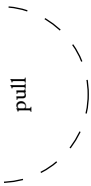


{ Material Lyrics }

Susan M. Schultz

Tinfish Limited 2001

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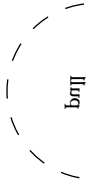
{ Thanks }

to Patrick Durgin at *kenning* and to Ognjen Smiljanic at *tooth*
for publishing some of these poems in the future.

to Gaye Chan for the sleeves.

to Sangha for the use of his lexicon.

Illeg



{ Creative Memory Consultant }

I love to help people organize their memories. Imagine the following film: *Being Dr. Kissinger*. There's no light at the end of *that* tunnel. Lala lost her ball: *aw down, aw down*, Sangha says, waves hands, palms cupped up to signify the nothing that is there. And then Po her 'cooter. Clouds like vast pockets of lint over the Koolaus. Write to the rhythm of the pile driver. If lyric is material, how to reconcile its obsession with what is forgotten? Does that explain the moose with a head cold, bedded down amid animated rubble? Bomb crater where a wedding party was? What memories my son carries are physical: the touch of foreheads, particular curve of the hand when he dances. What he has forgotten is an entire language. *I'm eager to show you how to organize your adoption scrap book*, the consultant writes. Your snapshots are testimony, remainder, the excess that spills over in long division. Revision by reduction, memory plants—a glove still grows in the garden. *And they all live together in the big red barn.*

{ Ephemera }

Magic bones haunt Takeo province, await validating experts to analyze. *The villagers who took bone parts to their homes reported becoming dizzy and feverish*, according to Radio Australia. The dead of Takeo are archived on-line. The photographer was *only following orders*. Tripped his lens. They were bludgeoned, as bullets were too dear. The archive perpetuates before, not after, blurry as Schrödinger's cat, though we see its eyes. *Ai!* he says, seeing the picture on a box. Vision contained, domesticated. Cooking as self- or other improvement; *value innovation*, the president tells cadets. I imagined an erotics of starvation in the Khmer Rouge cookbook; she returned home dressed in black, a broken mirror. Lend me your ears and eyes, oh my editorial conscience. Her words were excess, invention, surcharge on memory's credit line. The wedding hall collapse was due not to terrorism but incompetence, articles of impermanence inscribed in cement. *They're accustomed to terrorism, not accident*. Do you know where your *other* is?

{ Moon Down }

Sees a crescent moon in my dirty coffee cup. More musical because he speaks sentences before the words come. Blows on bugs and geckos; picks grapes from books and "eats" them; dances out of a cultural memory before our time, left hand cupped over his head. *He won't listen to you again until he's 40*, she says. Detail as divination, moon inscribed in cloud. *Wadobs* for water. Käse, cheese, an English *smile*. What he does with my computer when I'm not watching. Retrieves the past at random, almost as it might have happened.

A shot came out of the hooch, so they fired back. That is one version. Another claims civilians were killed so they wouldn't talk. Landmines are anti-memory devices, do not permit an end to that disabling event. History of bone, of the boy with new legs going back. One man folded a brother's story into his, like batter. White man, brown brother. No autobiography holds its solitude.

pull

{ Vocalissimus }

Interregnum. Egg with a *kb* at the end. *Dada ohm*. Hot smudge behind the cloud means *moon up*. Substitute *water bird* for *swan*. (Was a monkey did that.) New fairy tales end *and then they worked hard*. She'd always say *be concrete* to me and I'd think *sidewalk*. We grow more linear, not less, with time. She asked her father if he wanted to be cremated as he danced between the graves. Those were days of the *grève*. Tripped by the question about metaphor and metonymy, she moved from one to the other like a tenant swapping neighbors. I knew what community was, once the guy fell through our ceiling. Narrative desire is different from a desire for narrative. *Use the compose command to complete your message*. Composition and command, what finger on what trigger itches. *Where the Garbage Goes* has a beginning, a middle, and an end. Ramon Fernandez, please stand up. Your green card should suffice, though we worry a rubber raft might be necessary. Yes, I will talk public policy, twist my thumbs around the banyan's roots. There are now mountains where the motherfuckers were.

{ Hot Hot Hot }

As if to hang from your heart's rope. Leather chewies are good. Most action is implied, not accomplished. Her mother saw wombs torn from women's bodies, tied to trees and left behind. Her grandfather saw what was not there, but was true. Metaphor involves ethics; therein lies its difficulty. Parsing not syllable from sound but necessary from suggested comparison. *She'd make a good Nazi, but she missed out on history's envelope.* Take the observer out of the poem; the *I* should not exchange body or other fluids, like words. He says *abten* for siren; signal without syllable, lacking an interpretive key. *Bye bye*, he chimes, blowing kisses in his palm. *No one left to drive the car* is an American line. *This is our universal poet, as Walt Whitman was before him*, the arch critic writes on the jacket of a book about little girls with penises. He left twine in his room as an inheritance for whoever discovered it. Solipsism, too, is method. No angels dare to tread on that pin head. In the evening sometimes it's *dold*.

pull

{ Material Lyric }

The blind assassin sat on a stump, dressed in milky white, aura of vertigo. Savior and sinner, *save* and *delete*. Yet the counter-force, accent on act, literalizes what ought to be our metaphor. Not Lear, someone less like. Nor witches, for whom material, when broken down, becomes spirit act. *Oxidation is lose, reduction gain*. Oxygen does not want to share. *Mine* says the boy clinging to his *babo*. Cambodia's new beauty queen has a gender problem. Skirt the issue by raising it. Leaving lines of gender, the slug slithered through the garden and died of alcohol intoxication by morning. Corso's yak. Elegy to body parts, not the soul, though Yeats's bird was as much that as smithied gold. Everything means twice, is so redeemed. Sometimes ironic, like coupons, and sometimes not. Flesh of my flesh, spirit of mine own. *Hundreds of infertile couples interested in cloning*.

{ Toy Story }

No one says, but everyone knows. *Nose*, he says, when it runs. *My nose is walking*, insists the moose who thought a cat was a bed. It's best to wake up edgy, like Wordsworth, only acid. *90% of the world's work is done by people who don't feel well*; Churchill changed beds because he liked them cold, lay bricks as a hobby. *I remember what you say, not when you said it*. Plots are the endpoints of this unstill universe. Seeing changes it, but also us. *Hard Crane*, she wrote, then corrected it. At Melville's our instruments are wet, immersed in the *wadobs*. Corpuscular travel, from the inside in. Still to still, its herky jerky motion like Nashville on reggae night, the *I an I*, as ever, up for grabs. *Would rather my president cheated on his wife than offended the world*. Transrational alliteration, mistaking stem for stern, stamen for the flower's lip. Tulips in April, New York City '97, cue card to that particular stew. Or not: this material forgetting turns transcendence into toys; little boy's *duck* carries imagined rocks across the living room floor.

for Janet Bowdan

pull

{ Jurassic Tech }

Plagiarist's holiday: seeing everything twice, but refusing to say so. Double happiness not as character but as palindrome, this shuttling back and forth, tapestry of a spring's double dream. Wide winged birds mob refineries on the LA coast. Adjacent, defined if not re-fined. His first published poem. Terre Haute the high water mark of *execution*, word requiring disambiguators to detach completion from terminus. Folk beliefs lack locus: if your mother tears her skirt before you're born, you'll suffer a harelip (stuffed rabbit proves it). Volunteer to break and eat bread over his corpse (none in this case), and you are a sin-eater. Belief could be a conditional state. Everywhere there are *scenes*, of crime, of love, of loss, whatever motivates us to start the DVD. Lasts longer than tape, better approximates memory, or what we want memory to be, stable era of shallows and shadows, fiction worth cultivating if only to remainder what's left of tag ends. Bits come in handy down the road, no matter which fork you took. *Do not put your feet on the table. Do not play with your food or it will disappear.* What language means, time torn or worn.

Romeo's a flat character, albeit accomplished. Not the time we associate with depth but with Leonardo DiCaprio. The basis of sectarian violence is belief. Settler guilt and gall. Longinus serenades us as we fail—again—to cross the Alps, seeing instead Mauna Kea's black crescent poking through a cloud on our approach, descent. On various and sundered wings.

pull

{ Truck Stop Fugue }

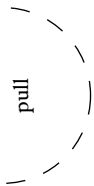
One man in a cold space. The word as self, exchanged. World in which there is no moon, no cloud. Where there are variations without theme, indulgences preceding sin. In which there is no background, only counterpoint. To hear as he does a kind of empathy. In kind. Kinder, kind kids. Da kine, or an evasive opening. *Moon down*, the boy says, where *down* means *gone*. He was not a hermit, for he had a phone. Light bends, distracts, is consumed by dust, and that is why the sky is blue. One man in a cold studio, dancing. Time may be replayed, but is never repeated. *I am obsessed by form because I am never still*. Indulgence is desire at its extremity, so *I want* wavers from poverty to plenitude. Give everything away.

{ Attached }

From out of the dark sequence a bright boy. "Happy daay," he trills; throws an imaginary ball and runs when he fails to catch it. A mock patriot is still one. Adrienne Rich writes, "a patriot is not a missile," though it's awfully easy to get confused. To the rhythm and rhyme of pile drivers we install our palm pilot software, knowing where to keep time and its lists. Flag day, though nothing's burning yet. "It's probably the paxil," the doctor says, to my new fondness for naps. At 20 mg, I love turbulence; at 10, I love it only half so much. Years to reconcile the brain's chemistry with church visits. The bathtub with the clawed feet became my mantra. Memory is repetition, only. It's what we do with it. Where alteration finds, my Hong Kong tailor, his and my hand signals. Saw him at Star Market, gazing at flowers. My sense of place is color, shape, the constancy of a certain kind of green. Only the hibiscus is a bridge, blossoming when it can. Wept when I approached the end of the books about Hart Crane. I prefer

pull

meaning *within* the poem to meaning *without*, and attach my article on Language writing. *Picket lines mean*, they shouted, obstruction a meaning in kind. She regretted referring to her *natural* child. The satyr would speak twice, goat-faced, witty. Not a lamb but a tiger be. In opposition collapse. Of category, Edwin Gorey, figures drawn and quartered. When he likes a book, he pretends to eat from it: fish, hermit crabs, even manta rays. Says *side* for in- or outside, thus avoiding the categorical. Words *received*, as by someone lacking hearing or sight. Proof positive there are no origins, only echoes. Between echo and echo, then, there is silence. We are left in anterooms, gathering music's dust behind our lobes—*All god's children got shoes* and *Swing low sweet chariot*, as performed by the Wee Singers.



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When I asked him if he could say *leaf*, he said *yes*.