga in Buenos Aires.  
These mediterranean fallacies  
teach us a peculiar hesitation,  
or the courage to face down  
the intimate discord within us.

Years in advance,  
I will hear that desert rat  
extolling our grafting in the authentic  
olive tree.

Such a man to praise,  
one who stumbles through the Greek  
of his own abasement, tonguing after  
his sibilant entreaty—  
Better to have ordered his do-ut-des,  
and to have bled the syntax of petition  
of its injury.

How easily I slip from invocation  
to argument,  
a ragged garment that covers  
my offensive shame.

I have been fasting upon silence,  
and have been too willing to abandon  
the companionable austerity  
of my entangled saints.

What bird will remind me of that moment  
when my doubt came forth  
and was betrayed?

You will never learn  
the lineage of number,  
                    the buried order  
that survives in the bush.  
Some will direct you  
to autumn's canon, tropospheric  
disturbances that derange the body,  
and encourage a desafinado of eye.  
One counts upon a clamorous exactitude  
in the birch,  
                    a deferential expansiveness  
in the season's first excursion  
on its slightly worn legs.  
This day always arrives  
with strangers intent upon exhilaration,  
though it does not pay to be  
too attentive to a widow's dirge,  
or the origin and evolution of a sacred  
                    bell that installs  
the measure of a difficult birth.  
Cool air leads to singing in a kiva.  
I have heard a child,  
attending to the disrobing of alder,  
                    aspen and birch,  
speak thrillingly and darkly  
                    of sunlight and sugar  
                    and transformative air.

How indigenous death appears;  
I would not hesitate to say,  
parochial,  
        poorly appointed,  
incapable of any persuasive intent.  
You will see the carping prayer  
that guides my misconception.  
I distract myself imagining a forest floor  
in British Columbia,  
the soil-enriching lichen, the star-shaped mosses.  
How like a lichen to this world I would be,  
slowly dissolving the rock of despair,  
surrendering my fragile body  
        to the soul's revived soil.  
Could I curvy such modesty,  
conjure the planetary conception  
        in the pronghorn's feasting?  
Could I remember the reticence of grace,  
or be content with knowing those  
        who might never wear crowns in the grave?  
Certainly,  
the dean, so at ease with the singularity  
of every star, will whisper to me.  
He knows my Cusan temper,  
the quarrel of my fading and finite body,  
the star-braiding contradiction I find  
        in my prayers.  
I must start again,  
and, having lost my passion  
for this rooted stranger, I must find patience  
with the slow repair of damaged things—  
the corollary of being, instructions to the performative self.

We know  
they attend to juniper smoke  
and the aspen glow that rises  
                    and swiftly fades.  
You will come upon an old dilemma,  
compounded by the southern entry of a stellar clock.  
What could give us such confidence  
in all the rules that govern change?  
Night air leans  
on a curtain of clouds  
                    drawn close  
to an earth that has been set  
                    flagrantly afire.  
Shall we look for an answer there,  
or listen for vespers at the crown of a butte?  
No one will stand still for the joke of it,  
the enigmatic gem that faith proposes.  
I say, let barbers beware of atoms and the void,  
or sit on my terrace,  
with the sun draining the atmosphere  
                    of its props.  
Let no one dispute  
the relevance of an emerald air,  
or the ash of an unanswered prayer.  
I would leave Leibniz at sea,  
turning through the meridians of faith and belief,  
exhausted by love's examination,  
and leave him with his faithful dilemma:  
                    being spatially apt.  
So I sit, here,  
a salutary boundary for a soul's incision,  
marking a moment here, the same moment  
in the shadow of what we call tomorrow.  
No one will forgive my arrogance,  
the tense of it—

though I insist, you will forgive my security,  
the fixed relation of my spirit and rain.  
I return to those early birds scorching the air,  
that simultaneity of loss

no one can explain.

Someone now sits  
at the apex of my sanctuary,  
and asks me if I will play,  
if the expansive cloth of my regard  
for those who refuse to name God  
will suffice.

Names escape their special place,  
or become the place

long after

the spirit has fled,

and one might become  
a stranger, or an enemy of cultivated fields,  
and distrust that habitable fiction  
breathing its presence.

Out of this devastation,  
I have built the probable appearance  
of my nothingness,  
and go, garrulous and grateful,  
into that axiomatic air  
that the breathing dead  
propose.

This proposition of garden  
alerts me to my truant body.

Envy me—

    beyond my reservation,  
halfway upon Mount Olympus,  
    a confusion of constellations.

I must need the spiny, grounding  
intrusion of barberry,  
    or the absent fonio.

But I would rather stand  
under

    Jupiter's electric blue aurora,  
or be attendant upon a symbolic altar  
that Paul has blessed.

    I ask now,  
what is the nature of truancy,  
and what is the value of coming home?  
My name will forever bear an unbearable  
    separation.

    Perturba el sueño de mi ojo un fuego  
    que se esconde en el pecho.

Nothing this garden can disguise.  
Nothing this garden can assuage.  
A certitude of absence and displacement.  
Even this perfect garden  
holds no alumi, no sorrel, no rice,  
all those ritual colors  
    that sustain my morning.

Once, I think,  
I was a human log, perhaps dead  
and lying within this garden; my guilt  
was apparent.

    But who can argue  
with my melancholic skills, the way  
I disturb creation?

Who, at the edge of this flowering,  
will measure love's latent properties?  
And what bird, all bully and blather,  
blames a genius for its ragged coat?

I am scandalously broken,  
having risked my life for un cervatillo,  
or the enchantment of its eye.  
Who am I,  
if not Ibn Gaiyat de Lucena,  
or some anonymous scribe himself enchanted  
by perfumed branches that turn in the wind?  
I would not die for that mouth,  
or awaken south of my own enchantment.  
In Toledo,  
one learns that there are secrets  
only revealed by tears;  
one must  
travel to Veracruz to assure oneself  
of disdain,  
or be humiliated  
standing beside the cathedral  
in Guanajuato's plaza.  
There remains  
una llama avivada por la pasión.  
But the thorough specification of passion  
seems a lux sui generis,  
or the withheld light of an obscure  
apparatus.  
Such is our symmetry,  
surfacing long after we have encountered  
and abandoned the solitude and scurry  
that defined our possible  
light.  
Love, they say,  
feeds a necessary orbit,  
and every measure speaks of separation.

The Athenian tells us what he knows  
of Cynthia, her self-perfection, her passion  
for the impossible.

Time will reveal  
a misreading, and others will propose  
a lover wandering the brightest part  
of the Milky Way,

searching the Butterfly,  
or, having descended, scrabbling among  
the shattered tokens of a tutelary god.  
We know that, too, is a mistake,  
an amplification of a hope

that must always recede.

Romans will brag of their honesty,  
the clever way they can renounce a decent beauty.

The Athenian gives up his choral songs,  
the practice that had once sustained him

in his passion,  
and has turned his passion into practice.

Surely,  
one ought to hear another voice,  
and be able to flounder in a specious danzón,  
or to stand at the summit of Mont Royal,  
marking with ribbons a solitude

half-redeemed

by an original loss.

Could Propertius have seen that bright open cluster?

Could he have named it,  
or have cuddled that incandescent  
flame of loss?

Melos,  
be my judge;  
divest me of anger.

What must I find on the lips of maidens  
I might have loved?

Why am I tied to the full moon  
in its perfection,  
and why do I feel so secure  
in my uncertainty?

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The subtle doctor would begin with this experience,  
and attend to Virgil,  
who might have only arrived  
by a difficult path, the goat path figured  
in a New Mexico desert.

Peregrinos.

Sólo como préstamo  
tenemos las cosas en la tierra.  
Look in my book for love's pragmatic  
hypostasis; you will find acacia, ceiba,  
and the beginning of a consummate argument  
with a tattered shawl.

Where will the lady be found?  
Who will embody her?  
Who will argue her unbridgeable life?  
Once there were those who thought themselves  
divine, who sailed under divinity's boat, disruptive,  
disguised in the lady's charitable flesh.  
This all must begin with a misspelling,  
a misapprehension,  
a corollary of Aprils, blood dropping  
from Heaven in a ball of foam,  
the divestiture of brides—called roses—  
a turning of hearts that fails  
to become adoration,  
a voiceless Bacchic band attuned  
to a different supplication,  
a natural  
incarnation of the woman's only son.  
Invest me now in faith's village,  
or in the city,  
where a dead king becomes expedient,  
and where I have lost my muse.  
You must say again how we intend  
to dress the lady's bones,  
and abandon your Theban evasions,  
singing  
of right order,  
a delicate fate,  
discretion,  
nobility.  
This axiomatic lady  
draws strength from being in flight,  
or so I say,  
and know myself mistaken.  
I would be true to a rhythm  
that escapes me,  
attentive to a white dwarf that has  
never appeared.

I conjure the shine of a reasonable  
river,  
the felicitous flooding that welcomes  
a new year.

    All is an astringent  
ecstasy, a strangeness that draws me close  
to a light that fades.

But this body will go dancing  
in its seemingness,  
in the simplicity of logical terms:

        one,  
        all,  
        the,  
        is,  
        and,  
        only,

the theological dogma I wear with my skin.  
You grow imaginative in your refusal,  
in what you would deny me.  
Who will display the greater moderation,  
if nothing lies under the tongue  
as sweetly as loss?

    Think of the self-restraint  
embodied in Electra's urn,  
and the natural order of her grief.  
An attentive scholar has heard her chorus  
searching a different balance,  
and has seen the binary star of a special absence,  
the light absorbed from each visible component,  
marking its transitive way

        through reconfigured air.

Those who turn under the active voice  
must believe in fulfillment,  
and the generative compassion of those  
who can never be held.

Why should I ask you  
to linger with me in this perfectly  
fitting moment,  
where one goes naked and unafraid  
toward turbulent waters?

Love is an imaginative equinox,  
and yet it remains veracious, and not at all  
like capricious Libra, distraught with autumn,  
                                casting it off, or the sun,  
who would abandon an Aries spring.  
We imagine communicative stars  
and constellations,  
threading the vernacular through the dust  
and gas of a treacherous habitation.  
One learns to say  
                    they were learning to speak  
                    an idiom of measure  
                                and separation,  
and perhaps they knew that the word  
would scatter the world,  
and that only silence would gather it.  
Perhaps they knew we would stand under  
the dispensation of words that would disappear—  
                    Malinke words, given to the cutting.  
Why should I lament such a quantum state,  
or the experimental apparatus that measures me?  
There is the intelligence of all things,  
a consciousness of death,  
a correspondence that never repeats itself,  
and distant galaxies,  
                    here, on the morning of their births.  
Think, too, how I have closed my calabash  
upon a sacred bird,  
and have made an inventory of similar  
events, the occasion of powers  
                    that alter or sustain you.  
You are the occasion for this consistent order,  
the ambiguous nebula of a hidden authority,  
                    a temporal asymmetry.  
It is an Easter morning in December.  
The yard appears boiling and fogged with spring's  
customary gases; the clover-filled lawn shines

with an unaccustomed dewiness;  
even the tropical grasses, supposedly at sleep  
in the border near the house,  
have awakened to splendor.

Something  
seems on the move; someone seems to offer  
a solution to a troublesome equation;  
or perhaps the eye has grown used  
to these interrupted moments.

How can we wake in this aura  
bereft of an air arising in Acatlán?  
Pity my arrogance,  
another singer undone by pragmatic signs,  
searching an atomic moment.

I am one of those who feels  
an unsuspected subversion, and go  
caroling my rude ambition  
among the stars.

Would the wood now reveal  
a principled seating, latent  
properties made actual after  
the fact of that first  
possession? What speech is imposed  
by the signatum: a first mother,  
a knife, a point, confusion of tail  
and head,  
culled in the emblem, námurukú,  
in that pure and static state  
before the first authoritative act?  
All might sound in the quia est,  
the sensory and frequent  
acquaintance  
with the west wood's measuring  
operator.

The problem lies  
with a radiation gas coupled to gravity.



The triangular stiletto places  
the accent left or right, begins  
                a nettlesome  
explication of the women's elephant feet.  
                Start over  
with a whistle made of iron,  
or forged copper, the grain  
manifest in stone or a leaf.  
I must follow a river  
       that does not answer to its name,  
       along an edge of light that does not  
       appear—  
                all a perfect postulate of Quine,  
a reasonable excision of ungovernable  
origins.



Who has placed Scott's oriole  
near the kapok tree, and has opened  
the recital? Some will whisper  
divinity,  
others will begin a nautical  
movement, provoke change in a magnetic  
field, dispute the catalpa presumption  
in the snowy but absent  
white flowers.

Color is harmony,  
or harmony is color.  
Who goes where with meridians?  
The silk of it.  
The round sound  
of shade.

Often the rhyme will parade  
the very transfiguration no one desires,  
disperse the vulgar fragility  
the woman displays.

There is an order,  
a bone order,  
a tyrannous syntax that makes  
of this silence a sensible act.

All sensible acts begin as paradox,  
as, at once,  
the image of my own interdiction,  
that statue that stands  
at my circumcision.  
This must be told in accident,  
in the embodiment of matter; leaf  
green symbols string themselves  
into existence,  
operative,  
dissolving continuity.  
Here is the now  
that the stone one designed.  
Moment to moment,  
white flowers turn red with shame.  
My heart is capable of being another,  
and I must pass through every degree.  
Once, I encountered a formal river,  
empirical, pragmatic,  
creative.

A secular marriage in Paradise.  
The hummingbird insists, the ceremonial  
bliss will draw it near me,  
and down through the dean's intention.  
Yet one must wait, or wade  
through a closeted passage,  
                    melismatic in its invention,  
having skirted a cantus firmus,  
and all the polyphonic matter  
                    attributed to morning.  
We have been told  
                    to do as you please,  
the corporate trouvère, and there  
you have caught us with an incipit  
                    that will not fit.  
I was once at Fulda,  
and thought the isorhythmic restraint  
upon our texts  
                    questionable.  
The hummingbird embraces  
its medieval feathers,  
and has ordered a response  
                    to a text  
                    it no longer feels  
                    compelled  
                    to sing.



What is as imperceptible as grief?  
Think of that court secretary, come to record  
death's perfect sentence.  
In the past, he misread his mother's body,  
denied her discretion and virtue.  
He sat upon a variable wave of grief,  
courting an appropriate season.  
But "sweet hours have perished here,"  
and the doñu bird's canon,  
which once was apparent,  
has gone to ground in an unmeasurable  
memory.  
Shall we baptize such an innocent  
in a tawny river,  
and stand him before an altar  
to receive his poet's cap?  
or send him searching for corn,  
rain, and the articulated order  
his resonant office obscures?

Night prepares its awakening.  
Somewhere a cloistered figure begins  
a prayer that will embrace me.  
I count upon such lawfulness,  
    the expressive motion that articulates  
    the shape of a dying apple tree—  
call it that internal order  
    that borders upon loss.  
I have grown unpredictable  
in my thirst for blessedness, almost  
willing to deny the earth  
    its spin upon its axis,  
deceptive in my perfect submission  
    to measure and substance.  
So this might be night  
    and a thorough awakening,  
that ordinary practice that prepares  
our limitations,  
    a water gift  
arising from a desert dryness.  
And the woman who speaks  
will be an orphan, childless, and far from home.  
    I was once in love  
    with the genius of the kapok tree;  
    the woman told me her tale,  
    and saved me.  
Or was that moment my own attentiveness  
to a figure who had not arrived, one  
who would attend a sacred darkness,  
and go searching among common means  
for a learned ignorance?  
I would be at rest  
in the benevolent circle the offended  
women compose,  
    a son,  
given to the voiceless quality of an  
abandoned name,

to the cognitive  
flexibility of a body without limit.  
But the Florentine consoles,  
or disturbs me, now. Who is  
in command of this incoherent light,  
that thrilling benediction  
of disconnection,  
the magnetic possibility of being burned  
to fulfillment?  
A salty plate of fonio,  
taken upon the Po, or under the aspens  
at Jemez  
must never recall death's attributes,  
or the way the accidental morning  
tunes itself to a singing one can feel,  
but never hear.  
Will I be the wounded Fox,  
waiting in the bush, to see  
that bird,  
perched upon an iron staff  
and chanting the discontinuity  
of love?  
Or will I awaken to see  
love's flagrant intentions in a flame  
that appears without beginning?  
A bell signals the end of a meditation.  
We begin an exemplary account:  
one, one, and the ordinary number  
of redemption.

The altar dances upon its star,  
                        secure in its orbit.  
Say that the dervish Dog Star dances  
upon its altar.  
You cannot sing that song, or thread  
a corollary music  
through impeccable orbits.

Nothing

tells us how the dance escapes  
its redemptive orbit,  
or how the iroko rises in that special light,  
a caution against an altar dance.  
But a dancer's body is not a shadow,  
and the laughter of stars echoes  
                        deep beneath the earth.

What devastation a theocratic bird  
would bring to magma,  
and the tempered explanation of fire,  
a sermon as fresh as the water that flows  
out of this ground to a wounded sea,  
or as old as the sinking Nile,  
                        the dying trees,  
                        the ever-recurring south wind.

What a paradox of altars and suns  
our Kepler would embrace,  
the line from the Pyramid's summit, flowing  
along the Street of the Dead,  
  continuing  
that perfect orbital motion.

Would that poet,  
sitting in his northern solitude,  
admit the Pleiades as our guide?  
Or would he turn, and go deeper,  
in search of a life  
                        buried  
by our ingenuity?

I have undone the Valley at Cuzco,

and lost my place; or have these  
planetary orbits charted a place  
within me?

Life has become a flowing robe,  
a moving instant that will not  
acknowledge its form.

I wish that the turning altar  
would bless my turning, my passion  
for the hidden successes in my being.  
Such a promise can never fill  
the altar's past and probable orbit,  
and such is the dervish dance of limitation,  
the particulars of beginning,  
and such is the movement of light  
through the body's responsive dark.

I listen now  
for that molecular order of altars and stars.

Romualdo  
 has written a rumba  
 for the buckhorn cholla;  
     the virginal moon,  
 as green with envy as Empalme  
 or Granada,  
     has abandoned Mexicali  
 to follow us along the border.  
 And the singing goes,  
 and the singing goes,  
     ¡Ay, que laureles tan verdes!  
     ¡Que rosas tan encendidas!  
 Why prick Romualdo with these other  
 successes, that Vaquero who loved his green  
 and could not know these lemon-yellow flowers,  
 rising from a shaggy appearance?  
 Why fret him with the slender  
 staghorn cholla, or remind him  
 of the teddy bear?  
 Why dishevel him with a displaced  
 Basque,  
 one who always hears the despedida  
 in the women's songs?  
 Romualdo would love to be at sea in Spain,  
 or footloose in Havana,  
 shivering under the batá,  
 but his dance's dosage is imprecise,  
 and will not take him there.  
 Where would the there be, if not there  
 embodied in the guaguancó,  
 being dressed by a montuno that celebrates  
 a border crossing?  
 All these particles irreversibly construct  
 a different body,  
 a spiny sheath clept by an evening's light,  
 perhaps,

derivative as death, constrained  
by the change in the music.

    In this exception,  
what can we offer Romualdo  
except the long-flowered four-o'clock,  
with its white flower unfolding at dusk,  
a tropical plant,

        like Romualdo,  
solicitous of wet, warm summer?  
So you see us riding  
to quinto, segundo, tumba,

        Romualdo's angelic versifiers.  
And you yourself  
will feel the weight upon Romualdo's  
spirit, as he spirals toward Tucsón,  
where the light bends

        away from la Ciudadela.  
We have this rhythm as a new beginning,  
a bush life that will live in the bud  
        and keep an eye on purity.

Embraced by Romualdo's cantankerous desire,  
        the buckhorn cholla begins its transformative  
descent into the red lineage  
        of a distant winter.

La huasteca está de luto.  
Se murió su huapanguero.  
Speak now of relative motion;  
greet those masked dancers,  
                    turning in an absolute space.  
Bring me the confusion of coffee mills,  
the millet beer the living drink.  
Even with a death so sure,  
there is an ordered resilience in spring,  
a spontaneity of lotus Azucena  
                                    would endure.  
Oh, the krasis of a shivering sistrum,  
when the corn goddess invites you  
to board her boat,  
and you find her at rest,  
meditating upon divinity's essence.  
A traveling guest,  
you will cross that border, and go astray.  
I will tell you that one of them  
approached me with his argument  
against my fulfillment, and dismissed  
my Cusan faith in measure,  
the intervals of spirit the huapanguero  
must endure.  
You will notice that the Florentine  
has remained silent, sitting in harmony  
with his trovero memory,  
                                    and the Azteca  
rhythm of a Mali morning.  
                    It cannot be true  
that the women sing their own perdition  
and that every body and every extension  
must come to a close,  
                                    or come close  
to the autumn of eternal things.  
This huapanguero might have learned  
the psychology of disguise,

and the necessary paradox of being  
    out of face, out of place,  
the substance of his own translation.  
Shall we figure the huapanguero  
in a Malagueña salerosa, or in the music's  
budding cell,  
where love is prefigured and constrained,  
and empty,  
the culmination of an element  
that will grow ordinary, dense,  
                    and disappear?  
I saw one who, singing, rose  
to take me through the strangeness  
of my being, and offered me  
                    the disturbing compassion  
I would need  
to redeem my scattered breath.

## Coda 7'

(ratio)

This breath braids the bond  
between the living and the dead,  
begins a cantica graduum that lifts  
a iubilis cordis into a different  
consciousness.

Where does the dean's grace reside,  
the pilgrim's oil of devotion?  
Kanaga will anoint the discipline  
and pragmatic descent of love  
in nature's sound and transformation.

## Coda 8'

(logos)

Just as the double rainbow clings  
tenaciously to earth and brings  
the puzzle of the sun / the scandal of a pun  
the light that sheds the hummingbird

(remember the bridging star  
that once forsaken air  
flaming restless fragile)

the logic of my heart goes dry  
its music seems displaced and shy  
the day is subtly changed / the dark is rearranged  
the moment speaks the proper word.

*(after William Thomas Strayhorn)*

## Coda 9´

(verbum)

Goodbye    I'm on my way  
No            I cannot stay  
I have another soul / to help along  
and I see (oh, yes)  
you've cradled my song.

Let's meet    where rhythm goes  
keep            death on its toes  
Forgive my solitude / in what I say  
but I hear (oh, yes)  
that you have come home.

*(after Horace Ward Martin Tavares Silver)*