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Wedding

By

Steve Sleboda

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THE UTTERANCE ABOVE THE STUTTER

Steve Sleboda is a poet who faces words as if they were strangers. In every poem he is an Adam without a garden or any pre-existing order. He is a man bereft of a meaningful language, and yet he is compelled to name the things of the world. He must take his scanty inheritance, an empty language, and renovate until meaning is born. He must overcome, rearrange, displace until words once more have significance.

He has chosen the heroic and strenuous path to make the words vehicles of truth, the cosmic and inner truth of poetry, and not the more easy and happy one of being a fashionable entertainer and writing about the illusory. He eschews what is readily recognized and takes dangerous risks. Sleboda has sensed that the old language must be destroyed if words are to have genuine meaning and if communication is to be restored.

Sleboda's language might seem obscure to those who believe what they hear, but once they can step outside of their illusions and ego-imprisonment, Sleboda's language becomes crystal-clear.

Duane Locke

wedding
—I act with benevolence & Virtue & get murdered time
after time—William Blake

As the wedding broke camp the missionary boys pulled down
the skirts of the tents hoping for a better view of the secret
plans that burned in the black vase.
The preacher already had ordered his pizza and waited in the
outhouse with his hand under his hat.
The folk singer was not speaking so he sang a song about some
war.
Each young girl circled certain numbers on the map a crow
dropped.
They liked wings.
A noise over behind the woodshed startled the embarrassed
mothers.
They jumped into each others arms and after realizing whose
arms they were in they quickly withdrew and walked by
the bar.
Groups of adolescent boys yelled at each other regarding their
views concerning the climate in toilet tissue.
The bridesmaid too had nothing to say so she listened to the
history lesson of the air.
The fathers were so surprised so many people were silent they
began filling up balloons with water.
The bride and groom at last were in the motel room with all
their buttons on the floor and the windows painted green.
The hot metal and shiny silence of their car attracted a familiar
face.
This child and his imagination left him for a moment as dark-
ness crept into his skin and fused with the ashes.

my guardian angel

Each canyon on the underside of the kitten has a home for
eighteen Spanish guards
The cook checks the rifles
The carpenter saws a way into the confessional only to find the
brown robe wrinkled and the magic green wand on a seat
where the sultan served the people in a plague
These seconds fill with oil
This light balanced at a corner on the desk becomes careful not
to collapse into the trenches of the termites
That early morning angel gives me no peace
She must ride on a candlestick holder
She is so far from my shoulder she could only be my guardian
mistress
My guardian angel is made from silk and flies when the snow
drifts
She would never be found near a wick
The heat would melt her hair

i know how to bring peace into the world

i know how to bring peace into the world but first you must let
me spit on your childrens dolls

question of death

i went to a man with his head in the sand to ask about death.
His voice became a cloud and swallowed the sky.
Then i went to a man with a crooked tie and a broken pen and
asked about death.
He said not to think about death, just live and be happy.
i went to a third man with a glass on his table and a bottle in his
eye and asked about death.
He said while he was in prison the boys called him pop.
Next i went to a woman with flames shooting from her mouth
and asked her about death.
She said whenever i was ready we could go outside.
i returned to the man with his head in the sand with a message
from the others.
They asked him to attend a death.
i asked him if i could go along.
His voice drew circles of yellow light within his eyes.
The group welcomed his arrival.
His head crashed to the floor.
His fingers opened and howling dogs fell out.
They asked him to put his arms on the table.
He became a blue flower.
They spit on it.
They tore its petals.
They swept it into the street.
i asked them about death.
They put raincoats on and began telling dirty jokes.
i went into the street and asked the remains of the blue flower
about death.
It became a watermelon and said there is a mountain inside the
legs of the table,
do not try to climb it,
do not try to dig into it,
and do not disturb its silence for it is awake.

furniture decides

While furniture decides in which direction to point its finger,
 peasants of anguish carve names in the castles snow.
The queen tends bar and politely spills her drink onto the lap of
 Apollo.
The king changes chords on his guitar in the corner.
The high priest and prince take turns pulling out each others
 hair.
The fair maiden and Madonna meditate on the dragon that
 drools at their window.
His breath, left in patterns on the glass, disguises his scarred
 features.
The women think he is the mailman with a leather bag full of
 stars.
But the dragon knows they dream of masterpieces without flesh
 to obstruct demonic compliments.
The king sighs.
The queen sticks her head in the cash register and licks the
 copper coin.

on the florida avenue bus monday november thirteenth

The beautiful
Spanish voice
with red lips
and flopping wrists

songs drown

i walk next to automotive madness.
Tar sucks rubber from my soles.
Big yellow puff trucks roll over the cities surface.
Songs of the mockingbird drown in the automobile engines
 raspy voice.
The sun bent street sets like a dead lake.
Cars screech around curves in hundred dollar suits.
The weight of tar, cement, metal and steel throws the earth into
 a stupor.
Government men paint black and white lines on oceans waves.
Parents settle into worry.
They furnish their children with wardrobes of panic.
They watch them wade in the sidewalks shallow sentiments.
Institutions of confusion liquidize and flow beside the curb-
 stones that lead to sewage temples where filth, debris and
 stagnant lives fluctuate.
The poets breath.

the kitten sleeps

The kitten sleeps by her dishes.
Blue linoleum inhales black and white fur.
Cold air surrounds the ears like the collar on a neck.
The degeneracy of the milk dish.
The simplicity of the water bowl.
The distemper of the food plate.
And the brown crumbs crying like toilet tissue in a plastic trash
sack.

hours

In hours of cardboard when spiders carefully hang in damp
corners, subtle ballads blister the herds of dust.
The shepherd and his staff both silent in the shade of unhung
shirt sleeves.
Over hills of laundry and through dales of disease the mapmak-
er guides interpreters of wood into the shadow-maze of
antique chairs.
Midnight agents have loosened threads that hold feathers sus-
pended above the chandelier.
The annals of disaster never have recorded such an event.
Black eyed scissors soar through blue diamond clouds.
Abandoned wine flasks penetrate turnstiles like slivers of glass
secretly contemplating entrance into the eye of a needle.
A space entered before only by flesh.
Like a finger in a mug with its cover held down by a dark cloud.
The metal cold.
The finger curled.

what is all this

What is all this in the shelves where harmonica reeds rust
Are these notebooks or an abandoned song
Maybe this is the almighty flute with its rug that worships the
diamond in the bulletin boards ear

the shark breathes

The moon unzips its eye to watch the shark breathe.
Her teeth freeze inside this jagged evening.
A man with a muscular disease paints the water red.
The shark circles his raft.
She tears at the mans body.
A foot with a brush between the toes falls into the ocean.
The shark devours the brush and spits back the foot.

dark voices

Upon the skin of a thousand apples dark voices bunch like
grapes inside a fire.

The heat warms the cores.

The ashes soothe the seeds.

Juices curdle in throats hidden behind the evenings misdirected
teeth.

Tongues grow old and lie like limp lungs on the cold floor in the
cellar of the operating room.

starved time

My creative moments are being swept off porches by nostalgic brooms.

Dust swirls over rubber marks on the tray of progression.

i long to swallow the celibacy of disaster.

i long to suck from the neck of this starved time.

This neck that stretches beyond the uncertainty of the mosquitoes flight.

Maybe in some frightened cabin corner a spark will rise and the forest will die and ashes will concentrate around the old womans opinion of what reality might be.

Maybe then the cistern in the chapel will overflow with blood.

alone

Who is alone like the candle?
It slips into the splinters of cabinets and rehearses the next days
dreaming.
Its castle walls have no ocean to wash it out amongst the ances-
tors remains.
A person is never alone.
Loneliness lives in the rooftops veins.
Destitute personalities unwrap candy.
They throw their souls into trash cans.
Pebbles ponder the layers of dump trucks tires.
Their lives unfold before shoe laces.
Tongues drill into civilization.
They become our flesh and bone.
The stars no longer explode.
Their light summons kittens.
Their fur is the country of the world.

stagnant altars

i fold myself inside a handkerchief to admire embroidery mid-
night has forgotten.

The empty chalice on the step under the light from the palm of
the moon is fast asleep.

Its shadow hears the intense desire for the destruction of
thunder.

It holds its emptiness like a metallic quiver that shuns an arrows
flame.

The camels hump is filled with water.

The desert is dry like black tongues of stagnant altars.

inside the prison and outside the flame

The escort and his art ride the wagon that poses with the wheel
of virgin dread.

In a darker room a wave falls over the rim of his jagged canyon.
Way below beyond the billboards mustache there is silence and
a family without a finger.

Under the trees and on the knees in various degrees of senti-
mentalities the wave swells and falls into an unnoticed
arroyo.

A drum and a miracle of squares have questioned this certainty
of fallen numbers.

The candles have no arms but the flame has no voice.

Watch where the fire melts.

An assembly of flesh at the theatre of the absurd has only con-
fused the memory of the fawn.

Her teeth are so white and the snow has covered itself with
double-masked strings.

But i am a thought like the rest of this tale.

struggle

The struggle on the bent face has no eyes.
Lips drag across cement.
Conversations lead to the execution of tongues.
Cheekbones rattle in the lining of the wind.
Velvet wrists sway like morning in a cloud.
Dull buttons sleep holding leaves that do not crumble.
Streets lick solitude from their plates.
The rainbow vomits.
The horizon empties its soul.
Deaf colors in doorways are silent.
The street cleaner screws another bent face onto his mop.
He soaks up his buried shadow in the light from a blue window.

an inspiration while looking out the window
of duane locke's office

the arch

jagged dimensions
 of leaves
Branches beyond
 the war of
 the engines circle
Peep holes to the sky
 and their sisters
 the squares
This cream-colored
invasion is alive
 inside the links
of the chain where
 the air rests
in the absence
 of the
flower pot

open arms
for R. Havens

Splinters of perspiration recite compassion.
Brown fingers adjust the moon beams brain.
Silver awaits its shadow on the robe of rainbows.
Dark eyes sew medallions to buttons on prayers of parted lips.
Damp wrists wear bracelets that slide and sound gently on the
evenings wood.
Immediate seizures untie the gnarled tongue from its precious
cabin.
After a rendezvous of frets it slips back into brittle streams of
soggy flesh.
When pressed against its presence one tastes the symphony of
coal floating above the bowed head and clasped hands that
fuse with a readiness to penetrate the broken aisles of open
arms.

oil knots that bind words

Blue dead hang from hooks in the sky.
They sway like wheat in fallen bells.
Children rush into the silence of shoes.
They paint dogs bones with dark hands.
Iron rafts float on sweat from brown leaves.
The camera has lost the lamp of autumn.
The computer has drained the stars.
Blackness stumbles across the shepherd and his flock and the
 purple in his sisters sink.
The monk drains the pond.
Three bats whisper to the puddle that remains.

stations of wind

There is a piece of insanity caught between my teeth.
The day has become an onion inside grapefruit peels.
i gaze at the spider that dusts the stars.
He is made of bells that sleep where paper folds.
i brush away the swarms of my dreams.
i brush away the dryness of the cold.
i brush away the lives that ran from the grasp of words.
Yet there is a piece of insanity caught between my teeth.
Designs fall from curtains and form puddles of education.
Teachers sit in backs of rooms and write their rules on finger-
nails.
i rinse from my mouth the madness of vinegar and sugar.
i tie myself to a chair and wag my tail and scratch my crusted
skin.
There is a piece of insanity nailed into my chest.
i am filled with stations of wind.

the shadow from a stone

My name is written in stone.
My brothers sit by an ocean wave.
My sister is made of lilac blossoms.
My parents are the last slices of an orange.
My lovers are corners where wood becomes damp.
My uncles are parentheses at a banquet of jars.
My aunts are eyelashes in vegetable soup.
My cousins are roads in a forest of lamps.
My grandmothers are diamonds on a liquid wall.
My friends are shoelaces going through the holes.
My teachers are hinges that rust in the fog.
My employers are mattresses that float on the sea.
My bankers are matchsticks that glow on the sun.
My enemies wear blankets which they claim are scars.
My poem is a shadow that meditates on soul.

the disaster of the sun

The disaster of the sun and the daughters with their fingers
inside the moon
Water cannot drop from the faucet that chews gum in its sleep
Four men on an abandoned farm mended fences until an earth-
quake disturbed their conversations
The pitch forks and hay signaled an oak to drop its moss where
the barber bent down to put an old rose on a grave
A desk began opening and closing its drawers with the wood
that wore a scratched mask
An explosion and incision could not compete on welshed terms
with the window that broke at will before dawn
The shine on the cup and the glue in the bottle were more
familiar to the train in the snow covered tunnel than the
cap of the bottle to the stunted pear in the oval fire
An order for three plates of leaves was heard at intervals over
the loudspeaker of bricks
Tongues in the drenched wind
Candles that starve among towels in the hamper
The eraser on the pencil bends long enough to locate the
shadow in the oil

family of eyes

Black cat with white ponds that settle in fur, your bright eyes
have become clothing the past knotted to my skin.
Sleeves that sang sounds in a funeral procession.
i visit them when the screen doors become bubbles.
We attach translucent nights to lizards eyes and roll in grasses
next to campfires.
We listen to voices that melt alongside the ashes of guitar
strings.
There is a melody of hair that stands in the garden.
Its blossoms are footprints that disappear on the path that leads
from the old barn to the sanctuary where rabbits visit
lunacy in lakeside stores.
You who unwrap the strip of cloth from the totem pole and find
an old wagon filled with paper dolls will find an older
envelope filled with letters from the children of scissors.
Their knives are dull and their spoons cut deep into the cement
of eternity.
An ice age beyond cold.
A flood beyond the boundaries of death.
In this family of eyes you will find masks you thought you had
burned and the masks covering the cold sides of the
pillows.

wooden gloves

Wooden gloves of my childhood set above the mantle where
candles meditate on each others wicks.

My eyebrows once were made of salt water but have long since
sunk into my pores.

Now i contemplate rags and swallow dust.

i belong to the order of dry leaves.

blackened cup

The fruit of the wind falls into open hands that grow from the
depths of the blackened cup.

Rain clings to the fingers silver sweat.

Diluted worlds orbit trunks of flesh rooted to endless robes of
chafed climates.

Silence floods quickly through smoothe veins of darkness.

Up into finger tips the army of tall grass grows.

The ant parades over fleshy lanes.

The wind penetrates the suitcase of the bee.

Sleeves of the freshly pressed shirt begin to flower.

The journeyman abandons his golden handle but cannot locate
the pollens shade.

the surgeon and the surgery of the stars

The surgeon and the surgery of the stars with the maps mounted
on skulls is an answer to the wound on the knee of the
forest

A recluse and the wood of the clocks around the startled finger
of unsanctioned madness is the question that brought the
lumber into the construction site of the twentieth century

The cemetery gates and toll booth rates and invisible helicopter
brakes merge at an intersection of registration — the child
is ready for education but his imagination hangs on the
clothes line to dry with the cigars and golf balls of the day

A religious leader and his basket and the coins on the tongues of
empty drains will raise the balloon out of its stirruped sleep
until its cousin the cash register can count the unnumbered
blood baths that await the flesh with resurgence and iron in
the vaults of uninked pages

cradle of civil starvation

In the cradle a severed arm suckles plastic nipples of assurance.
The comedy wears steel buttons around its neck.
The audience unplugs their jugular vein to watch slime ooze
from the manicurists scarf.
An advisory panel relegates conscience.
Patrons sell dimes to the disorderly.
Drunken sidewalks confuse conspiracy but cannot delay fore-
casts from lost throats of migrant visionaries.
Tiny monks stumble across uncertain pavement.
Their helter-skelter precision dominates cloud formations that
loiter like grey buildings into the late evening fragrance of
sterile tongues.
Do not look here!
It is behind the brown door that the cave nods its approval.
Where bats are foreign policy.
Where lizards are nuclear discussions.
Where disarmament lights a candle.
Where the flame is communication.

i do not want

i do not want to leave you alone with the world
With the sleeves that hang to the ground
Oh, they hang so far down
With everything you need right in the basket in front of you
And the ants around that spot on the sidewalk