"If we posit the existence of a darkness, then no light in addition to it would come about from the Light of Lights, for otherwise the aspects of the Light of Lights would have to be multiple, as were explained before. Yet, it is obvious that there are many self-conscious incorporeal lights and accidental lights. Were a darkness to be generated from the Light of Lights, it would be alone and nothing else would exist, whether lights or darknesses. Existence itself testifies to the falsity of this."

- Suhrawardi from *The Philosophy of Illumination*

When the light walks, clockwise, counterclockwise,
atoms memorize the firefly's wing
silhouette 20 foot elm leaf
(worm's-eye view through three crisscross timothy stalks).
A blue hinged green at edge, the twilight
sinks as if half swimmer
-- ankles in wrinkle through wood turtle
swallowing scarlet strawberry,
waist deep the warp then roof of star split clover, one pale
eye spool rayed Orien
thistle silk through soil particle --
to Euridice. Head deep
in neithere
*aether*, nether:

- Ronald Johnson from *ARK*
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A Manifesto of the Work of Redemption

Confess that dictation, collage, sincerity and objectification, interruption, chance, the concept, typography and constraints are a poem’s Being, then the poem becomes our thinking, read into Being.

Confess that in this life of the poem we listen, study the mystery of the poems that preceded us, then translate their singularity into our own poems, our own world, the poems and the worlds to come.

Confess that as we write into the seconds just before us, we put our hearts on the inevitability of metaphor, the linguisticality of perception, the boundedness of thought . . . the beauty of error, where our words’ persistent shifts are absolutely trustworthy, relentless meaningful—sacraments.

Confession is then redemption; it is words spoken, written, read, heard, as words, their correspondences, their creations, their bodies, converting us, one another, their difficulties made difficult again, an incarnation of the cosmos, burning our selves away, making them new, as in a desert, exploding with light.

Thus, against the depravity of representation, its failure to show us Creation, our inability to come to life every moment of it, we who confess, confess, acknowledge,

1. words as such; all the energized past possessing us so it becomes our possession, rushing, poem from poem, made, not begotten, of one being with the world, but not pointing to the world; through the language all meaning is made, every principle of composition compressed in one line.

2. rather than craft, the discipline found in open forms; rather than the genre experimental poetry, blindness to ourselves, the visceral registers of experience and judgment, and the productive, irrational force of our imaginations and our poems.
3. our need to cast off the teleology and crushing rationalism of liberal humanism, that orthodox secularism, ideology of the ideology minder, its commodification of thought and history, its evisceration of poetics and philosophy and invention.

4. redemption and belief are not metaphysical; they are the truest form of materialism: the work of making a poem and the Work of Redemption are the same. In the poem is the sacred; it draws us into the impossibilities and complexities of the word, and our nearness to others who also live in words, on the world.

5. that as for politics, our mothers and fathers were overrun; we must stop filling our lungs with revolution and carbon monoxide. Why demand narcissistic self-murder? To keep on talking to mirrored rooms? Love the world instead: compound our irrelevance, worthlessness, give particular men and women our time and attention, our money. They will always be with us—we betray them right now sitting there. Don’t care for a better social order. Seek out impossibility & maladjustment; make a poem with the mind’s identity; it may exceed our good intentions; there we might found ourselves by finding every atom belonging to us as good belongs to you; no progress but perfectionism.

6. redemption is not salvation, but repetition with a difference, with a little less enthusiasm, more belief, in the midst of perpetual war. If we would but redeem the avant-garde, the avant-garde will redeem the poem, and the poem will redeem us.

7. our work remains happily minor, aside, read mostly by our friends. Skimmed, or endured, for five minutes or six.

8. in a present marked by banal violence and anti-archaic, anti-biological knowledge, childishness, utter predictability, a flood of social networks, our fantastic act of revolt is ecstasy in the avant-garde in its age as a gnostic nominalism, keeping what matters alive, in us, unheroic, unprofessional, useless, ignored, but always talking, acting, thinking, scribbling, at work, troubled, radical in study, care, and assembly.

9. the Divine, manifest in the single catastrophe of history, but who beyond it awakens us to it, gives us poems as assembles, made from the rubble; the poem is thus a work of apocalypse, which has already occurred, in which we dwell.

It comes to this: the work of redemption makes the familiarity of a poem wandering in the avant-garde strange and productive once more, for a great strangeness, for us who live after the twilight of the idols has turned to night, is found in redemption and belief, the strange discovery that the gods persist, despite our sermonizing, simply taking on new names, mutating, stubbornly conserving.
In the work of redemption, the poem is constant; it is perpetually merciful and faithful towards us, carrying us safely through all the changes of the world from generation to generation. Here there is, for me, joy and matter, and you. Bodies coursing with energy and thought. New poems. For the aesthetics we cherish—matter and joy. Bodies coursing with energy and thought. New Poems. Arks.
At the recent poetics conference at the University of Washington’s Bothell campus, I was exposed to my first irradiated moments of academia, sterilized by the light of it.

I left empty and purely clean.

I wish I could say it was a cleanliness that brought freshness and vibrancy to my poetic approach. Instead, I think of Henry Darger’s back arched over his manic collages, an epic battle between the forces that compose life animating heroic girls alight in a vivid universe where every moment is bursting with importance and significance. A universe we are all seeking and that is constantly retreating from our grasps.

In writing a poem, I use words instead of material pictures to compose a collage. The words can make pictures in a reader’s head. So can the sound of the words. So can the placement of one word with another(others). It allows me more freedom, perhaps, than other mediums.

I do not want to be clean. I do not want to be told how to write and what kind of writing will be acceptable. I do not want to write about sex because in writing about sex, as a woman, it will be so fascinating...so liberating...so titillating. I do not want my genius to be buried under my body. I do not want any woman’s genius to be buried. Poetry is a tool to revolt, to rebel and to grasp. To train one’s eye on the universe within

and grasp.

*lux in tenebris.*

Poetry is not standing behind a pulpit telling everyone about how intelligent you are. It is not about mastering language or displaying your brilliance, your cleverness. It is primitive. It is wild and cannot be tamed. If it can, it is dead on arrival at your feet in a pile of human achievement amounting to nothing. It is barely language, barely speaking, barley anything at all worth talking about.

What could we realize if we let go of what we think we realize?

All of this is said with love.
snake elation
malled here
Congregate
Man
Equines
(literally "little man")
or horse-on-bird
an artist's lay
figure
America
& its floes
its neck of lace
Cali graphy—
you and your presence
The Sea Lion

All the waves went ahead
And I stayed behind
The clouds came over
Rear a roar

Thru my element
The salt
Sands the floorboards
Over comes

My island the cock
My rural
Stunned district
My one

By one
I burned my hair once
to watch it transform in my hand.
Everything in this room wants
to burst into flames even us,
wicks struggling doused
in oxygen and timed by time.

Remember asking for life?
Me neither.

Or these phantasmal visions.
Romantics say people are trapped
in bodies, but there’s something
else. The mind is not tangible
nor isolated is what ten
thousand spontaneous wakings
have taught me with as
many dreams and days of thought
that were never mine.

Flame starts fire but what
glints a spark for who or why?

And I’m starting to doubt
decaying wick belongs to such
heat or if the light does, too.
Does it taste the wax and look
through the glass air around it?
Then drowned in eternity, ruined
by energetics but saved by
experience of existence.

Feelings you’ll know
when people burn you.

Extinguished body or
transformed from things
more exquisite
less entropic.
having grown tired,
we whisper to ourselves and hope that you
can hear
(though we are dreaming of fields
full ripe in mid-day sun),
and somewhere out beyond us,
oars are being gathered and
the water is being depth tested.

if we knew another way
to change your mind, we would.
now, we wait for you to come to us
and talk with obscure lines
about trails leading through bush
little known to anyone else.
now am i partial motion_ 
here a letter_ there a mark_ 
owner of all_ of emptiness_ 
in state i_ in community i_ 
self concerned for concern 
mostly with motion and knowledge_ 
no explosions_ or
movement_ wind still water
still_ light always bright { 
movement yes, but not 
vocalized_) no losing reason, 
for no standard exist_ the 
logical system is my own_ for 
to arrange _ along the paths
precreated—beyond me_ 
these dream did i or just follow?
Sore neck. Eyes dry.
Pollen unbearable.

Allergic means
‘to meet a strange enemy’.

From the Greek.
not of sieges,
but eyes.
poetry is the ache for god of & hermeneutic meanderings stoved in the fire until the sign of wine & the winehouse our heads are dirt at the feet of the master of the fire temple

the ring around the ring around the tightness of the ring around

the breakdown forthwith the leaping feet the tender /s the listing lisping of the headsman, the fire of his hands

the noose the axe the scene in green of the hills behind the cheering & jeering screams the rose amongst the stones

1 Traditional Persian Sufi song, translation by Gregory Angus, unpublished
i will transfix
transubstantiate
the sign of the mass
word made flesh
flesh made holy
Holy Holy Holy

genuflection in the Sign
Ya Haqq!
genuflection in the Sign
Ya ʿAlî!

O Allah
O Hu

we will call
by righteous names
& by the rectification
of names, do as Adam, Ron

do, now
the Secret
/s
The secret wants to be told. Why doesn’t she have the secret man in the third row tell, he squeals, hand up—pick me. By all means says L. But he just reveals his cover, and just to the secret listeners. They listen politely, praying he doesn’t dominate the evening in which their secret hearts pound.
The long tree's bristle
Hermetic cry
Thrash
Can they unify their attentions?
Rain arranging
Can they together this?
She's working her way through
She's farming
The fields admonish her labor
again and again blank

She sees herself upon the yellow grass

_Oh why must there be expanse so beckoningly at my disposal?_

The moon is another field
or is it the sun reflecting none

She’s working her way through the field

_Is that a star in my eye or the sky, is that a you from whom I have known?_

She’s sleeping in the field
Chthonic

in the loam of mind

green-fingered eyes

muster the scene
state less,

Adam

under awe spired eyes

every thing

has its mouth to manifestation
And there is little light
that penetrates
her eye’s impermeable rind
where there is neither
clarity nor resolution
surrounding the unrequited thought
the thought which bears
the intimacy known
(to the self) as isolation
and it is here
she believes
she sees
daylight fade
behind the blast furnace factory’s
grey fieldstone walls
where iron chords
fuse melting air
to dissonance arisen
on darkening asphalt streets
and where incandescent lamplight
glows through winter doorways
and into rooms of corridors
and hollow mirrors
and rooms where the widow dreams
of the intimate desert
of her own haunted isolation
The push back against that volume of space empty of matter, 
it’s pressure at zero,

you’re a mighty thought experiment
*burning the small dead* components of the universe, 
*a hundred summers* under radioactive decay.

Now bombard me with high energy subatomic particles, 
Make me convert 
into a different element, 

modify the operation of our entropic system, 

fill the landfills with 
what’s in our pockets: 

hydrocarbons, sulfur dioxide, and heavy metals, and furnace slag, 
iodine-129—

to seal up 
a state of lowest energy, 

hollowness exhausted of air, 

and although it is not true. Consider, the sunset 
with more sunset in it, the dessert lit more dessert-like, 

then push *your mouth* into a smile, and smirk, 
*the world we hope is an ancient woman* 
gathering recyclables from bus stop rubbish bins.
The sudden, overwhelming weirdness that things exist—you only make it worse: your acts of hermeticism, scions swarming beneath every godbless-ed face; extract-ing documents of barbarism, hoards of specimens, binding our brains, our flesh to specters, chewing at the pedosphere. Bohr said he made man the hub again, enmeshed in measurement. He didn’t know that each cross-sectioned shred of matter is a mouth lecturing
VIII. "Hold me tight, honey, hold me tighter. Then let me go."

Speak of this,

rolled into

hills. Memoried of hills,

Spaced thoughts of hills

sun reflected of

hills,

Past declarations

of hills,

the work

we did

of hills,

far reached into night

old bones of us,

Ready to begin the task,

understanding not the neural

but the heart

of hills.
To discredit

belies an allowance

of judgment

The sound of night

distorts an aroma’s hue

leaving its nakedness concealed

Hands appear pristine

pristine only because they are empty

and angled perpendicular to everything
Hesperus is Phosphorus

and the name
makes the difference

between

I

you

ya-Jami: The One

the star the bright of the morning

in finding it

within

who reconciles

who composes and arranges

who connects together

alight

a

light

once the wheel's begun

the blaze
Correspondence
From Thomas Meyer

An end. Terminal. Or goal. Question mark. The modernist project shies away from finality. That things simply run down. Perhaps, in the blink of an eye everything is gone then replaced by itself. Disclosure. Can narrative action exist without conflict? Don’t ask an actor. Can there be a drama of revelation... Antagonist. Protagonist. Antidromous: to be led by the hand all over town.

Ambiguity and digression, how perfect are they? Together they give rise to the liminal. And the liminal gives rise to shape. Shape to form. That gap of uncertainty the binary cannot attain.
Interview
With Peter O’Leary

Jamie & Jeff: In your last response, you mentioned that Apocalypticism can be seen as an act of decomposition, “dead matter is devoured and returned to nourish and improve the tilth of the earth”. We loved this idea of consumption as a method of rejuvenation or as a part of a cycle that is healthy. Can you expound on that idea of poetry as a method of consumption/creation in relation to the cycles of life and death?

Peter O’Leary: Lately, I’ve been thinking about mycopoetics, which is my coinage for connecting the lives of mycelia (or fungi) with poetry. Mushrooms are the fruiting bodies of mycelia. A mycelium is comprised of hyphae, which are thread-like tubules with thin walls. These hyphae expand into soils and rotten matter where they absorb food. If that food isn’t readily available, as in a healthy tree, the hyphae excrete enzymes to break down surrounding matter. Hyphae function exactly the same way as the cells in your stomach; the difference is that your stomach internally contains the food; fungi acquire their food externally. Hyphae is a strange word outside the realms of mycology. (Hypha is the singular.)

But you’ve seen them before whenever you’ve turned over a pile of sodden autumn leaves and noticed a gauzy cobwebbing linking the tissues of the rotting leaves together. What you’re seeing are hyphae. If you dig in your garden and pull out a handful of soil, especially if your garden is healthy, you could be holding up to eight miles worth of fungal cells. Put simply, there is no conceivable growth in any environment without fungi to break down decaying matter. If all the fungi on Earth were suddenly eradicated, the planet would become inert.

Language shares a great deal in common with mycelium. Paul Stamets, the visionary mycologist, has claimed that mycelium operates at a level of communicative complexity that far outdistances our understanding of its functions. He compares mycelium to the internet, going so far as to show how visualizations of the networking functions of the internet closely resemble mycelial networks. Because a fungus is a relatively simple organism structurally speaking – a hyphal tube has a thin cell wall through which food is absorbed and from which all kinds of information can be transmitted – Stamets believes mycelium acts as a kind of neurological system for the environments it inhabits – absorbing histories of forest fires and footfalls and capable ultimately of being communicated with. Language is the imagination’s mycelial system, absorbing nutrition from the information and experience it encounters and transforming those things into knowledge that nourishes the soul.

Poetry is one of the fruiting bodies of language. It emerges in order to propagate language but also to preserve it. (Mushrooms are the sexual organs of mycelium: they shake down spores which allow the mycelium to reproduce.)

This analogy is good, but only to a point. I don’t want to make an extensive allegory about mushrooms and poems. But I do think that there’s an incredible amount of rotten language and toxic poetry out there in the world, contact with which withers the soul, poisons the imagination, and leaves the reader limp and lifeless. Every poem is headed eventually for the litter heap. In this basic sense, every new poem should be contributing to the soil out from which any new poems will be discovered and grown. This is as true of Whitman as it is of my own poems or those of any other of my contemporaries. In “Poem of Wonder at The Resurrection of The Wheat,” Whitman, who, fantasizing about the volume of corpses filling the ground he walks on, asks, “How can the ground not sicken of men?” goes on to claim “Now I am terrified at the earth! it is that calm and patient, / It grows such
sweet things out of such corruptions, / It turns harmless and stainless on its axis, with such endless
successions of diseases corpses, / It distils such exquisite winds out of such infused fetor, / It renews
with such unwitting looks, its prodigal, annual, sumptuous crops, / It gives such divine materials to men,
and accepts such leavings from them at last.” (This poem was eventually entitled “This Compost.”)

_It gives such divine materials to me, and accepts such leavings from them at last._ It really
couldn’t be put any more clearly. And my thought is: if you’re not imagining this fate for your poems as
you write them, then your poems are going to be toxic, filling the environment with poison. Each newly
created poem is its apocalyptic ally, its revelatory twin.

(To be continued...)
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Alhamdulillah.
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RIC CARFAGNA was born and educated in Boston Massachusetts. He is the author of numerous collections of poetry, most recently Symphonies Nos. 1, 4 & 6 published by Chalk Editions and Symphony No.2 published by Argotist Press. His poetry has evolved from the early radical experiments of his first two books, Confluential Trajectories and Porchcat Nadir, to the unsettling existential mosaics of his multi-book project Notes On NonExistence. Ric lives in rural central Massachusetts with his wife, cellist Mary Carfagna and daughters Emilia and Aria.

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