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.
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.
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.
Molon labē.

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.