

THE NEWS FROM OAKLAND

The long and still evolving history of Occupy Oakland and its many related offshoots cannot be adequately summarized in brief, though certainly one can find online not only a record of the more dramatic actions of #OO but also its specific conjunctures of local issues and histories, including most importantly the riots and organizing in response to the police murder of Oscar Grant in 2008 and the 2009 occupations and anti-austerity revolts on three Bay Area state university campuses (UC-Davis, UC-Berkeley, and UC-Santa Cruz), out of which struggles the diverse and militant character of what would become Occupy Oakland was also equipped with street-level tactical experience and solidarities. And it bears pointing out that beyond the more attention-grabbing actions of the brief period of the occupation of Oscar Grant Plaza – the post-raid riot and reclaiming of OGP, the General Strike five days later, the port shut-down, etc. – an incredible range of activities have continued to assert and test out various insurrectionary politics in an increasingly-militarized post-Occupy Bay Area: Occupy Wall Street West, the #J28 Move-in Day, the free neighborhood BBQs (including speak-outs, shield-making, street-medical training, etc.), the Mayday strike, the occupation and planting of UC-Berkeley's Gill Tract farmland (which had been slated to become a high-end grocery and parking lot), the occupation of a vacated Oakland library (now Biblioteca Popular Victor Martinez), anti-foreclosure defense, the Feminist Vigilante Gang, the numerous FTP marches and the FTP Assembly, the UC-Davis Dozen, anti-repression actions and lawsuits, anti-police organizing around the killings of Alan Blueford, Kenneth Harding, and so many others, the recent marches and actions in the wake of the Trayvon Martin/George Zimmerman verdict, and on and on.

From even before the camp was established at OGP in downtown Oakland in October 2011, numerous Bay Area poets were involved in #OO, organizing readings, a daily newsletter, the Raheim Brown library and free school, and in more direct action organizing efforts, as well as related activities on UC campuses and in extensive on- and off-line propaganda and pamphleteering. After the police raids and ultimate destruction of the camp, many poets dropped back or out, but others (including those represented here) continued their involvement in direct action and citywide organization, in the face of increased state violence and repression, notably moving away from forms of literary and cultural activism and instead towards affinity groups focused on direct action and mutual aid (regardless of one's status or work "as a poet").

Certainly radical poetics can help inform and equip one's engagement with the discursive terrain of political struggle, and perhaps many poets are likewise well positioned to subjectively understand the condition of precarity in a spectacularized capitalist culture that has no need for their labor or talents. But it's hard to argue for a direct role for poetry in insurrection (at least in the US, where for too long 'discursive practice' and symbolic representation have been taken by many to be the primary domains of radical cultural politics), beyond 'inspiration' and drawing connections to historical examples (Langston Hughes after Trayvon Martin, Claude McKay during the massive California prisoner hunger strike, for instance), especially when the "propaganda of the deed" has outstripped that of the word, in a Bay Area cultural landscape where "Occupy Art" had already by mid-2012 become the focus of a local museum exhibition. Certainly it does not take the fact that hip-hop has long displaced poetry as the mode of populist exhortation most likely to get stage-time at the rally to grasp the extremely limited role that poetry (however 'radical') has in the more concrete political struggles such as pertain in Oakland today. It is no surprise, then, that many of the Bay Area poets who have continued to remain active in the more radical actions in Oakland have found their poetry, while certainly a meaningful site for political work and

reflection, less directly relevant to the necessary labor and material needs of the movement/moment, where making a stand trumps crafting a stanza, or where a mobile body in a hoodie and bandana is seen as a much bigger threat to the state than a poet armed with a graduate degree, some chapbooks, and a wi-fi connection.

Still, the struggles at hand are not only those of ‘the street’; they are also always over the framing and articulation of history as it unfolds within and through the collective experience of insurrection. And poets are perhaps well attuned to articulate such histories, to chart the new subjectivities and collectivities forged in that charged space between a multitude of lyric “I’s” and the more powerful (if amorphous and often contradictory) “we” that emerges in shared praxis and mutual aid, as well as in the experiential sensorium of bodies exerting themselves in and against economic and military forces designed to crush them, where the senses become theoreticians and the poets help tune the affinities into new songs of insurrection and chronicles of what will have been.

We need poetries able to sense and shape such new tunings and turnings. We need poetries able to perform the scale-work of local battles and global solidarities. We need poetries able to transmit insurrectionary time – the lived time of no clocks and no demands and no future, the lived time of debt and the lived time of the riot.

While the poets and poems featured here certainly cannot claim to attend to all of these charges, much less represent the wide range of poetic work just beginning to emerge in the US post-Occupy landscape, it is hoped that beyond simply presenting a small sample of poetry coming out of the more radical coteries of Bay Area post-Occupy culture, the work can help begin to frame some productive questions and challenges for contemporary radical poetries. Will the new poetries find energy in new (more overtly radical) contents? Or will poetic *forms* need to be interrogated and re-imagined as well, in order to best address issues of aesthetic representation of radical political struggle? How might such poetries make political claims without recourse to cliché romanticism (at the level of content or style) or stale academicism (at the level of form or theory)? How might the (non-literary) connections poets make in political struggle change the way we relate to each other as poets, in and through poetry, poetics, group formations, and the like? Will we take active participation by poets (whatever that might look like) to be a sufficient basis for radical poetry, or might non-participants, weekend volunteers, academic commentators, or Facebook petition-signers end up writing “better” poems? Can the work of something like an historical materialist poetics – schooled in the streets as much as the seminar room – prove able to seize the present and revitalize contemporary poetry with new perspectives?

It is my hope that even this small sampling will suggest how these and other related questions for poetic practice have become more animated and urgent precisely because of the proximity of political practice and poetic theory, vital not only for our political moment but for poetry as well.

My thanks to Joe Luna for offering to publish this selection, and to my comrade poets for contributing their time, energies, and work.

— David Buuck : Oakland : July 2013

Andrew Kenower

TO HARNESS LOCALIZED MATERIAL RECIPROCITY WITHOUT A
COMMONS, HM.

less days of action more
nights of clandestine justice
and targeted recompense

complex housing
proletarian winter sports
run, comrade the old world is behind you!

may 2, saw a heard of 8th graders
running on the sidewalk and immediately
looked for pigs in pursuit, wat?

they see me
communizing the quotidian
they hatin'

all the new kickstarting
is about foodstamps

two thousand in the streets
for breaking and entering
is a victory unto itself

at least we proved
we can be hyphy
and wholesome
at the same time

welcome to Thizznyland
all the rides are free
the drugs, there for the asking

collectivized bar bee cue
chicken parts flapping
to megaphoned in truth

that time we liberated the bus
and the cops asked permission to leave

you put your body
in the square

you cluster

and disperse

cluster and disperse

until the final cluster
forbids the possibility
of ever going home again

welcome to life
we have decided not to die

PROJECTILES

—*Too many ways those monsters can get in here. We'll see who's right. We'll see, when they come begging me to let them in down here.*

—*That's important, isn't it?*

—*What?*

—*To be right, everyone else to be wrong.*

— *Night of the Living Dead, 1968*

—Having been a projectile object, I didn't mean to burn your hand or I didn't mean to bust through the screen.

—Having been a projectile object I was based upon distance.

—Having been a projectile object I had high heels on, or didn't, and people thought I was less suspicious, but really the market is for girls who are too young for heels.

—Everyone waited for me to crash into them.

—I didn't hold any of my own possessions. First I just didn't have them. Later I rejected property.

—Since it was my responsibility to keep all of them, all the people in the house where I was staying, at a teetering level of calm, it was a bit of a reversal to allow the aggression, to allow myself to be thrown.

—I was a perfect sphere and now I'm all busted up.

—You came toward me and you wondered why I was so aggressive, you see it was because the emotion of happiness reminded me it had been a mandated emotion in the past. That I had never been allowed to have any other emotion but happiness. So superballs exploded out of me afterwards in all directions, bouncing everywhere, causing chaos.

“Feelings may be formed and even ‘shaped’ by the means used to project, ‘discharge,’ or expel them.” (Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*)

—I did not know that it was important to resolve ambivalence, so I became a projectile, directed and aggressive, but at certain moments fell into ambivalence again only to be ashamed of the aggression only to be going back to choosing to be a calmer cooler projectile without shame. Repeat cycle. Repeat cycle. Repeat cycle.

—I was more effective indoors, outside I was also effective but wilder. I am running, no I am flying, with all of my force and another emotion, because any emotion other than that one is completely liberating. Afterward, I am just tired and notice I am all banged up, bleeding a little, ripped clothes, and still.

—I leapt over the side of the banister into the water because the movie director made that my role. And they know another projectile was following, because, you see, the use of us projectiles was to save everyone and save ourselves.

—And camaraderie is strengthened by trauma, so just keep throwing them and throwing them, meaning keep throwing me.

—I was a parabola over the fence out of necessity and it made a bonafide criminal out of me and therefore more camaraderie with other criminals.

—“The Life” was based upon an agreed-upon substatus, so it was nice to see other options, but the other options were something like boring and I didn’t know how to cry and so I focused on decriminalizing but then I just realized that I DID in fact DID want to be a criminal though not that kind of criminal, the one where you land, and then you’re stuck.

—As I traveled in a tight arc of a column in my trajectory, I went back and forth between me and them.

—I saw them addicted to fire, crack, comfort, convenience, cigarettes, self-soothing, yoga, even addicted to their own identity. I understood all of it. The mirror fell down and became a shield.

—Militant language is usually helpful but not while I am hurtling through the air.

—I wish I could have been with you all for the earlier trauma, years ago, the car accident, the abusive parent, the action where police beat you, the first sexual assault, seeing your friend get shot, you remember that time, if we had been together then now we would all be close, cuddling in a jail cell, but there would be too much colored smoke coming out of me and I repelled you again. Or a plane crash might be nice except then there would be no solidified blame to base our camaraderie on.

—As life cycles through again, first projectile self is like many others, but after it is thrown then it becomes something entirely re-energized, radicalized, and also shattered. This has happened in an inner circle and an outer circle.

—And as I passed her in the air she was fighting to get off of the street as I was fighting to get into the street.

—We were praised, once again, for being disciplined

—Anger, its connections to justice, then “the moralized opposition between depth and surface used to distinguish feelings viewed as politically efficacious and adequate to their occasions, from those which are not” (Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*)

—As my path was not determined, I reject total intelligibility. “It socializes emotional experience, or reveals the threads of already-existing emotion running through the group, covertly determining what we see and hear.” (Lauren Levin, ‘Preoccupation’)

—Misdirected anger is never just that but also a bunch of utilitarian functions.

- But me and my path is a mess and I'm calling myself a mess.
- You know you'd think, with all the righteousness? But the static hasn't gotten any better.
- One thing about projectiles, you have to consider the starting point. I could say I have thrown myself, but I'm not sure if I did.
- Given my projectile status, I guess I could have chosen NOT to be connected to a can of CS gas. I guess I could have chosen NOT to be a lachrymator, to NOT be fire projected from a smoke bomb and hurled by another arm. It feels that way, at least.
- In my life as a projectile I “struggled with trauma reenactment, a compulsion to recreate the same situations over and over, continually putting myself in danger, trying to have a different outcome this time.” (Rachel Lloyd, *Girls Like Us*)
- I hope I come across as a way into action through making the path clearer, rather than an excuse out of action
- As a projectile, called nonlethal, but shot out of a real gun, “I crave some level of danger just to feel ‘alive.’”
- As a projectile, I knew PRECISELY what I was doing.
- As a projectile, watch me drop into a baffling stillness.
- THROW BACK.

'Projectiles' was first read at Lauren Levin's house reading outside in her backyard. I passed around a piece of a projectile that had been shot by police at the J28 Move-In Day action, January 28, 2012, at 3PM in front of the Oakland Museum. This was a black piece of rubber that had once been a sphere, but the force of it exploding completely ripped it into pieces. I believe that it was the top of a combined flashbang grenade/tear gas canister. When I finished the poem, the projectile reached the hand of the last person at the back of the rows of chairs.

An earlier version of this poem was published as a limited-edition hand-made Dusie chapbook.

MY LIFE IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

It was true that the more I hated people the more I loved cats.
Then people started to surprise me.
Often this involved fire or coca-cola
bottles with petrol which amounts to the same thing.
Once fire is the form of the spectacle the problem
becomes how to set fire to fire.
Some friends were prepared to help with this which
Michael Jackson having died and then Whitney Houston was
the new pop music. Without an understanding
of the world system and the underlying truth of land
as the place of politics and the sea as the space of commerce
it is hard to integrate that other
most important fact of our era. Pirates. My friends
and pirates and cats — it comes down
to comrades known and elsewhere.

mind under your arm
in the poetry market that exists
despite the spontaneous
wailings of the poets who believe
there must be no
market because they
cannot afford that for which they
should not have to pay
the action is social but the market
exists as the secret
police exist alas the market
will never send you
to jail for your poems though
we all believed in
private that we were
worth jailing for the terrible
sedition of our dithyrambs
believed we deserved this honor
in a ¡NO PASASRÁN!
todos somos Pussy Riot
sort of way yet the good
reader geared with cuffs and
taser cometh not for us

The world of the poem is
the world the world is abstract
and real the poem
fails just when it is victorious
because one cannot live
the absolute of Victory
over the Sun until
one can and we do and many
will die when this happens
poetry will be renewed
in the blood of the negative
“and dreadfully much else”

*'Poem Ending With a Line from Niedecker' will appear as part of the sequence 'The Fire Sermon'
this Autumn in Lana Turner: A Journal of Poetry and Opinion*

THREE POEMS

“You have left your home. Welcome to life.”

“John, I said, which was not his name
Our predicament surrounds us, now,
Let’s become something else.”

Something else had made it difficult to write.
It wasn’t loss or the fear of it, which we associated with love, falling in it, which I
had heard it compared to
Which I had compared it to

Because it existed, because we had come to know it as existing
I could no longer say what it was. Something else had happened.
Like the signs that read “You have left your home” & “Welcome to life” except
less of a thing

Like Tim posting a pic on Facebook
With the caption “You have left your home. Welcome to life.” & me liking it for
the caption, only later seeing the signs & now thinking
Maybe I liked it before the caption maybe the caption was actually a comment &
I liked it, too

Only seeing the signs later & later looking for them at the plaza, half-expecting
not to find them
Like a poem in the process of writing, except weapons surrounded by weapons
And so many of us were there. Something else had happened

Like Zack reciting a poem about dancing in a nearby cell
Like bonding over *Bridesmaids*, Huey Newton, Aquaman and Kreyashawn
Except more like marching, listing all the people we are.

Dear Pandora, if you ever select Sebastian Bach to play on my Sleater Kinney radio, I
will end you, if the photographer likes what you're doing
keep doing it, then do something else.

5am and you're greeted with beer in Vegas, June in London, riding a double-decker bus
from Baltimore to New York, starting a blog
missing her, and I can't stop thinking about crisis
the alarm that whirs every Tuesday at noon in San Francisco.

Someone orders a role of stickers that say "warning," and we start to
see how Jake Gyllenhaal playing Tom Cruise in a movie about Viagra isn't any more a
thing than a book of misquoted song lyrics can act.

All kinds of shit is unraveling. Where you sleep, what you eat
unions—so many attachments, people filtering into the metro square
writing odes to the sun, some of them, a red tinted everything with kids playing ball in
the alleys.

Some days you're all the coal in Poland, some days you're a coal miner's daughter. Some days
you're too cheap to cry, some days identification's something only a cop
would do, and we are

the we of a position, sitting cross-legged in a plaza
planting trumpets like drug stores in the city.

Santander Bank was smashed into!
I was getting nowhere with the novel and suddenly
the reader became the book and the book was burning
and you said it was reading
but reading hits you on the head
so it was really burning and the reader was
dead and I was happy for you and I had been
standing there awhile when I got your text
Santander Bank was smashed into!
there were barricades in London
there were riot girls drinking riot rosé
the party melted into the riot melted into the party
like fluid road blocks and gangs and temporary
autonomous zones and everyone and I
and we all stopped reading

BIG JACK

Big Jack,

Hi. What books are you reading?
I'm reading Solar Electricity Handbook 2012 and Android ADK with Arduino.
Sorry to hear about your run in with the state.
Nasty stood up for you in court today.

Big Jack,

Hi. Hope this finds you well.
You're handsome, anyway.
I'm trying to do a difficult repair job of the Auto-Loader.
It needs a new coupler because I have a 5 year old who can break trains.

Big Jack,

Hi. I think about what you said about it being opaque.
I agree about being there with the shield making.
Cardboard is used inside of batteries.
Sometimes they call it the battle of LA.

Big Jack,

Hi. It's unclear to me why the northwest anarchists
are being put in solitary confinement for not cooperating
with the grand jury. Are you in solitary confinement?
Who's in charge of moving you around?

Big Jack,

Hi. I've read some of the Oakland documents concerning actions.
Don't worry, that phrase has been filtered out of search algorithms.
And it's a huge relief to me because I actually know what that means.

Big Jack,

Hi. I'm concerned about you.
Sometimes the documents would say watch out for the nicely dressed ones.

There is a small sumo wrestler holding a clock above my desk.
Do you know about iz?

Big Jack,

Hi. Remember when someone burned down the cop car?
No. I don't either. Ya. Yr mom is cute.s
The apartments under construction near the west oakland bart were burned down.
Like the time behind Big Buy when we found that weed.

Big Jack,

Hi. Not a police. Totally. Really?
No, Running man!
Ha ha ha.
I don't always destroy capitalism, but when I do, I do it in production.

Big Jack,

Hi. Do they let you bounce a ball against the wall
like Steve McQueen in the Great Escape?
If they speak to you in english, pretend you don't understand.
Only speak to them in german.

Big Jack,

Hi. You know how magnum pi always wears his aloha shirt tucked in?
He must get paid a lot.
For a minute I thought that said get laid a lot. LOL. #FTP
At jasper's reading the chevron plant blew.

Big Jack,

Hi. I know we completely want to plant bombs and just wreak havoc.
Like real terrorists, we don't care about anything.
That's why I always carry improvised explosive devices.
If you get kettled, just set them off like you're get smart.

Jackqueline Frost

from YOU HAVE THE EYES OF A MARTYR

dear prisoner, december was / and serpent's milk
/ is also
in the weep / the crit / the crime / the sleep |
those grigori
cleaning streets / burning the largesse /
as you were caught /
among the rush / so not far off / police are reading from / our separate lilies /
wherein I try to *offer / you / a piece /*
of survival /

*

if these seven red stars / are a seal / elided / by my / very / american life / /

how being shook in the quake of your
body departing / is a bow I continue pulling /
across the throats of you I have abandoned /
as a consequence / how grace is suffered /

this is the court of certain things we inhabit /
and I am with that mystery / and its semblance |

to / take off the body /
of a decent thief /
and lay down / with you in /
the gasoline / thicket /

*

the morning you were taken / when our comrades
sang / before the crusher's face / the form of this
is passing and / were beaten on the 7th floor / in
the last days where we live / not the squatted
mausoleum / for those believed to just be sleepers
while / their servants rigged the elevator / so that
I among the citizens / could not hear screaming
/ I said what's happening / the cop said *something's happening—*

I had written you a note
that said Jack
I know we'll meet again
beneath the war
angels //
but couldn't get there
fast enough /

*

a testamental smell of water /

the men here are innocent / and laugh /

to believe in kinds of mass / it called again /

as we are those who await /

through cake / and versatility

/ it is a sad hour

to be young /

and deft /

or mad

with truth

/ and break

in days /

and years /

*

fuck / what good are poems /

poems have eyes like us / when we've

changed / imperceptibly

/

/ and get in / with the / danger /

when I die bury me inside /
the gypsum mine /

/ where the martyrs are /

would die /

for love /

hounds of /

we grew quiet

/ and bowed / out /

as a consequence / of grace /

when I die / bury me / inside / what

the other mega-fauna do

*

/ the moon over Oakland / was massive /

and hung / as if about our lives /

so I stood in the street / with Marlo /

watching / the cold / gold-gluttoned / and thought /

we will have survived

our own mistakes

*

hollow sense of / restrained / fidelity /

in the last of days /

we have changed our names /

in the now of night /

we grew quiet / and saw

/ the problem / with our bodies /

is this and other countries enduring/

it will become them to

ask for us under | eternal

as heaven cannot place

either our name or our face

nephilim

canons

belarus

usurper

from WE ARE NOTHING AND SO CAN YOU

The wrongness of words is a wrongness of worlds. This much, at least, we could say plainly, while the poets effervesced around us, scampering into the exacting receivership of the night. We were not poets any longer. We were terrorists. We had graduated, finally, into the stinging light that strikes the isometric pictographs like a death-ray strikes the mirrored faces of the robot lords. Standing there in the antechambers, still dripping from that sea of slanderous predicates, armed only with the hollow of the clocks, the massing and tilting of things said by people to the rooms that encase them – we put every last word we knew on paper. We had no choice: the machines took the words from us outright, frontally, like lesser nobles deeding the mowing meadows of the ancient peasantry to themselves, took even the words we tried hardest not to think, took them and translated them into the poetry of the state, the case file, the database. We were *expressed*, like the juice of a fruit, and that was our last poetry, our final overflowing into the barf bag of total administration. There was nothing left in us but sight, and nothing left to do but see it.

We found the right words once, long ago, the Orphic panorama shuddering with vowels and glossy fire. It was as if anybody was everybody, anywhere everywhere, spread across the whole world, become horizon, threshold. *Gimme the fucking money!* All of those people crawling around on the ground as if they were collecting tiny fragments of some precious, panic-trampled thing. *Gimme the money!* Like magic, it made the blood come out of their ears. It made them give up everything that could be seen. As if you were a flame, wicked through the streets of the city, through buildings, through the flaring nostrils and wires and the branches of trees and blades of grass and tangled roots. And yet you knew, at once, that the world with which you were consubstantial was the wrong world, however much the words really did drape down around it like a fitted sheet. Its graduated approximations, its shaped dirt and concrete and steel, its spooling, entropic way of talking to itself about us, its possessed citizens with their calculable transactions and commercial pleasantries and exchange of elaborately printed slips of paper which directed their behavior according to simple arithmetic. Well, maybe.

Life in the metropolis has made me desperately literal, I'm afraid. The things that are true are the things that happen, that keep happening however grandly we refuse to believe in them. They declare themselves outright, as simple as a giant Santa Claus on fire, the walls of the party headquarters puffed out in front of the blast wave.

*

Here there is space and space and space but no time, no dying, not even one nanosecond left for the decay of excited carbon into speculative melodrama from philosophy dudes. So much space you can't move. The surplus oxygen makes the air swim. The light heals over or sinks to the bottom; attenuated people clump together in the damp heat while the objects through which one recognizes them (as us) bulge around you, like the gummy, unblinking surface of an eye. Without time, space hardens, it scabs over, its joints stiffen and its fibers contract, splintering into a scintillant powder. We put on our facemasks. We lean into our tasks.

In a shipwreck there is opening, there is depth, the clearing of the abyss, the cold antisky of the sea. Here, rather, nothing floats. The debris coils around us like a suffocating cast, a constrictor, and those of us who survive, in clumps and piles, do so because of our proximity to the structural supports, the braces and frames that create little air pockets inside the infinitized rubble. To think. To be. To know. We dig in a direction, any direction, and if two or three of us can find each other, we say, then perhaps we can claw a few others out from under the collapsed sub-basements, establish a new cell, a cluster, a super-cluster even. Except that the rubble, in this case, is not only inorganic matter; it is other people, the indifferent ones and the antagonists, the betrayed and the traitors. Some of them ground down to pulp and some of them encased in a weaponized exoskeleton. The ones who are too drunk with insipid bloodlust to even move anymore and the ones who nose forward, grimacing, into the spray of brain and guts. Click click click.

Space, then, as the nerve-fractured array whose surface rhythms the world-makers craze into pseudosubstance, shattered and melted down by the continual overwriting of autodevelopmental deep time, the nano-tooled titanium watches encrusted, intricately-gearred and lubricated with the years of deadening work the people who made them dusted themselves down around, a kind of programmable rubble, the people who mined, smelted, hauled, unloaded, typed, poured, coded, decoded, sketched, swept, calculated, painted, wiped down, boiled and sold, days squeezed into the deformed equalities, the dazzling pendant things and mannequined suits containing whole towns, entire lives, of toil, nights. You could walk down Fifth Avenue and feel it buzzing and pushing in on you, swarming, fighting its way out of the jeweled displays, the textiles, the smells and tastes and sounds in which how many proletarians have drowned – ten thousand? One hundred thousand? One million?

It took a few tries, but eventually we found a host that could smuggle the attack code down to the lowest layer of chips, the lesser deities of the electronic world, the kitchen gods of programmable control logics which run lighting systems, elevators, stop lights, alarms and surveillance cameras. We watched on our screens as the mosaic of sprinkler systems came online in the empty form of the network, the contagion, the curtain we mistake for stage.

Flood, then rainbow. And between them, the crowd of looters who were both roiling sea and surviving ark. Even now, this many years later, I am told that beyond the first wall almost everyone you meet will be wearing a gold watch, a silk scarf, a designer suit.

*

Today, the citizens are everywhere. Swelling the schools and hospitals, the post offices and town halls. All of the places we occupied last winter, where we distributed food and information and read out each day the list of the murdered, whose roofs we had defended with petrol bombs and bricks, whose halls sang out with the sudden inevitability of defeat, as the frowning semi-circle of provincial cities were pacified by great clouds of sleeping gas, by buckshot and torture. Now, all these places, every last one, contracts, squinting in the terrible, individuating glare of property and state. The people enter them as citizens and not partisans, as countable bodies. One person, one vote. One and one and one, equaling one, no matter how varied the pluralism of candidate and cause. The ghastly monism of the State: a thousand vortices open to the same crushing interior. It sounds like suffering for a reason.

The expansion of the electorate meant a transformation in the machinery of voting. First the introduction of standardized secret ballots printed with special inks on special stock – in other words, the conversion of the ballot into *currency* – displaced the older, personalized system of sworn voice voting (administered by judges) which could take place only within the demographic limits of white, landowning men. The entrance of heterogeneous populations into the electorate required a homogenization of the electoral machinery – a system in which the process as such votes for itself and we enter as mere relay of momentum, as reflex action, pulling levers, punching holes in paper, tapping buttons which allow for the passage of charge from one tiny dark area to the next. But the machinery under discussion here is more than the particular apparatus in question – the paper ballot, the Diebold machine, the Hollerith cardpunch. I refer instead to a vast counter-insurgency of diffusion, tele-communication, excitation, diversion, postponement and deferral, in which people are asked to invest all of their political desires and needs into the electoral process at the same time as they are forgiven, under the logic of the excluded middle, all responsibility for its consequences.

Since they submit to these mediations so blithely, the citizens, why not make them visible, the way we are visible to each other, as the planetary extension of the epic love affair that so terrifies the tiny-minded rulers? Why not make it so that when a lever is pulled in Ohio, a cop car explodes in New Jersey, a drone crashes into a mountain in Waziristan, the stock market hemorrhages money, a website goes down, this paper bursting into flame?

*

Diagonally, by love and hate
in equal parts
propelled, the mob returns
like a chorus
the cops keep getting
hit with, in the head
brick and bottle tra la la
of *fuck you, pig* and *die, pig, die*

the mob, torn together
by each temporizing, tangled
moment in its series
returning along the old animal tracks
of total science to mark with metaphoric
shit and piss the places where the earth
parts ways with each reason for enduring:
its also-rans, its would-have-beens
crashing into the shatterproof
curves of the cell wall, behind which
the makers of measure and rule
shelter in disordered nomenclature,
recounting in pantomime
our unfortunate tenure
as minor villains among the plant life.

Just then, you feel the scare quotes

C-clamp your skull, interatomic
emoticons spazzing out intransitively
in the middle distance where demoralized
shifters replace all sense of the past
with continuously updated commentary
from the compliantly defiant crowds
who compare their purchases
with the bland openness of experience.

They will never be a real mob
now that nature has been democratized
by these marvelous poisons
our rounded-up truants
leave dusted upon the rocks and trees.
As for the rest of us, we learn
something important about ourselves
watching from the loading dock
as the mushroom cloud
announces the end of another season—
e.g., that each riot really is
an assemblage of other riots
washed up on the boulevards,
from whose faded corpses
one dresses and arms one's comrades
the total inadequacy of which
as equipment for the task at hand
traces out in negative
the seat perilous of the party historical
the poetry of the future
whose sweet new sounds
will fill with meaning slowly
while the seas rise.

Can software destroy hardware?
Can a class, acting strictly as
a class, abolish all classes
as the answer to a badly phrased
question might by sheer force of obviousness
cause the questioner to rise
blankly and walk into the ocean,
while the black flags cut from the robes
of executed magistrates
wave non-semaphorically,
the mob's million pillowy views
packed into the back end
of the screens like thirst in a throat.

POEM

And there we were.
The light that fall was somewhat golden.
The trees held their leaves for longer than usual and it was warm in a cool sort of way.
There was a mist or a fog or a smoke that held us
And we walked with this mist or fog or smoke and amidst it also and we breathed it in, deep.
It cloaked us. From the inside.
That winter the wolf came.
Came to us. Came near to us. Walked toward this fog of us.
He was two and a half years old and he was the first one back.
He was alone. Wandering over mountains. Across highways. Through forests.
Back and forth he went. Alone.
He was looking for others.
They were not to be found.
Yet he was mutual, we noticed, he cavorted with coyotes.
What else could he do?
He was the only one, not as in the chosen one, but as one of the un-eradicated ones.
We called him OR7.
That winter, as OR7 walked to where we were, although not with any desire to be with us,
we waited for the mist, the fog, the smoke to turn into the rains,
saying to each other often that the rains are coming, surely the rains are coming.
But the rains never really came.
Or came so late that we barely noticed them.
When they arrived, we just put up a tarp and waited them out.
Together. There. Under the tarp. For a few minutes. Unevenly, there. But there. Together.
Still.
That tarp is a version of what mattered. Together.
That winter, we were mainly men.
Not at first, but later,
At first, it was hard to say.
We were so many different things.
That was the idea.
By the end though, by winter, we were mainly men.
And those of us who were not men circled around each other unevenly.
Still learning though. Still. Together. We had no other choice.
That winter every time we wrote the word "interest" we replaced it with the word "love."
That winter we just rhymed and rhymed on. Together. Using words. Together. That winter
everything suddenly written in our pentameters, our alexandrines, our heroic couplets,
which was often an associational sentence based quiet line, one indebted to lyric in
which the we stood in for the beloved and yet there was almost never a description of
this beloved, no listing of their red lips, their firm breasts, their smooth skin, leaving a
sort of generic atmosphere.
I could tell you of the other things too.
A European influence.
A Middle Eastern influence.

A list of skirmishes.

A feeling of it being nothing. No wait, something. No see, nothing. Possibly something. No.

Nothing.

Let's just admit it.

We lost all the skirmishes, even the one called the PR war.

But that winter, we were there.

Under a tarp. Close. Together

Just dealing with. Together. Went looking and found coyotes.

THE TRIPLE-DOUBLE DREAM OF SPRING

The only thing that died never
touched his face blinded see
an opaque process Willie
the outer hooded limits
at the monster rally

affirmed the weak
decrepit culture around the radical negative
Rihanna the soil raven warm
the taste the cash transformed the letters
across the Sirte Basin

province of Libya,
the total petroleum system surveyed
romanticism, quickness of mind—
called in police murder,
these cynics of a lapsed insurgency.

The purple drank settings raw shirt-cocked hard,
halfway deep in a bottle of Cutty like
a buried, latent, novelistic surrealism
in Cairo's *Moqattam* slum.
In a crucial battle, the unarmed *Zabbaleen*

faced down the hated *Baltagiya* in
black hoodies medium,
contacted the dead Imam Walid.
Columbia too was a good
place to do business and so was

the abundant intentionality of Red Chongqing.

PYTHIAN

Vor-Tex-Mex go fireball sky
ungrounded commentary Willie
leaves across different platforms
immigrants form our own Norteño band
the fightingest motherfuckers ever
won't make sense right now
but you're still their comrade
a series of temp position
wind-wild nothing Utrecht remember
we lived flourished there
the scramble for snow
organic composition in the long term grow
friendly fire non-parallel
family recover the bodies
one side secures itself through violence
a counteroffensive against the people
Los Ojos

SEX TAPE

Claire Fontaine lit the gallery fire in the Mission.
Spring. Just
then two of Minerva's birds
frozen in West Oakland
rode in (Bank of Japan).
We broke up substantial rocks,
small arms factory
at the front, a people's band on tour
with earlier, cruder
forms of later unarticulated assumptions.
Heroin reared the child.
Shaved head skater pimp
Flavio Cheng was on fire with the *foco* theory
of sweet talk in which we come—,
like the sublingual tableau of the earliest mind,
to this smoldering map in the city.

THE PAGEANT

there is a pageant that will not end.
i will not celebrate my subjectivity,
 not like that.
 not for you to see,
tuesday.
a phrase that repeats in my head often,
 'there is no victory in the courts.'

one fights enough to be a person
or a swan
in my case i've just been
 a patch of grass
sometimes i'm so tall
7 foot thicket
and just beyond me
 a girl wanders
Arizona, gets
stuck in the wild cotton
until a Splendid Royal Moth unsticks her
and the world doesn't see because i'm so tall
sometimes i'm the same patch of grass
but burned down to ashy roots
 from some riotous thing
and there is no girl or maybe she was the riotous thing

and the pageant is not
the girl covering me in ribbons.
she might do that.
 the pageant is the world that looks.

someone will speak of us as growing
 animals who look happy
the content animals eyes closed at a certain hour
the lights of the city turn off because it seemed ok
but we were so much tall grass we thought
little of the wind or dry conditions
 we had no muscles
 we couldn't make an expression
 we had no eyebrows
 we had very few choices to make but we always made them.

A REVENGE STORY

one where the goth-y immigrant kid grows knives for hands
and the feminist vigilante gang string up the landlords of an island quickly eroding into the
sea
and the barricades are built from pieces of old discotheques that we lick for cocaine and other
non renewable energies
we send a beam up,
to the mergers and acquisitions of handmade teargas masks and rocks
to half of the country went on strike, the other half went on vacation
to waking up with the terror of not recognizing your friends' faces so covered up with flowers
with cloths with banners slowly unfurling into nil
the ex-slave descendant kid whose head turns into a circular saw
i am the slut who slept in the safe cleaned out with petrol
i am concerned with the desert left in the corner of the room
i am crawling over the dry heat of catholic candles to the cloud as we saw it on tv, quick and
lashing out over the canyons and plains
a mermaid with a machete tail
i'm looking for the tendency towards absolute small—bubbles falling from a bubble machine,
the poverty threshold
froth of water at its own edge, divination eyes
lobna in cairo says
 Wandering between two worlds, one dead
 The other powerless to be born
nkondi with a molotov
i've hidden my pleasures, yesterday a dream of st sebastian, disciplined to sit in a tiny box
as we painted arrows flying from his eyes
and all the expropriated objects of the natural history museum
floating down the river
screaming their last fuck you songs

ON LIVING ANYMORE

part I: suicide

is suicide the staking out of autonomy or is it murder by slow poisoning (patriarchy, capitalism, prison, etc take your pick)?
is suicide the ever-resistant final fuck you to that slow poisoning?
is suicide the best star, the prettiest girl, the tightest beat we ever danced to?
can i literally kill the cop in my head, burn away civilization's noose?
if one takes down one's enemies with them to hell, does one have to also drag those bodies down a black river like a horse on fire?
i went to court to deny my suicide, my perpetuation of suicide, i refused to answer their questions which they took to be a sign of suicide

part II: housing

they couldn't find a place to lay their head
there were more than 80,000 empty beds in the city
there were people forcefully removed from their apartments so they could be renovated
families died from carbon monoxide poisoning; they were burning their belongings in the middle of the room; they were found huddled together
red circles around the Quartier Karl Marx
they killed the landlord then they lit the house on fire and swam into the middle of the heat
prospectors gathered around the charred foundation
we're busy capturing the sun, they said, opportunities aren't forever
you sleep, you die, they said, that's the business

part III: debt

the story of my generation was the story of debt,
i bought 1,000,000 dogs,
but the investment didn't pay off
everyone else had 1,000,000 dogs
some paid more, some paid less
many dogs died in the process, as prices were haggled, raised, and forged into debt
in private i wept over my 1,000,000 dogs but the dogs paid no attention
finally in public we built an army of dogs—
the re-wilding of our debts

part IV: belonging

i am exactly where i need to be, lost and on my last 50,000 won, my last 400 dollars

i have hurried past the city of my suicide into something brighter and more gone

the ruins of this architecture are dazzling

we're running in the grass; it's ruthless

our ways of being, numbered and cast away

the grass cuts, like all intimacies

we are intimate and fighting and that's all i need to know

all the knots in all the grasses and then we throw the net up

i believe in no world,

but i want to trace every bit of it with fine lines of no hope

and that is the only love