

Anti-Positivist Manifesto

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Class of 2018
Rudolph William Rosati Award

I Am

Was Descartes big on baths,
Do you think?
I doubt it. Mostly because of that phrase of his.
Cogito Ergo Sum. Sure. Maybe.
But did he ever watch his legs float
Awkwardly in the tub? Small anemone hairs that
Sway as the water makes way
For lazily ravenous lungs?
Did he ever look at his gangle and length and
Chuckle, for a moment, at the strangeness of nature?
Probably not. Or at least,
He must have always gotten out before draining the water.
He can't have known what it's like to pull the plug
And be tickled as the almost aquamarine
Falls away from skin—slowly—retelling the burden of gravity
As if it had never been heard. Certainly,
He never lay against the drained porcelain, naked,
And marveled at the weight of a torso out of water.
No, he wasn't big on baths. If he was, he wouldn't have forgotten
About his body.

Mustn't Dance Too Long

Straining against the present
 Inactive in my chair
 Closing grateful eyelids
 And

Twirling around the room with a premonition in my arms
 A glimpse of those things that will demand me
 In ways
 The commotional, competitive, clamor of the now
 Cannot

Wisps of conjured warmth comforting me with what
 Will—must—be realized
 A blanket of storybook feelings
 All scratchy sentimentalism and romantic moth-rot

Prophesying must not stay so

Created before manifesting
 Born inside a jittering head—
 A harrowed host to itself—
 Semantically satiated with introspection and
 Losing any of its meaning

Delight transfused from some
 Distant future

A future lobbed at the middle of my mental trajectory
 A future without which I will have borrowed from nothing,
 Will have indebted myself to imagine

A future
 That I'll bump into on a bus, a sidewalk, somewhere
 Cold but not barren
 Twinkling with happy convergence

A future in which I mustn't dance too long

(One mustn't risk living entirely too far in advance)

A Love Poem

I was thinking—
 Just the other day—
 Of a way that we could die...

Ice skating on a familiar pond
 not quite frozen enough for our weight
 but only because the sun would be shining and
 tiny operas of birdsong assaulting
 the rigidity of its surface

...

Hot air ballooning into a hurricane
 Cackling wildly at the serendipity
 Of finally seeing the tempests in our minds
 Reflected back at us
 Lightning mirrored in our eyes—then through them

...

Shipwrecked somewhere off the coast of Portugal
 Our bodies sinking to trade secrets with the
 Scurrying little crabs that would know us—
 Our bones—
 So fondly

...

Reaching for some part of the written world that
 We could not live without—
 Careless from habit—
 Tumbling off the library ladder and
 Soaking into the holy pages that fell with us

...

Taming grizzlies with camping chairs
 Next to our faded and friendly tent
 They'd have fantastic names like Davenport and
 We would have had a class act if
 They'd kept their jaws open as we winked and pretended to
 sleep on their tongues

...

Making faces at the so many skulls
 In the Paris catacombs
 Laughing into the dark when
 The tunnels collapsed—
 Burying us and our six million friends

...yes I was thinking
 wouldn't that be nice?

Cliché

I remember that plain August night
When the yellow moon performed its miracles:

It anointed you with dappled chamomile and
Clothed you in masquerade ball shadow-scrap.

You were beautiful and I told you so—
Echoing garishly through time

Between a whisper and a laugh:
(you're serious?)

Cursed are those that cheapen the moon, and I
But
You
 Were still beautiful in the moonlight

Blue!

Give us grey skies
 And clouds that obscure direction. Please,
 We are not melancholy
 But burned by the transparent positivity of Blue!

Such an average color, Blue!, but so arrogant,
 So loud.
 It might be said that Blue! drowns the rest of the world,
 But no, drowning is tragedy and detritus and
 Blue! is sterile, scorching.

Blue! simplifies,
 Replaces Caravaggio complexity with
 Blind, sweeping grabs at profundity.
 “Sum it all up! —
 It’s just so *clear*, isn’t it?”

Blue! hunts for our thoughts,
 Wants to wash them in its vast.
 Molōn labé.

So, they hide in grey days—
 Oblique corners—
 Quiver, among the piccolo reds
 Of dying leaves walking on air.
 Squirm, away from Blue!’s brilliant touch.
 Quake, next to tear streaked Passion.