Number Among
Tom Snarsky
NUMBER AMONG

Tom Snarsky
for $K$
I.
The following is a tutorial for the moon: how to hold it

how to suffer its dumb face

how to walk into the belly of the sky with no armaments
Wish

My trick is to pretend
To be a person you might want
To know
In the initial stages
& then to fail
At being that
In a million small meticulous ways
Until our century
Finally passes
So As Firmly To Embrace The Jaw

One of the conditions of poetry is wishing
You were doing anything else
Like maybe acting so people could love you
Or fucking a lodestar
I decided I would write a screenplay
But then pretension vibrated my bowels so hard
I could not move forward
The borrowed comic book hitting the floor
Still thinking about Francesca Woodman
I am sorry for suspending time
This is just a cheap way of stalling desire
The only one I know that kind of works
It's entirely different not doing this with thumbs
There's a qualitative difference
In the duration
No one is vacuuming so

Someone might be listening

Balthazar Getty is in my head this week

Right next to you in the spatialization

Of the evening

I've decided to ignore the blinking light

The feeling of my hands touching

Four different textures at once is

Alarming

Like Michel Houellebecq's photographs

Both within fiction and without

I am joking with the tuberose

But not with you

Never with you

I am sorry that the moonbeams are so sad

The way this light arcs

Portentously
Like a condition or a lit fuse

It's entirely different not doing this

In the duration

Where the celebrity chef is alone on stage

And there is a single

Solitary light

The only one I know that kind of works

Right next to you in the spatialization

Of the evening
& there in the marbled timeline we each extended a branch to the empty
Tomb, inviting love
To decompress over the hills. His fat tongue & dark hair were equally
Inexcusable, but not to me. I didn't listen
When his sovereign silence importuned me
With its questions, their insane detail
Accreting a report to be inscribed on the plastic case of a budget drone,
Flown up & up until its innards froze & it fell relentlessly
Into the sea.

Sight gives a birth but takes it back. The chaste maroon
He knew me for was a neon sign I'd switched off. I couldn't maintain
The underside of a leaf—that lighter
Green, shaded & veined,
Riddled with stomata (from the Greek στόμα, mouth) that must remain open
To the air & its poisons
To give water.
I'm holding this basket way out

Over the river and it's got

Precious goods that may be alive

So if I drop the basket that I am

Holding way out over the river

I will be forced to tell

A story to the lover

On the other bank
Alexander

You smoke outside and you don't
Buy cheap cigarettes. A mother is born
As you walk away. The city thoughts
I'm thinking right now, the morbid
Feelings I've cloistered in my dumb
Paws. You are wounded
And that makes it worse. Can't talk
Directly about the porcelain damage
But it surrounds you, close to (not
Inside) the bone. Tuesday will be
Next week and still I'll hallucinate
Sudden butterflies, an outstretched
Hand, a body swap and two bullets.
I never pegged you for a sinner
So I'll handle any dirty work as the fog
Encroaches, on the heels of the birth-
Day song. Imagine we grow old in this
Humidity, next to everyone else and
Also alone, breathing a thick wet
That mothers know and that I have
Been tangoing with for your last
Nine years. Mon agonie douce—
La vôtre, je ne la connais pas bien.
Caritas Gemini

I.

The dog sprinted full-bore into the field &
Was gone forever from the present tense

He turned into a stack of love letters
Scribbled on postcards with addresses
All over the world but mostly in Europe
To be read by whoever found them

Actually they were music boxes with
Nothing written on them at all
Each one a shrine to claustrophobia
& the cleverness needed to write music
II.

My reology is just a smooth pear
I first saw under a prescriptive light
In a nightclub full of people I loved &
None of whom had yet learned my name

They were all mauve without apology so
I dripped out the door & into the night
Singing their songs in my cracking voice
Until I found a dirt path that led to a field

With the redundancy of color & with love
I ran into it headlong like a black hearse
After Webern

A beautiful boy died in a lamppost
And we will stick with this result
Through the serial woods, carrying
A torch and a body that's not his
Because his was incomplete. When
We reach the cliffs, I will give you
Such a hard time, and I'm sorry for that.
It's the light that does it, I think—
The glow is like his voice took aim
At no one but hit me somehow,
Square in the face, as it happens.
Traklish

*after Thomas James*

I.

A classically trained injury has befallen us.
The blind boy lives with me now—
His muscles dance in my hair.

II.

I distrust American suicides.
What if they're just
Burning branches no one has named?

III.

I am unclean in a city.
The city is the color of asters.
I forget the rest.
IV.

A woman leads her horse along the road
And reads him with a tracking gaze.
He translates the weeds and the guardrail.

V.

After everything, death is still
Somehow a surprise—
A frozen rabbit pulled from a hat.
A Classification Of Wounds

Totally disconnected, we await the early dark, when blood becomes the color of all liquid in low light.

There is a standing order to amass all the different darks, to wait until the sum of them reveals its character, which is to say its preferences, which is to say the popping sound the jaw makes at a certain angle.

Color TV must've felt like this, although not at first—only after it had been around awhile, out in the open, bullied on the playground in full view of the others. O, I will not transcend this rudely empty house. Nor will it me.
Brutal Monologue

Reason is cruel but it isn't real
But it is so maybe I'm confused

I'll wait this one out in a cool
Place until you get it all figured

Out I said but then my collarbone
Got ripped out by the Nothing-

Ness and I was left with no choice
But to engage
    (It was silly to think

There was any other way this
Could go, but your mild eyes did

Give me all kinds of silly ideas)
Idea: *ownership* is a refrigerator with designs on my selfhood. Yours too. I can’t explain it, I just know that in English, there is a difference between “this poem has an argument” and “this poem is having an argument”

and the ghost puppet judge is waiting just around the corner to decide which formulation obtains in this case.
Frustrated Observer

The thin trail of slime
that observation leaves
is a pillar of our several
ways of communicating
with one another, & then
the distance is only
a small part of its life,
an etching by a silversmith whose entire
family is dead but who
smokes only Newports
in your dad's garage,
which he knows his
way around like a fine gob-
let or a cheap sword you
would never have known
was made of real silver.
Mitre In Three Scenes

I.

The vestal virgins yawn in agate.
My life decisions have felt theoretical
For a long time, martyred as they are
By the dizzy moon.

II.

Historians,
The only honest people we have
Left, scour the Earth hoping to find
The hidden toenail of the mind.

III.

This recipe calls for silence,
Warmth, and the kind of tomatoes
You only see on television: blister
Red, fresh as an argument.
It's a chemical—that much you expected—but the worried trees haven't yet bought into the weekday morning television stories claiming it's also a curse. What to do when consensus is not forthcoming: dry the rainbow and haul its desiccated flesh to the autopsy room. Kill the one (which is a many) and save the many (who are hopelessly one).
On a playground, one of the
Biggest fears is misplacing
Or getting misplaced. Stop
And take stock: how many
Friends did we have in this
Universal year, and how many
Friends had we the right to
Expect? Figures are tumbling
Into the margins again, down
A greased slide, way too fast.
You might think it's cinnabar,
But no, it's green: that color
Of digits, that color of feasts.
The Archives Of Truth Written In Letters Of Blood

This is not an epistolary dream—
Maybe you'll like the negations better

You & I are far from actuality
& the tightrope we usually walk

Together
I have never lied to you but I have

Certainly made mistakes
I never told you about

Like for example when I said *Truth is*
*Like hearing a voice you cannot read*
Bad Argument

Summer ear and some're gone away
to the forge. Eerie mandate of form. An
echo lessening their sense of dread.

They sing together like contraband
in a hotwired hotel full of guns.

The reverb makes you disbelieve
& rightly so. Beware validity:
its spleen, its dire meat of sure repose.

The only meat that bleeds itself a shell.
Erratum

*Underthought* as in *underfoot*, not
*Undercooked*. Dry snow, not wet meat.

Images are culpable if thought is
Infinite, like we sometimes imply.

To hold that all can be presented
Again, with minimal complication,

Underappreciates the way dry snow
Hides water from the subtle boundary

Of a phase transition. Melt, refreeze,
Step on, step over. Get out of the way.
Poem After Lurlene McDaniel

A cottage with a river sunning
its dark doors. The winter of polio
again. Cryptic animal light source
beneath the wounded bed calls

the shadow to another harbor.
Fleeting trees illumined by a
milquetoast murder glow.
Killing them daily, like radishes.
Real

Imagine composing every kind of music
& then the elixir wears off & you're you again

& you is a black paper gift bag the universe
used to give itself to itself in a humdrum im-

pulse buy kind of way before it (the music)
melted into the background of the best

promo video for a well-traveled semi-pro
avant-post-left air guitar quintet ever made
II.
Malign Vigilance

Tremolo to begin:
The long thighbone
Humming its secret
Tune, bullet point,
Septum fracture
And the bitter hawk
Swiping the black
Of the sea. Humility
A nightlight with no
Replacement bulb.

Smokestack an-
Tonym loving you
Like a horse race
Out of sight of the
Painted steel. De-
Relict eye music a-
Gain. Make it hurt
My inner ear with
A piccolo of rivers
And no warning.
Cairn

Dominability sees
an opening in gloom
for the purplest flower
to shoot up
between the rocks
& ask questions later
You come from anxious stock:
daughters in the pharmacy, love
sealing the wool at centigrade.

How many woozy lambs would it
take for you to fall in love with
sound? It follows sharply through

the ravine, on your coattails like
mildew on the fine morning. His
hand burns with seeds, the kind

that fall into the soil and dissolve
without a word. One foregone
conclusion is he's messing you up

with winter; another is he's singing
with that wet kind of fear you like.
It is absolutely not necessary to make

that choice at this time; you should
know, though, that time is likely
to forge a decision and pass it off

as yours, without your permission
or so much as a passing glance.
O humble mithril
Regimented morals
Knife lines in bark

Sleep durably
Together out of time

Write a wind song
Scored with motion

A harvest of metal
Where the grain
Awakes transformed
Jean-Joseph Surin Wins The Spelling Bee

Perdition: P-E-R-D-I-T-I-o-n, Townsend avalanche,
Gravity current snowslip,
No-slip condition's exception,
Downgrade to the no-
Penetration condition, more
Free in parallel, resolving in
Parallel keys, gin and tonic,
Sloe gin, slow to begin,
J. J. Surin, covered in shit
& calling to God, in real life
& in Penderecki's opera.
Crying makes me feel so stupid
The warmth behind my eyes is a lot
Like the unhelpful
Transcendental impulse
Unavoidable & burning forth
Before language
Or maybe just a metaphor for living now
Sight
That old Protestant sense
Depleted & blurred
(THALES, triumphantly:)
With water
Poem In Which Quentin Meillassoux Has A Beautiful Dream Of Total Silence And Drools A Little On His Favorite Pillow (The One With The Green Stars On It That Smells Like Lavender)

I'm looking for a Word
Like “speculation”
But for listening

Something immemorially old
But still technology

To flow “through the ears
From an alien stream”

To calm by receiving and
Recoiling in equal measure

To be semelfactive but servile
In the fever of isotopes
How long until
I have to sandblast this word

Off the guardrails and
Swingsets and rivulets

Until I give it to someone from
Whom I will not get it back

Not theft only
A forgetful aperture a

Specter of pauses
Held in kind by the presence

Of the victim
Prayer To The Shoulder Wound Of Christ

On Sunday I get drunk & buy every book by René Crevel
That I can find on Amazon. This act of bourgeois shamanism
Is meant to help, even though I know that all our actions
Will eventually fade into a calm, clean, & moonish dark
With no images to speak of.

Still, the fear continues. When
I serve you a mouth in the dark, you don't even pretend to act
Surprised anymore, which stings. The mouth being, of course, our
Lord's, & the surprise being that of indomitable finitude peeking out over
The ledge.

Being drunk, I am not worried about overdraft fees
Or the fact that I haven't read a book in months; I am only worried
About the sufficiency of bisexuality, the lantern of flesh poised
In the seat of the soul, & the way pouring itself pours in mid-breath
On occasion. In these moments, history becomes a lavishness
That brutality
Cannot afford. Or a slavishness. Or a woozing of the heart & mind.

When the broken leg is so broken that thought stops
At the emerging redded-white (& for me it does), or when the shoulder
Decouples (flesh from flesh, flesh from bone, bone from dark)
& forms a new, looser unity,

every second in me burns to ask
The Question:

How many universes have there been? How many
Have contained you? What are we to make of the sex at this impasse?
It would be wrong to limit ourselves
to one set of colors, but
That was never what the snow was asking us to do. It wanted,
Simply, a myth—one that we might buck the trend
& tell our children.
Tithe

Once the red float.
Carpentry. Serial number
On a faun.

Illogic. Heightened
Senses. Metastasis on film
Would be what?
Would be sub-
Terranean, going under still.

Thickets of youth

Grasping.
Flyover of the huntsman, crouched brutally on the outcropping, looking small with his hands invisible in his big cloak. His head is in its usual place.

He's not alone. Sound waves at extremely low levels cut through him constantly, to say nothing of light; he is a dwelling in inconstant motion. The minor streams he steps through and the trees he ignores all murmur through his spine, brain, fingers, eyes. When the moss catches his attention, his step hitches, the profound green jolting him from his own high body.
No rifles allowed.
Things are working as they should on sluttish time.

The eternal return of the same is happening right this second.

High-frequency welding makes limerence come and go without a sound.
Authenticity is another word for acting

Like acting is somehow less than crucial

To the success of our enterprise of being

A good & bloody pulp of text messages

To you
   yep nameless name yep hourglass

I said our vows in a quiet topography &

Market forces built us a bridge to youth
Ramified. So speechlessly ramified. I owe it to the sun-dry real to top off my I with cold feet; here they are doing other work. On the level of the consonant I feed into the dew. Let this all be memorandum, full stop, silly habit. An arbitrage wipes my name away from the base point. I smother these periods for you.
Vacuity

Empty, but tense. I lifted the idea “art is shelter” from somebody with limpid bones. There's no manic edge to draw back from, no great systematic doubt to heave through the windshield—I lost the wherewithal to call it a beautiful moon, spongy & fair. The attention I have spent on this is like garbage slinking through a river of milk. The long, pedestrian sigh versus an anagram of dreaming.
[¿]Does it throb with live interrogation...
—Anne Boyer

...on this reef of earth [/] Inclement and inhuman[?]
—Herman Melville

A free mandibular decision to drink the wreck.

Whole coasts of outer love ringed with wet roads

clasp the fortitude of fathers. “Beachy Head”

off 20 Jazz Funk Greats.
The ocean keeps asking

its question: groundwater interrogated hourly, off a

cliff. Poet tricks of yesteryear.
The crest in a golden fire.
It feels sick to stomp verbs like notions or grapes,

both gifts from you I hoarded with similetic caution. Your playbook drowned. I signed it first.

Between the between and afterlife, there's a hinge.

A poll of the body. Information I'm indebted to.

Without any deadlines, I climb the hill,

parallel to grass, born into its mangy secrets.

A perilous adventure disguised in a country
accent. Identify yourself with anything big enough

and nettles will fall from the sky. You asked me if

“platoon” had any synonyms, and of course I

kept quiet. I pretended to forget the question.

Corset pull in the dream marina. Lack of evidence.

The defense is doing justice to repeated actions.

Someone is floundering after applause. We don't

know who. Choreography in your mixtape. Multiple
media. So many brilliant rays.
We like what we like and

we butcher the apostate.
A jury box bored through

with malice aforethought.
We can't just be enemies.

To ask the judge a clarifying question, first you must

climb the seaside mountain.
Tell me what you find there.
Way Too Far

Dread biting your shoulder. 
The mass grave statistics 
Are never in time to hear 
The harpist's tune, which 
Rings like a bell shattered 
By the flat-mindedness of 
Flawless desert, where your 
Father lives. Read the sign: 
His nuptials were a prison 
Of cosmology, the fleshly 
Guilt of one entangled in 
Becoming without having 
Prepared an airstrip for its 
Arrival. This means you run 
Out of runway, going way too far 
To land unscathed, or ever. 
Then all we can do is mourn 
And ask our safer questions.
How did your day glow?
Too movies for the other side?
Too aspic to rise?

Whereunto the division, after promise of cold stuttered hand, a fixed rain, some plums in the shed. No argument.

Missal bower hanging over the karst sings listwise to the tripwire.
Mixed question marks.
There is no semaphore here.

Depth in general running around the clock. Thorniness happens every day you're alive.
Widow Code

I mistook your body
For a flood & died in it

Every decision is insane
N'oubliez pas ça

The secret admirer
Walks out from the mist

& takes you
As his only prisoner

You have four options
None of them are pretty
Plains of eternal beings
& metaphors of light

It is difficult to understand
Skin & the time it takes

To collaborate with flowers
I slackened my body until

The whole expanse pudged
Into doves

The explanation
Drove him home & didn't

Kiss him goodnight
This poem should end

With “day” & so I'll make it:

I love you
    Happy birthday
Frost Dream Theorem

Throw this poem hard against a wall
How many photographs survive 22 years
Gather all on one side & shove up
The recoil is the fastest, coldest part
When I lived up there in Dream Alley I knew
Dozens of people willing to bind the Book
The pool in the secret cave of it
Axioms of us like “sex”, “food”,
“Crystallography”
The king of night watching sophistry cartoons
An angular pill does just as much
To offer calm
Throw this poem hard against a door
Enough times that someone has to answer
I think it would be best to continue
With the burden of an overheated moon

Hanging slackly off the left shoulder

Proof of an arid photograph we could hide

In & call it an accident

How many poems survive 22 years

Hold them all in one harried mass

& shove up
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