

This Architecture Is Far From Reassuring
by

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**This Architecture Is Far From
Reassuring**

MACHINES/DREAMS/SCREENS

MACHINES

*I tried hard to imagine my poems or any poems as machines
that could make things happen.*

-Ben Lerner
Leaving the Atocha Station

*Between me and the machine there is no estrangement. I am
the machine.*

-Henry Miller
Tropic of Cancer

Knit Tightly

An acrobat walks a timeline.
It is dark in Minnesota—
with religious frequency
we buy supermarket beer
buzz with greasy breakfasts,
twist palms
to the palms of others—

The structure of a long winter.

I said I wouldn't write any poems about New York

But the sky is mocking me,
pinking and blueing as I'm
reading Berrigan, O'Hara on the last page and
Schuyler on my bookshelf at school, but,
really, this is too much
perfect color leaning away
from what could have been a beautiful
train ride
through Connecticut trees.

And now I'm in my mother's
first apartment
and it's 1976 and she hasn't been
eating enough.

Now I'm on the phone
with my sister two years away.

And now it's three days ago,
and I'm flying to New Orleans
while my grandmother dies upstate,
underneath an orange blanket
in an empty room.

Deadwooden

there's a triteness
in the crotch of his pants—
misleading, these are not
favors,

he has
hospital eyes, he
rowed crew at West Point—
does not work
on Wall Street or
in Tehran

his mother
had candy necklace teeth and
sang to him at night
until they melted

watercolor

The shape

the male
gaze with
public lip licking
amusement.

brothers who become doctors
police officers
whose pubic hair curls
damply in
Alabaman-heat-August
thinking about divorce.

my body tight and tightening like
the sea before a storm
like the second before a storm
like your eyes reading
this poem.

A Time For

There was always the drunk, abusive one.
Mother would traipse through the townhouse in just a
translucent purple kimono,
a downright cunt. Always doing terribly dirty
things to her
daughters, slurring words. Yelling obscenities.
Her boyfriend loved her though.
There was constantly
on the television a concert of her and her

Barbie friends, rocking out
in neon outfits.

She had been famous. Her bed,
when you turned it upside-down a bathtub.

I loaned her a book

but not only did she not read it,
she didn't remember my giving it.

She's nothing like bound—she
grinds her teeth while she sleeps
wants to drown like a Lichtenstein

has trouble believing in.
On the other hand,
he made a teenager—
growing in factories
these boys with their broken hands
and dirty eyes seeing
a federal fix-it,
a war

Your hands sometimes hang awkwardly at the end of your arms

It's like that novel where
the pollution produces the most
breathtaking sunsets.

No, it's like the refrain of flowers growing out of shit,
how we're all born bloody
and covered in our mothers.

And if a cute boy winks at me on
the bus or the Metro-North
railroad it doesn't mean
he wants to fuck me,
it just means—

like this sunset,
smell of onions cooking in oil.
It's like seeing a mouse in someone else's kitchen.

Because really, this is all my body's
made up of,
round ringing in my ears
the pleasure of the word
"eardrums"—
seeing you at the other end.

Hunger Year

In Fairmont, tracks
were cut—
the densest down
pop.

The adaptation of a curve:
tumble-memory,

In Fairmont,
the priests soaking in.

It's obscene,
boats at the end
of everything.

In the Country & the Mountains &

She is still swimming daily, not
essentially disrupted, still
votes, she's just
politely suffocating—

We're all little vessels, right?
We're all just things for blood to pass through.

No Roof

carved-bone
face up
rabid long and
snowy
refresh buttonpause

eject
gentle gentle gentle
the infectious eyeball

is growing big,
and he's looking to you!

The bronze eye in the house is growing

your mores, philosophy, cocks outpolled, but

try to stick to mental space in Birmingham, try to hold onto that summer,
remember, she's pumping
remember, Angela Davis knew those four kilt girls—
remember fits of the throat

Stay a Soldier

I.

I slept with a boy who had just
signed up for the Navy. He was
memorizing their alphabet,
doing pull-ups morningly.
Whiskey, tango, bravo.
I think my body reminds boys of their mothers.
He lived near the ocean.
They want to crawl inside me to feel home.

II.

I have never slept with
a real soldier.
I slept with a boy who was in the National Guard,
which is not the real thing.

This not-quite told me how much he loved women,
how he loved to fuck women, but every now and then
HE JUST WANTED SOME DICK.
We fooled around the back of the house,
everyone else at the party inside
beer-drinking and watching t.v.

I got a call a few days later from my friend.
She said his girlfriend
had chlamydia or gonorrhea or something.
I went to the free clinic to get tested,
fine.

Actually,
cost a dollar.

Pinball Machine

I am growing my middle in bars.
This is most uncomplicated,
required machineboom
of desire,
landing in
three rows of well-lit affairs
that slip right off,
all by one.

Industrious shots
collecting
in a handful of body.

The Machine Is a Political Machine

Cover the war with another war. Cover
me up. I wrote a story because
I wrote him a note
because everything was
like that then, because it was lively
it was alive like socket
because we lived in the country
I followed you there.
It was unlikely
acerbic
and shallow
because I like it.

DREAMS

*I watch you
all morning
long.
With my hand over my mouth.*

-John Wieners
“A Poem for Trapped Things”

Dreaming men are haunted men.

-Stephen Vincent Benét
John Brown's Body

*Between the dreams of night and day there is not so great a
difference.*

-Carl Jung
Psychology of the Unconscious

You really meant it

The dream police are
coming to get me.
You told them about the washing machine—
it was yours, not mine.
Your dream.

It was not my dream.
It was all a dream.
It's all about the dream.

If I'm Lonely

after Ted Berrigan

It wasn't as if I didn't like it.
It wasn't like there was anything there.
I miss it—the way you fuck
I need a drink.

I used to like waiting
in lines, I used
to walk alone at night without fear.

She did not say anything, but
open borders
make it easier for men and
I am usually the last to jump.

Imagine it's 3am
and I want you.

I Have Never Held A Crying Person Correctly

It wasn't as if there was nothing to start with.
Instead, a most general idea of bone.
My body contains more birds than—

if I hadn't known
this was all there was,
I probably would have been fine.

A Dream About My Mother

Freshman year
of college: my mother appeared
to me as the ultimate Lesbian.
It was hot and my rugby team was there, surrounding her, & she was
teaching them how to lead a Sapphic existence.

My mother, shining, wearing maybe a black
leather jacket, curly auburn hair from childhood blowing
in some wind.

I, picked up and placed
in a wheelbarrow
& someone
starts
pouring chocolate
coins in,
gold
wrappers on
top
I can
feel
them
melting

in the sun,
as I am pushed
by teammates
through a gay pride parade.

No One Ever Saw What Was Inside

very, very kept.
very coming
of age
sexual playmates,
assassinations

don't rock the boat—
don't even get in the...

& After This Time

there's no way to win this,
my life is covered in film like
a pot of unwatched soup—
or, no, that's too much—
my life is covered in film, milky
and transparent in the worse
way, blue, and
boys in the kitchen grudgingly
giving each other
compliments.

do you want me to
or do I want to?

run my hands up your thighs,
your nice belt
and grab, hold you under—
pressing back
into my sheets so I don't see
art-school shoulder tattoo.

As Far As I Can Remember

In elementary school, in fourth grade,
I would pull my pants up high
as they would go. Khaki,
and I would press my pelvis hard against
the front of my boyish desk. I did this everyday.
That was the year an overhead fluorescent tube
of lightbulb fell
on a girl's head.

Discovering orgasm at age fourteen was a revolutionary act.

Actually discovery is too
strong. I was told
where to look.

I Used To Cry In Airports

Or want to.

Atlanta is the busiest airport in the world.

It started when I saw soldiers younger than me.

I would want to love them in the bathroom,
but never got up the courage.

I wanted to go to the smoking area
and ask for a cigarette,
but never did.

I once saw Mark Wahlberg in an airport.

He was riding down the escalator

I was riding up.

Escalators remind me of being a child
making fun of "black people names"
and a story I was once told by a neighbor.

Wanting clacker-balls in my hair

wanting desperately to be black

in elementary school

so I could be cool,

being taught over and over

again at sleepovers how to booty dance

but never quite getting it.

I remember

always wanting to talk about

boys and kissing because of the feeling it gave me

at the very bottom of my stomach.

like takeoff

Tangerine

the dandy dressed in
tailored waistcoats—

he trusted certain things:
body-filled lakes
and women who smelled like coffee

his four children, by training
predators or
toy-makers

he had been
a child musician, not a protégée
but the son of vegetable growers
mountain carrots and
fuck I'm dizzy

A Dream In Celekza, Nebraska

It is lucky to be in the
basement of you.
There was an evil princess,
but I have eaten
her out your uterine lining.

Her nose and teeth insulting.

Here, there is
kindness without any
upward motion.

I reassure myself around
steps of your spine.

There's something about the thickness of your fingers

It's exhausting.

There's something about the
way you sigh my name
when you're annoyed.

There's also something in the
way you sit, reading Kant
while I'm in bed watching
a gay bareback video, laughing

how far apart everyone is from
everyone else.

It's just that I don't believe anyone

There's no such thing as
a deployment strategy,
an apple as apple-red as your—

no such thing as
your face in the afternoon
Stratford, or
change at all.

Platonic love for me.
There is such a thing as oral sex,
pruning.

And now I've gone and gotten sleepy
D. will be picking me up at the train station,

but all I've got to do is sit here
and still listening to the same
music, and it's six years ago, I can't

In the library, the books are bleeding

I am becoming a city,
proving realism.

That's what my book is about.
One of the clearest showers.
They beat an infant—
death on tv, I saw it.
Oh please mommy, I said,
Oh oh oh please mommy,
I'll be a good girl
I won't do it anymore.
Please believe me.

The yoke in the frying pan is not broken yet

Battered sex is more than
head trauma and weak senses, it's—

sex is more like
defining fragility.

Emergency room laughter
sounds like
you're using the wrong words, and
it's
the wheezing of a refrigerator dying,
demanding an incendiary
glow, in winter, &

her eyes like television snow

Sur la plage

Where was it we were?
Something to do with never being on a boat.

In childhood, I was an empty yellow school bus.
I learned to swim on my back.
Sorry I was such a brat.

This stretch of road makes me feel like a real person.

Being on a plane and simultaneously
plane seeing—from the highway:

look up
look up

The sky stiffens and begins

We are talking marzipan with
rose dew, and
the girl to my left is more than
she's
an opening,
a chronicle.

Tells me the only
color she can see is red.

It's almost a relief
and Ruha's mother brought us
baklava and lemonade,
how nice of her.

At war,
he was chest surgery, he keeps
a live
total of dead boy faces in his eye,
it's embarrassing,
keeps
hitting on my brother.

We are street eating
in April, in Tripoli,
he tells my brother
in whispers
about being imprisoned four times
but he wants me to know too,
he slows down,
we're in front of some building.

There's a pitiful bird on the ground, &

my brother
points up.

At the West End Marta Station

I dreamed myself waking
Propelled by arms
I don't have
a carrousel riding me
I think I dream—
of sex that
doesn't hurt
six Undines
waiting to breathe my lungs
sea-air.

Walking through the quietest snow to
a whitewashed house—
outside little men sit.
In Russian,
my dealer charges me
less than normal and says,
SMILE

I couldn't see it at the time
but the woman waiting
for me to finish using the toilet,
eyes crusted over,
asked me to dance.

I have not known enough
women in my dreams
to say for sure,
but I bet I know
how to tonguefiddle better
than machines hinging
use on design flaw.

This will be how I challenge myself to be kind

watching Marlon Brando say not to call him Polack

this all feels so
authentic,
Vivian Leigh and her eyebrows

and when he first came on screen
we sighed—
he's so...“beautiful”

SCREENS

Alright. I'm just gonna make a good impression. Then he won't forget me.

-Brent Corrigan
Schoolboy Crush

I Have Never Seen A Cyborg Correctly

They let me sleep here,
as much as I want, here.
This is that nation-state;

like a cape, with soft
edges, the flag of Catatonia.

The streets are full of bodies in white bags

I always thought they'd be black,
but some places wrap their dead
in white no red soaking through
blood means you're still living
a little girl with blood
running
down the inside of her
leg
not a little girl, she's
a robot

A series of poem about Brent Corrigan:

Oh Brent

I think you also know
how it feels to have a big and meaty hand
covering your mouth, maybe afraid
more than I was,
maybe you also grew up
eating microwaved foods and McDonalds,
your mother a single mother,
and maybe he was sweet
and bought you sneakers.

BBC (Before Brent Corrigan)

How obvious is it that this body is
17?

There are tells,
in the way it moves, but not
the wanting on its face—
is he good? he is, is
not a good actor, but
can make a feeling,
see it pooling in his belly?
 chests and cheeks flushed
 seashell, and baby fat and
 bad teeth, still.

His coworker, another Brent—
Everett,
with those
questionable
tattoos

two
blue lines encircling
bicep
scroll of paper
Chinese characters

and those lips—pillowing
and pursed
when thrusting
but his desire always
seems genuine enough.
From Moose Jaw,
Saskatchewan,
Canada.

Their bodies commune well.
True.
Could Everett tell,
did he know?

Everything in this scene is
blushing—pink and orange,
peach skin deepened,
sunset.

Who is he
fooling?
Me?

Brent Goes to the Movies

Today, I'm going to a poetry reading
and Brent's going to see a movie,
maybe his,
maybe someone else's.

Brent, if he is wearing underwear,
is probably wearing some
Hanes (boxer-briefs) which I am also wearing
not only are they fairly cheap
(four-pack for \$7)
but very comfortable
black and grey,
not all blue-wall-making
or glow.

If Brent is meeting some guy from online today,
he is going to take another shower
after the movie, even though he showered
at the gym this morning
and there was a man there,
in his 50s and huge
giving him a look like:
"I know you. I've looked into your eyes too many times."

Brent thinks it's sexy and sad
and here I am going to a poetry reading,
not in Alabama in 2006
masturbating to his movies,
but thinking the same thing about
his eyes.

Brent Corrigan

What's in a name?
Before there was
Sean Paul Lockhart,
an Idaho boy,
alone and
crying
in a bunkbed,
crying
while being fucked.

And I imagine Bryan Kocis stabbed twenty-eight times
by teenage boys,
but that's not what happened. They were not those boys he had fucked.

I imagine Kocis, wearing glasses,
chubby, smiling
as he fucked Sean,
Sean who is a good boy
and who is crying and sixteen
and has eyes that go
glassy and wet
like his asshole,
who has limbs like drugged.

I imagine Kocis holding Sean,
after,
telling him how he's
gonna be famous.

But that's not what happened, either.

They had to use
these dental records
to identify
the Kocis body, and on
Sean, now Brent, on his
website
he's smiling an ice-cream-eating smile.
He's twenty-four now, writes in his spare time.

You can hire him for go-go dancing,
but that's not all
he's good for,
site promises.

At The Murder Trial

i.

Brent wears a red sweater,
silver tie. He “cooperates”
“fully.” A murder
about him,
to get him,

possess what it is about him
that brings all these men and
15-year-old
me
to a seizure state
before a screen.

ii.

He shows horses now,
rides Western, eats
Sushi, often,
how obvious
but
sweet.

A CYBORG AFTERWORD

So, how do cyborgs relate to gay pornstars? And why does this matter. Donna J. Haraway, in her mind-blowing anthology Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature (New York: Routledge, 1991) writes that “the cyborg is a condensed image of both imagination and material reality, the two joined centres structuring any possibility of historical transformation” (150). In my poetry, a cyborg is anything between a corporeal human body and complete technology. Images, recordings, texts, etc all become the Cyborgs, these creatures that exist in loops and have their own lived realities. I think Brent Corrigan is a great example of this.

Some history—I started my relationship with the computer and sexuality at around age 11. In the essay “Going On-line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Era” by Zabet Patterson in Porn Studies (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004) the “rhetoric of anxiety specifically located at the rapidly evolving interface between corporeal body and computer screen” (104) is examined, in particular how the “anxiety concerning the possible lack of control and autonomy of that body when confronted with this technology” (104) is dealt with in popular culture. Online pornography then “figures the relationship between body and networked computer as peculiarly and unwholesomely dissolute” (104). This works nicely within the framework of the cyborg, and further complicates my own adolescent wandering on the internet.

I started reading erotica online, almost all of it about male/male relationships. To be completely honest, it was mostly Harry Potter fanfiction, the representations of teenage boy sex leaving my palm tingly. But I wasn't masturbating, although it was certainly a "masturbatory" act. I was just getting excited with no release. Around the same time, I was also watching softcore porn at sleepovers with one friend of mine, whose parents had HBO and Cinemax. We would

press our faces so close to the screen, to fall in, and watch. We searched desperately for some sign of a penis, but mostly all we saw was perfectly round fake breasts bouncing around. This absence is perhaps telling.

I moved out of my home when I was 15. This is about when my online porn habit began. I had found a website called “Gay Porn for Girls” (I think I was linked from a fanfiction writer’s livejournal). This is where I first encountered Brent Corrigan. I didn’t like him. The first video I saw of him was a scene in which he plays a student, and an older, more muscular man plays teacher. He had his tattoo by then, even though he was 17. And I was unknowingly watching what is classified as “child pornography.” In the essay “Child Pornography: Classifications and Conceptualizations” by Adam Stapleton in the anthology [porn.com](#) (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) he writes that categorizing something as child pornography is difficult, especially in the technological age, and that there is an “Increased reliance on the notion of the perverse gaze of the ‘pedophile’ for understanding what ‘child pornography’ is” (38). Indeed, this is a stance often taken, because images that could be innocent in their original context and intent (for instance, my parents were very fond of taking pictures of my siblings and me in the bathtub, or naked and covered in chicken pox) can be seen as insidious when arranged in a collection found on a registered sex offender’s computer.

I have to admit, I’m fascinated by this concept, and its implications. As Stephen Maddison writes in “Online Obscenity and Myths of Freedom: Dangerous Images, Child Porn, and Neoliberalism” in [porn.com](#) (New York: Peter Lang, 2010) viewing child pornography is a transformative act; “Only the Other knows it, and to see it is to become Other” (32). What does it mean that I was viewing these videos of Brent? Who was corrupting whom? Maddison notes that “the shift from criminalizing producers and distributors to criminalizing consumers accords with a wider trend in neoliberal governmentality”(24) and while this is certainly true, it is

fascinating to me that this category of “child pornography” has been imbued with this power to corrupt, to Other, to fundamentally change the person who consumes it.

Of course, “Porn is a business, and porn production and consumption can never be separated from questions of economic power” (26) and while the videos made when Brent was 17 were recalled and are (I imagine at least) sitting in a warehouse somewhere, they are easily available online. They have become their own entity. As Haraway writes in the section “The Cyborg Manifesto” (New York: Routledge, 1991), “A cyborg body is not innocent” (180). But the question of innocence, especially related to child pornography, is fraught with contradictions. If it is accepted that “the relationship between organism and machine has been a border war” (150) then we are closer than I imagined. I think of my face staring at a screen, staring at the world through screens, and how you can only see some things from the center. If I am fifteen years old, under a blanket, and I am clutching my right thigh, watching Brent and Brent kiss in a white-walled condo, am I a cyborg? Am I Other? Haraway also writes that “Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations” (180). A living monster is a threat. A dead monster is a trophy. And I have no answers. I am a living machine, puzzling myself.

To quote Anne Carson: “Before and after/ don’t interest me.” The cyborg exists in the now, and will always exist in the now. On a screen somewhere, Brent is 17 and is looking out from under eyelashes.

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I would like to dedicate this collection to the memory of my mother, Beverley Ann Bark-Brown.

NOTES

This Architecture Is Far From Reassuring

The title originates from a line of the John Berryman poem "Peter's not friendly." from 77 Dream Songs. The original line is "The architecture is far from reassuring" (62) but I found it more appealing to point to the specific.

A Time For

This poem owes so much to those who have dealt with this mix of a topic in the past: A.M. Homes and her story "A Real Doll" as well as David Trinidad and numerous poems from his collection The Late Show, "Doll Memorial Service" in particular.

Barbie, while plastic, is less malleable in life than in imagination, and the past play is harder and harder to remember.

I loaned her a book

"War is clear and intricate."(78). From "TV Men" by Anne Carson in Men in the Off Hours.

The bronze eye in the house is growing

From an interview with Angela Davis in prison in 1970.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8sLIDscuc-M>

Originally seen in the documentary The Black Power Mix Tape:1967-1975.

I Used To Cry In Airports

My first encounter with Mark Wahlberg was watching the movie Fear on television late at night as a child. There is a scene where he fingers Reese Witherspoon's character on a roller coaster.

A series of poems about Brent Corrigan:

"I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess" (181) in "The Cyborg Manifesto" in by Donna J. Haraway.

I would rather be a cyborg than a number of things.

BBC (Before Brent Corrigan)

This film, Schoolboy Crush, was Brent's second, although scenes of Brent and Brent were shot and spread over several videos. In some scenes, there's a poster of the Taco Bell Chihuahua and the text "Who are you calling tiny?"

Funny, since Brent Everett is barely 5'6". (Brent Corrigan isn't much taller).

Brent Goes to the Movies

"This solipsistic collapse is one engendered by the new technology" (105). From "Going On-line: Consuming Pornography in the Digital Era" by Zabet Patterson in Porn Studies edited by Linda Williams.

Brent Corrigan

"In sex (he told her) the mind evaporates and suddenly/the body is there, /just the body with its reaches. /He was more or less repulsive to himself, / the little satin parts especially." (77)

" I have grasped certain fundamental notions first advanced by Plato,/ e.g. that our reality is just a TV set/ inside a TV set inside a TV set, with nobody watching" (89).

"As Lazarus is an imitation of Christ. As TV is an imitation of/ Lazarus. As you and I are an imitation of/ TV" (89).

From "TV Men" by Anne Carson in Men in the Off Hours.

At The Murder Trial

I know this from following his twitter (@Brent Corrigan).

As Steven Jones put it in his essay 'Horrorporn/Pornhorror: The Problematic Communities and Contexts of Online Shock Imagery' in the anthology porn.com: "Reality culture has blurred the line between fantasy and our daily lived reality." (135).

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