Wesleyan University The Honors College

I wanted to be sure to reach you;

by

SaeidVahidi
Class of 2009

A thesis submitted to the
faculty of Wesleyan University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Bachelor of Arts
with Departmental Honors from the College of Letters

Middletown, Connecticut April, 2009

I wanted to be sure to reach you;

poems by Saeid Vahidi

with thanks to Ethan Kleinberg and Kevin Goodan

CONTENTS

[In boundless infinite astronomy] 6

I.

[Ex nihilo the sun is rising up;] 8
[However long I've stayed it's time to pack] 9
[The sun has risen, finally,] 10
[The frozen night cars crashing driving doughnuts] 11

II.

[New day today: watch the sun rise] 14
[The snow is falling, pieces catch] 15
[Death in the family. You have left] 16

III.

[food / for thought cafeteria] 18
the Theory 19
[The rolling countryside of your skin brown] 20
Decanter 21
Day / Night 22
Supermarket Group Portrait 23
the History 24
Sonnet 25

IV.

[Rt. 18 S] 27
[I am the sand the strand the beach the shore;] 28
[The reckoning is coming and I'm trying] 29
[Can the subaltern speak? You'll hear me out] 30
[Like waking up at noon and watching snow] 31
[I was sitting alone, my arms around] 32
[So everybody was already blazed] 33
[Let's talk about emotions the sad way,] 34
[Commotion in the foreground of the wet] 35
[Maybe I will go back a couple one] 36
[March 2nd snow. I feel so damn depressed.] 37

[Well, time will tell. For now I fluctuate] 38
[No explanations: where I'd like to end] 39
[Left from New Brunswick, head to New York] 40

V.

[No way of knowing if] 42
[If not the cleansing downpour,] 43
[Goddamnit. I'm up early and my nose is running.] 44
[At Martin Luther King's memorial] 45
[The rising sun is yet another sun] 46

In boundless infinite astronomy
is it love if no one reciprocates?
True love: is that outside of gravity?
To love: to understand a star relates
its history, apart from it, negated,
out of existence? Is it to subsume
oneself in brief celestial light created
in distant time? And then why does love loom?
The unaccountable is that which changes.
The irresponsible is that which changes.
The firmament, in which a star deranges
itself laboriously, it arranges
these dying stars, including all of them,
as if encapsulating all of them.

I

Ex nihilo the sun is rising up;
from nothing il gran sole sale su;
out of the night the day emerges so
unlike the darkness that it registers
as its own entity, an organism
in its own right. An individual
significant other. The moon is ice
stuck in the sky. The sun is flooding it.

However long I've stayed it's time to pack
the few things that I have and leave this place.
I have my underwear and shorts, my black
backpack that has a book, notepad, and case
of pens in it. Why bring that to the beach?
It only takes a breeze to set my mind
off on perambulations, free of speech
and other hardships. If the stars aligned
in that special alignment that they've got
for me, perhaps I'd know precisely what
I'm doing with this book and pen and plot
of land with which I've been warming my butt
up to this frigid moment.

The sun as risen, finally,

but I am still unsettled. We
have been up for too long, and I'm

worse than you are. A goldfish floating

in its container. The jar's filled
with shit and water. Will it be

this way much longer is the question:

the lone desire being clear water.
And I'm this absentminded fish,

not even gold. I'm floating, lost;

where could I swim to? Can you see
the water that I'm in? I'd like

for you to see this grayish water.

the frozen night cars crashing driving doughnuts
into the earth the grass that forces its
way up our feet as always pushing down
even when we're asleep or dead the rush
of things the past exuberance of things
summer's demand that takes away too much
the night my ruinheart unbroken in
a moment that I could hate water's cold
a wet white shirt sucked to the skin the rolls
white mesh of swimming trunks between
a pair of hairy cheeks the grain of sand
that got into the tip flat feet that slap
down on the wet hard packed sand volleyball
nets in this great expansive edge cigar
smoke thick stench wet cigarette butts afloat
ugly seabirds the cotton candy strewn
over the sand a thin and tall redbull
floats on a surge a tampon points its face
imperiously at the sky the jelly
fish everywhere a sabretooth without
its legs left arm subject to lacerations
some sandy crust and marinara sauce
a variation on a theme potato
chips and tortilla chips the boardwalk looming
birdshit and the dry sand on the street cars
parked at an angle as far as the eye
can see well what a fool I am to walk
barefoot in this place plastic bottles red
caps prizeless caps tar in the heat to keep
the gravel earth of cars from sundering
an empty thong bikini you became
past time my pretty girls run on the sand
and smile and disappear old baseball caps
are missing their head wet sand matching sweat
stains toilet paper rolling we observe
the delicate unraveling hearts tuned

not really broken babyblue surfboard
a wonder what the innards are from here
the beach invisible was ours and now
rocky sicilian shored weeds growing up
and disemboweled vhs tapes films
dark ribbons over crying sand the fading
and weeping the desire for an extreme
expression but that is not given us

II

New day today: watch the sun rise
obscurely. From this cold white pane

it seems these leaves are frozen, yet
there is no sign of winter, snow,

whatever, but here's the sunrise
arriving as it always does:

important; unremarkable.
So this is what it's like to have

some light again. You too are as
if frozen, beautiful, this leaf

that fades. What's there to do?
I could get up and get an egg

cheese sausage ketchup bagel, but
why wreck my day if I can sleep?

The ugly blind is glowing and,
I'm sorry, but the light is here.

The snow is falling, pieces catch
in my hair, melting as they rest.

The winter's come; and, sure, it will
pass, but "one must regard the frost."

Dear lazy summertime is gone.
I'm trying to have faith, but when

will our warm day return to us?
The formulaic fails: I'd rather

the warmth and that which follows, not
long days and endless exercise.

Death in the family. You have left
to visit with your mother, and,

you know, I haven't thought of you,
and it's been pleasant. Like I said

what but a sandwich is there left
for me to do? These days I have

a hard time getting out of bed,
with waking up from these long dreams.

III

food / for thought cafeteria
of books french aphorisms

hot out the oil holy leafy
green verses a little bit

on your bean or ham burger
whichever literature you prefer

hot doggerel in a bun try
the new england style

just like some people try
thebrussphilsproutsophy

the Theory

Somewhere

in Paris (center of the 20th Century) an old man,
speaking in a refined idiolect, discovers language.

The rolling countryside of your skin brown.
The burgeoning culture of laughter brief.
My strange, adopted homes, because the crown
has thus decreed, identify me thief
and excommunicate. Eradicated

Decanter

The empty signifier's empty

because we emptied it!
So why get angry at the glass

when it was us that drank
the water, milk, and applejuice?

But it was overflowing:
the table needed us; we needed it.

We sacrificed so we
could eat just as we always had

or better than we had.
We're so fat now. My belly's huge

and I am very thirsty.

Day / Night

I.

Gray light, new day leaks through the window.
Just to meet me in the morning.
Vanity of vanities. The sun goeth down

II.

and hasteth to his place where he arose.
I'm glad I didn't die before I met you.
But now I don't care.

Supermarket Group Portrait

We're all looking for food of varying
degrees of healthfulness and thinking much
about each other. And the critics notes,
"it's evident that not one line of sight
intrudes upon another or invades— "

The History

Linguistical warriors clunking and being
clunked. In Eur India. By the water.

Sonnet

This our world, like a soul, flutters and falls
and smacks its smallish head on the grey path.
First it had smacked into clean glass; then walls,
being so blinded, in red pain. It hath
  but little life, it seems. The children seem
  intrigued by this, and poke it with a stick.

IV

Rt. 18 S
and I am on my way
towards my home that's not a home or mine.
I don't know much about the beach today
or the beach yesterday. I read the sign
and it says go this way. I try to listen
and usually succeed. It's really cold
so I can't really smell the smell I christen
familiarfishsmell. My jokes get old:
you can predict my tone: abrupt huh boom
to ease myself out of uneasiness.
Well, here I am again. Feels like there's room
enough for everybody. Craziness:
some affectation's brought me here tonight:
alone, away from you, cold, not alright.

I am the sand the strand the beach the shore;
hightide you water passed the point of no
return ruining my sandcastle for
no reason other than I oughtta know
better. You brought your things with you and settled.
After the water dried up it was hard
to differentiate I you who meddled
in whose affairs. Remnants of mollusks jarred
messages and ugly seagulls. With time
this passed. I can't see straight who's who you broke
I broke we're like crushed glass like slime
like briny picklejuice. But I misspoke
perhaps dear dune of sand protector of
violent intrusion I am floating out of love.

The reckoning is coming and I'm trying
to be as calm and strong as possible.
The time for preparation underlying
the framework of this moment has its pull,
yet it's cemented in the past. No time,
late for revisions, I must let it be;
my eyes are astigmatic and sublime
in scalding, salty water from the sea:
my mind no longer prances off on its
perambulations, but broods, curses, paces
along coastlines, falling into mad fits.
Desiring love, or peace, in the wrong places,
I am returning to your side with hope
and skepticism. Either way:

Can the subaltern speak? You'll hear me out
but only on your terms, which are shorthand
for your conception of, your roundabout
hatred for, how I see and speak the land
conjoined with this diluted, watery
expanse holding us in. I open up
my mouth and you condemn my cavity,
my fillingridden teeth. You're throwin up
your hands into the air, crying for help
now, from me, but not when we were alone:
I was your boy; you came to me in kelp,
green seaweed wrapped around your skin, earth tone
integument, your swinging hips, straight spine.
I was submerged in love, blind in the brine.

Like waking up at noon and watching snow
filling the air days after it has snowed,
these memories of revelation blow
and fluctuate above the snowplowed road
below my cousin's building where I wrote
you funny, inappropriate emails
about a year ago. I was a boat
at sea: the crewmen didn't know that sails
could do this, anchors that. I was a mess
and that usedbookstore was invigorating,
the coffeeshop an inspiration. Yes,
you helped sustain me here while celebrating
new years back home. We called each other at
the turn. And I still rock your hometown hat.

I was sitting alone, my arms around
my legs and head, and wasn't sure enough
to let it out. Rising, the water found
my toes and I pulled back. That kinda stuff
made me feel weird, but its incessancy,
its slack predictability, was nice
and comforting somehow. Then, lost at sea,
I wondered what had happened. Water ice
cold suddenly, and I felt heavy, weak,
unable to support myself and swim
back to the shore. I couldn't even speak;
I felt really dumb: drowning on a whim,
hardly remembering the way it started,
gasping for air with pale salty lips parted.

So everybody was already blazed
when I got there. I had no such intentions
granted last night I was confused and dazed,
ending the night with an email that mentions
how I'm too drunk and high and eating this
Baba Ghanoush wrap thing. I wrote don't worry,
I am heartbroken too. Something's amiss:
there is no music and there is no hurry
to change that. Now this vaguely racist girl
and her friend play Beyoncé from a phone;
no end in sight, I kinda wanna hurl
a pillow at their faces, but, alone
in my dissatisfaction, lacking means,
I up and leave these "Single Ladies" queens.

Let's talk about emotions the sad way,
the way I'm feeling now, and let us bridge
this awful gap and come together, say
whatever's on our mind, open the fridge
in our communal kitchen and feast, feast
on the leftovers left to us by us
and laugh about the rotten stuff: at least
it's there for us to share. So what's the fuss
really about? Why separate, divide,
dissect, scalpel, autopsy, soon to be
essential parts that will be one inside
us anyway? So please let us be free:
please take my spoon, my plate, my microwave,
and taste my LeanHotPocket, which you crave.

Commotion in the foreground of the wet
brilliant horizon roaring calm beyond
my knowledge understanding I forget
what it was like exactly when our bond
in at least name existed when I was
adrift out there. What was it like to be
aboard that lost seawrecked vessel because
I'm losing that perspective how to see
the world the land from sea because I'm beached.
To be honest, I don't know what I need.
I'm scared to voyage out: our voyage reached
a point of no return. We have been freed
of our moorings I guess. I guess I'm free
to do whatever

Maybe I will go back a couple one
more times before I'm back to friends and books.
I might might not be able to on Mon
Tues Wednesday after Montreal it looks
uncertain at best worst. You called today:
I was asleep against the window train
New Jersey Transit wait this number hey.
It was so easy: I thought sadness pain
but you I joke you laugh. That then, this now.
Cut off I'm in a tunnel now I call
you back we plan to talk again. So wow
I guess we're laughing now again and all
yea the logistics all we'll figure out
tonight in person Middletown no doubt.

March 2nd snow. I feel so damn depressed.
I do not want to write another poem
about you, but I'm here. I could have guessed
that I'd be here again. Soon I'll go home.
My parents will embrace me, and I hope
this time I'll be more whole upon arrival.
This is an empty hope. I need to cope
with pain and not pretend it's gone. Survival
in difficult but manageable times.
What's wrong with me? I am rejected: no
misgivings there. Sometimes I count your crimes
and tell myself I'm happier, although
I don't deny my loneliness. Not much
changed, I'm a wreck today. We're out of touch.

Well, time will tell. For now I fluctuate
predictably, which doesn't make it worse
or better. Far as I can tell, narrate
and analyze, prediction is a nurse
and quack observing fluctuating pain:
so, on a scale from one to ten, how bad
(excluding fractions)? Wait, are you insane?
I mean what're you talkin bout? Sad, glad,
mad, mad upset, a touch humiliated,
what could you possibly expect from me?
I guess that I'm a five that has berated
itself ironically and hopelessly.
I'm sorry no I'm not I don't know what
to say to do. Is this a papercut?

No explanations: where I'd like to end
this babble, but, really, it's the beginning,
departure, when it happens: I befriend
estrangement, what the hell, all these breadwinning
and cheesy formulations. I just can't
afford to be refined with prejudice.
Recycled ideas. You as a slant
of rosy light inside an edifice
where others go to pray. It's kinda sad.
"My love for you is overpowering,"
"It doesn't mean it's there," even "I'm glad
I didn't die before I" lingering:
the lyrics are too true. Less than a week
now, after all this waiting, when we'll speak.

Left from New Brunswick, headed to New York,
and from Penn Station on to Montreal,
back to Penn Station, which is in New York,
and once again New Brunswick so I call
and catch a ride to home sweet home right next
to Home Depot, right next to Target, Hess,
Subway, my Domino's. I'd like to text
you how I'm feeling, but I guess that's less
than justifiable the way things are,
the way they've been in the preceding weeks.
The enigmatic place is not that far,
about an hour south, yet D.C. speaks
to me, nagging me, so I gotta go
back to the beach some other time, you know.

V

No way of knowing if

we'll meet again. Odds are we won't
be granted extra time, the time
that we wished for. From set to rise

we were together in the ocean's
cool, wet embrace, which is the shore.
And thus our passing meetings must

be taken as the broken gems
or rare stones that they seem to be.
They must, each chance we get, be such

because the tide recedes.

If not the cleansing downpour,

the musty ejaculation.
If not the imploding orgasm,

the nail skimming the spine.
If not scratching the itch,

the patience to wait it out.
If not serenity,

the filling glass of water.
If not the unlit seabed,

the tub's brilliant porcelain.

Goddamnit. I'm up early and my nose is running.

It's allergies. Perhaps it's the condition of
the immune system at this hour. My legs

are cold but it feels right how my shorts sag. My cloak
of a sweater feels good and warm and maybe, if

need be, I'll tuck my knees, assume the fetal pose.
The waves here have a rhythm like a drummer who

makes do with a crash cymbal. Here our souls are dragged
into the world. They've washed ashore. Fomenting in

the sand. They turn us upside down, they forcibly
remove the sand and water from our lungs, and we

exclaim to them that they've succeeded. We are born.

At Martin Luther King's memorial
I almost cried just being there with you.
His home; his church; the ceremonial
reflectingpool. You wore a dress. You knew
something about our nation's history
I felt I knew, although I didn't know
how to explain it. Hours later, we
were having dinner high above the glow
of your city, Atlanta, with the floor
rotating slowly; and the food was fine,
but probably not worth the price of your
week's paycheck. You were sweet then and still mine
as I was yours, and would continue to
be, months after the cold blew through you, too.

The rising sun is yet another sun
as it eludes its name, always returning
as visionary apprehensions, done
with us before we have begun our learning
in earnest. The sun doesn't rise, they say:
we change; we spin around ourselves, we spin
around the nearest star, passing away
in generations as we're swimming in
this oceanic grace; the rivers teem
with blood and excrement: dead hearts pulsating
with hot piss hot shit flowing in the stream.
However, in the night the light is mating
forever, and unknowable, before
this endless ocean confined by this shore.