

TWO THING THING

POETS:

STEVE SLEBODA

and

CONNIE MAY



Price: \$2.50

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STEVE SLEBODA and CONNIE MAY

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THING THING POETRY

Hugh Fox in his *THE LIVING UNDERGROUND* describes Alan Britt's poetry: "His logic is constructed of 'things' ('piano keys are thrown at car tires') and is an excursion into 'thing-metaphysics' whereby nothing is categorized or abstracted and all abstract meaning-connections have to be made by the reader.functionally his poetry hits the reader with bullet-packages of tightly knit thing-thing juxtaposition. He is a modern metaphysical poet, a master of the unexpected juxtaposing of unlike images such as 'fingernail voice' or 'the book marked crease in his eyes.' This trait of unexpectedness in the midst of the commonplace produces a species of meta-reality one step removed from familiarity and ease. We are invited into a world of hard-impact sensuousness; our abstract stances are overturned and channelled into a magic universe constructed totally by the poet."

Fox correctly presents the philosophy of Thing Thingism, once called Linguistic Reality and Immanentism, with one exception. Thing Thing poets do not want the reader to make abstract meaning connections, to impose on our poetry themes or concepts from the familiar categories of experience. We want our poetry read as a direct experiential encounter with a language that is a creation born from a concentrative and intensified awareness of things in their full fragmentary condition at a dynamic and fluid moment in non linear time and space, and we want our readers to respond to our meanings as non-reductive and non-classifiable experience. We do not write "theme and execution" poetry, and we are not to be interpreted from past traditions such as surrealism.

Our poems are the emanations, the auras made out of words, that arise in our consciousness after a mental mutation. We create not as egos but as witnesses to ourselves, as ourselves are born from a fusion with the everchanging life of things. We do not reduce the external world to objects or express ourselves as subjects. The objective and the subjective do not exist in the realities we create.

We take ordinary words and use them in a way that they lose their familiar and recognizable meanings and no longer seem the same word as used in the basically meaningless survival language of commonplace and learned discourse. We turn words away from their conventional function of expressing illusions and paradigms. By means of an altered consciousness, we create a linguistic reality that is an emanation from a thing thing fusion.

In returning meaning and value to poetry, we bypass all the categories of current and prevalent thought on poems, and bypass all the unfounded and illusory realities that are the Western intellectual tradition.

DUANE LOCKE

STEVE SLEBODA

WRONG TURN

When i step into the day it is a wrong turn.

i should stay under the sheets and converse with the mattress
about the distress of religion.

i should frown and cover any anticipated inspiration with
sadness.

Hopefulness should bring about sorrow.

i see the sun and run toward the closet of the red shoe lace.

Its door is always chained and gagged.

i stoop behind the clothes hamper and search out kittens
curiosity.

i find only directionless sighs.

i am the loser of games never played.

Recorded scores that never made the news.

i starved and died.

FEATHER

The feather gives its weight in peace.
It charges off the pelican in an attempt to save the human race.
The human race in desperate need of decision.
Centuries of war and destruction and relentless violence cease
to stimulate the nightmares misunderstandings.
These are times past the insecurity of insanity.
Scorched lives set in full view of scant feelings.
We must live to learn to catch the rain as it falls upon the
feather lying in the sand.
For it is there the children gather,
hands outstretched,
waiting for the sea to deliver long awaited coins,
the coquinas.

ERASE THE SHADOWS

Erase the shadows.

Stoop beneath the night.

Reach into the moon.

If you are made of mystery,

close your eye and quench your thirst,

the angel has arrived and she's forgotten her halo.

Go to the closet and keep her near the web.

She longs for the future.

It is there she wants to comb her sleep.

Before the clock surpasses your thoughts,

turn off the light.

Your angel is in waiting.

Hurry, her halo is a boomerang.

THE KNIFE OF LIFE

The knife of melancholy tragedy wavers over the house.
Condemnation of truces sit waiting beside rotting wood.
Rusted nails hang with misdestination.
Plywood life follows kitten tracks into the haven of disease.
Wet laundry dies there in the rain.
Mud and moisture mix themselves into a savage soup.
Insects reign in this gloom kingdom.
Tortured lawns wink at the seasons but cry during nightmares.
Peace rests underground.
A cross of wood and a piece of string designate my way.
My fear of the unknown rises like a curtain of fog when death
comes.
Everything is clear.
The greens are greener.
The yellows are gold.
The children are where they belong.
They are happy.
A life within me has been clawed to a horrible death.
A sufferance i had the reverence to witness.
A sudden stretch.
Teeth showing the paths that must be cut out of the future.
Eyes ready to bite off the head of an elephant.
And a box to carry her off.
And a shovel to dig a grave.
And a tear that never came.

ANGEL OF MADNESS

In the early morning hours your love becomes frayed in its cast.
Your dress has the sin of labor sewn upon its brow.
You are not yourself.
You have falsified your identity.
Don't leave me in the cold of your visit.
Warm me where you dance.
Speak to me.
Don't leave me here watching you drown in my dream of
yourself.
For i am not strong when the walls are made of nightmares.
It's only stone i would move.
The stone of kings.
The desire of queens.
The angel of madness.

STEEL EYES

No carton knew the sight of steel eyes.

There was no money inside burnt out light bulbs.

Calendars never counted Thursdays.

The weight of satisfaction could be moved by no truck.

Sweat and toil by hands of men who delivered themselves set
high in clouds as rain evaporates from executives notebooks.

And by shifts of dust or voices saying it will never happen, i see
deep into the sun and feel the black speck that will pry open
the door of hatred.

TIRED EYES AND HEAVY BODY

My tired eyes and heavy body are where sleep will never go.
 Inside the pants cuffs of the sun are my eye lids.
 They burn with exhaustion.
 An exhaustion of burning leaves.
 A withdrawal of an army.
 An army so powerful the forests would lose their green.
 A green so bright the cars would never stop.
 The cars so many the green would never rest.
 The only rest would be its yawn and occasional naps.
 i am on that breath of the forests yawn.
 An echo to the water and a rape cry to a mother.
 Where fire floats on its back.
 And air suckles the rainbow.
 On this carpet of fatigue, flames of dreams are launched into the
 black.
 Beyond the black is where my sleep will never go.
 Because here watermelons have wings made of cement.
 Here the dreary nocturnal dampness of weariness is laughing.
 Cloud after cloud terrorizes my space of sleepless saturation.
 A saturation no liquid will ever enter.
 A state of hung clothing.
 There on the line hang my tired eyes and heavy body.
 There where sleep will never go.
 Dusks subtle darkening approaches.
 The rest i crave nibbles at my fingertips.
 The whites of the words whisper to my torture.
 They say i must unplug all my veins and watch the blood form
 forests.
 When the forests are green i may leave.
 i must return to my tired eyes and heavy body.

THE BEDS

The playful trousers of the pier have shed their cuffs.
Smiles from sad eyes of beach stones do not leave with the tide.
Restlessness and infatuation cram dimensions of forgotten
wishes between their worry.
A worry of the icicles blindfold.
A creation devised to dissolve serenity where kittens startle
dustpans filled with glass.
Laughter shrieks outside these unheld weapons.
Here, the table and its legs of concern were sold to breathless
creases of solitude beyond the hallway of twine.
Where drought lives in the salt of the riddle sanctuary.
Where whistles of wire have no spark.
Where an overcoat has no sleeves.
On the sidewalk of torture.
There twisted in tears.
There are the beds.

THE SUN HAS SPOKEN

The sun has spoken.

Slits in the screen allow the bows of branches entrance into the
stammer of the porch.

Concentration saws its way into the wood splinters beneath my
feet.

The sway of dead palm leaves erases the view of the road as cars
speed past.

One car carries a tree with the amplitude of exile.

Thunder clouds circle the house.

Lightning peers through the window.

The rains come and go.

Night curls its paw inside the twigs of the driveway,
safe from the fear of extinction.

EXPRESSIONS

Expressions of death are easy to erase when the blackboard is
another mans eyes.

Quietly and in a whispering place the guessing persisted.

A noble demon could have washed away any preamble of
listening.

A wretched bleeder might have wasted his life donating nickels
to cub scouts.

A man of incision would surely cross paths with blight.

But there are no stories left to tell the fallen leaves of the
avocado tree.

And the watermelon seeds sense the graft itching at ones
testimony.

Rain pelts down on the thought of gestation.

A moment is born.

Closer to the miracle of life than a second beside crisis.

ENCORE

Gallons of innocence will not recede while contractible arrows
flame out of trombones.

Music surrounds moths painting walls with the grace of
harmonious rigor.

Each encircling ascension creates notes on the scale of
moonlight.

An encore could only be the sun.

GATHER AROUND THE ENERGY

Gather around the energy,

ears full of suds,

watching eyes wade in the liquid of disgust.

There is a girl in the corner standing like a statue as she waits
her time to cry.

Booths of conformity fill with the altitude of trials.

Excuses at the entrance of this room have the crime already
solved.

i haven't any legs in this story of life.

My arms always reach beyond conversation.

Tears fall from her face into the shadow of a glass.

And she falls on the floor,

full of blood,

ready to feed the stockholders of Saturdays satisfaction.

WASP

While i plashed in the rust of absorbent thoughts, a baby wasp
discovered a god in the mirror.
Its route of instinctive escape could not be found.
It traced window ledges.
It explored the tunnels of towels.
It sought light on the ridges of frayed electrical cords.
Finally the babe gave out.
It slivered into a crack frequented by nocturnal worriers.
The water drained and i dried as the wasp began its voyage
backwards.

THE HUDSON RIVER HAS NO NAME

The Hudson River has no name.

The waters are burning.

Flames of the diseased civilization soar into the ruptured
appendix of the sky.

The sky explodes.

No rain falls in the river.

Only echoes seep their way into its oily gloss.

Down on its bottom angels and devils meet to discuss
humanity.

A decision could only be destruction.

Blood spurts out of the faucet.

Fish blood.

CONNIE MAY

BOY WITH NO PENIS

Boy, with no penis,
why do I love you?
Why do I listen to you when my hands have turned green?

You have come to me with gizzards in your eyes.
You asked me for stamens and rotten oranges.
I could not find them.
You asked me for the moon, any moon.
They would not come.
You asked me why the night freezes like boneless stones around
your wrists.
There was no answer.

Dear boy, with no penis,
do not question me so.
Do not ask me to say your hands are lemons
when I think they stink like dead roots.
I saw a vision once:
It was you, boy,
you with your hair in the moon
you with your pelvis in the sky
you with your sperm in the trees
and you with a growth of sea hair in your eyes.
You were beautiful, boy.
You were beautiful like a dune of pure sun
and there was laughter in the sea.
It was celebrating a consummation of its waves.
Oh, dear boy, run to the sea,
run to the sea today
for the vision is still in my hands
quivering like a drop of pure larvae.

ANOTHER LOVE POEM

I have loved you like the wind does
that blows sound
into the chimes
of the trees.

I have followed your gentle urgings
with the ache of the fiddler crab.
The fiddler crab
that finds its peace
in the softness of wet sand.

Your eyes have enveloped mine
and seen colors
the world will never know.
Colors the sun creates
as it penetrates the surface of the sea.

Your hand has encased mine
and felt the tremor of the earth
in the song of the mockingbird.
Its movements were wings
that brushed the apples of the earth.

Tonight I heard of your other love
of the other muse
that penetrates your blood.
She has eyes of glass
Skin of mirrors
Teeth of a million midnights.

I know I can never compete.

I can never compare
to the girl with the glass eyes
for my reflection bleeds in the face of the wind
and not in the mirrors of her skin.

TO THE OTHER WOMAN

The crack in the wall
is now in my hands
just like your voice that screamed today.

Your head was bowed,
searching for some sign of life
in the carpet that protected the wooden floor.

Your shadow sifted beneath the cracks
of every door
and every brain
that occupied the room.
Sorrow bled from the walls.

Your obsession sat across from you
trying to act like the god that he was not.
Your heart fluttered in his hands
Your dress was the color of his eyes.

As I tried to listen to what you were saying
I could only hear the cry of a senseless bird
trapped in the stream of flight.
Its wings were flapping against my breasts.
The wind was ripping my skin.

As your numb body
finally accepted defeat
there were no cheers in the arms of house plants.
Instead, their hands collapsed against the sky
like a derelict sea
unwilling to find the shore.

THE BIRTH

I feel the sky give birth everytime I am with you.
I feel it beating against our thighs like a love-drenched bird.

I know that as we
drink the wine
from our hands
we are only two seasons
finding a way home.

That as we laugh until our faces break
the stars will carry us away.

But that doesn't matter.
All that matters are your hands
that find lilies in the darkest places.
Your legs that feel the breath of the sea when I thought there
were no waves.
Are your eyes that dart into the knots of my skin
and run home singing.

So let the sea explode,
the towers fall,
for our hearts will never die.

SALAMANDER

Dark-sided salamander
that dwells in the twilight
of the cavern,
you have created pictures in my blood.

You have shown me the night,
its lips curling about mine
and lapping at my tongue
like a homeward bound cat.

Your skin that contains
the fish's dew
is the skin woman can never own.
Water is its ecstasy.

The lightning
flashing in the dark circles of your eyes
reveals the inner scream
of the earth
the inner scream the womb knows
as it moves
toward a reality
of light.

IT IS ELEVEN P.M. AND THEY ARE STILL
KNOCKING AT MY DOOR

They keep knocking at my door
like parrots scared of flight.

Their fingers rap the wood
that protects me from the outside.
They scrape at its holy surface
like a child scratching for air.

I sit in my room
with a vase at my elbow.
Its brown hips produce shadows for contemplation.
They curve like the swells of the sea
and I realize that I have never been anywhere
when the ocean could not enter me
overtake me
flood my body with foam,
cleanse me of my inhibitions,
but these people who think love
is a dead cow on their plate
strive to rob the ocean of its power
and put flesh in its place.

How can the sea continue to climb
the crevices of my blood
when my poetry is on the floor
and their hands are still pounding?

AN UNHAPPY LOVE STORY

you don't love me
like you are supposed to do
like you were born to do
like the salamander does

you don't feel the wind
create my hands
my sides
the sea

you don't realize how many years
i have been waiting
in the wings of the earth
to envelope you
to touch the fertile crevices of soil
that control you

i have longed to touch
the sea oats in your eyes
to feel them sway with the earth
but your arms are too busy
counting the hands of the sea
to realize the apples in mine.

SONG OF THE WOMEN WHO HAVE LEFT THE WELL

You offered me the lamppost
but I wanted the lap of the sun.

You told me I could have fingers
embedded in all I own,
but I wanted a forest
to keep my feet alive.

You said the ocean could sit in our living room
anytime it chose.
But I wanted my living room in the ocean,
I wanted my chairs to be in the sky.

When you left me you took the moon
I wore about my wrists.
You took the lizards that basked in my eyes
and the sand that slept in my skin.

When you left me
you gave me
three bleeding plums.
You said they were the sky.
You said I had caused them to be that way.
That the blood was the torture bleeding in your eyes
and the pit was the scream blowing through your veins
and the stem was the bitterness bending all your bones
and I died like a dog that has no brains
I died like a dog that has no brains.

INSOMNIA

The sea has left my pockets.
It has drifted back to the conch,
it mends the arms of rusted anchors.

The sail that blew through my veins
has seen its breasts collapse in the narrow
corridors of my blood.
Its name is no longer new.

I cannot find the sand
that allowed me to breathe
or the gull that created moonlight in my lips.

I must be lost
for the beach is no longer near.

THE LAST HOUR OF JULY

It is the last hour of July
and the birds still are not singing.

I ran to my window to try to hear
but the naked derelict was in my way.

I had hoped there would be dancing
in this last hour of July.

I had hoped the old women
would run into the streets,
wine flowing from their hips.

For the children to sing
with the dawn of stamens.

For the men to tear the seeds from decayed leaves,
the women to celebrate their glistening water.

And for our shirts to finally become familiar.

But the street lights shine
with the hands of a thousand knives.
They display the emptiness of our trousers
and there is no comfort anywhere.

The cobblestones have ripped the bandages
from their feet
exposing their sores
to the rotting sun.

They know the sea will never flow again.

They know the sea will linger forever
in windows of coral that flame
and comb the lonely hair of the sea oats
and wash the cry of the searching gull
for the sea has seen the street's emptiness
and knows the sand is better.

FOR THE MEN OF AMERICA

I have heard you before
singing your songs
in the gutters of america.

Your hands move like old breasts
and your tongue is raw like the street light.

Yes,
I have heard your story
many times before
and the mountains
did not care then, either.

In elementary school
you were taught
by old women
who thought their hands
were made to knead dough
and not the sun
that rises in lips.

How many women have you killed, dear man?
Did you kill them hot or cold?
Well-done or still-frozen?
Tell me so I will know how to dress.

Your fingers run up my spine
tearing the flesh from each bone.
You play with my vertebrae
like they were rocks.
You throw them in the air
and let them bounce on the sidewalk.

I grow weary of this game
for your hands are cold.

FOR THE SEA POET
UPON THE COMPLETION OF "FOAM"

The Poet has written a story
the cantaloupes understand.

One that the mangroves recite
everytime the wind whistles
on the edge of their green hands.

One that the pomegranate drinks
everytime it sucks the breasts of the sea.

Oh, dear Poet,
who carries the eyes of cats in his pockets,
what will be your next creation?
The wind is asking
for the sea is in the sky.
Its waves are still applauding.

FOR A FLORIDIAN POET

The blush of the wind
is in your cheeks
Star of anemone
and fire of night

The voice of a forest
fills your days
Cry of gravel
and blood of moss

The chimes that ring
in the desert floor
sound in your ears
like words unable
to control the night
like rivers unable to find their beds
like tears unable to resist their salt

ELVIS PRESLEY, WHY'D YA' GO HOME?

Written on the Afternoon of His Death, August 16, 1977

How could you do it to us?
How could you abandon the illusion
in favor of
the earth
the mud
the reality?

Your hips—
those wide stars—
were a never ending axis.

Your pants—
tongues of night—
were the world
in the fold of the bobby sock.

Your smile—
an open bed,
your eyes—
the passion that filled it.

I sat on my daddy's lap
(he's dead, too)
and watched you dance
and thought that sex
began in your legs
flew to your stomach
and climaxed in the scarf of your breast.

I was wrong, though.

Your hands were always
sifting the dirt of Memphis.

Your heart was always
purging the pain of your mother.

Your songs were always
tearing the fauna of Female.

How did I ever love you?

I guess because
your hands were always
in my breasts
feeding the fake flowers they gave you.