



Emily Brink

Antony and Cleopatra: The Matrix

I have seen her die twenty times.

Utopia, phantasm is present there,

“realized”, a complete tongue:

Name Cleopatra as nothing;

we kill all Egyptian fetters.

I must break, or lose tears;

an external omega movie.

She taunts my faults with such full licence.

Promote the war massively...

always close to destruction.

The trompe-l'œil negation,

the queen breaks off:

Ten thousand harms,

more overrides the primary characteristic

of this pure love: that is related to dream,

the occidental power against itself.

Our ills told us everything.
There is in the digitalisation
greater storms and tempests
than almanacs, we must
denounce technical alienation
while making complete use of revolution.

Le crime parfait, is gone;
the hand could pluck her
back from death.

Actually, the real,
to which unkindness is seduction
is indestructible.

She is cunning past.
She's good, being by the screen,
where she's a part of the equation.
Everything je-ne-sais-quoi;
only a fascinated adherence.
She makes a shower of everything.

Twelve

Grandpa and John Wayne and the Soldiers of Fortune.

Men who'd say Hemingway was a fairy

because he wrote books.

Get up before dawn, run five miles and do fifty pushups.

Speak the language: AWOL, MIA, Beaucoup, PAX. Shine

your boots and stand up straight. Yes, Sir.

Emotions outlawed: pity, fear, and wonderment.

Practice assembling your gun.

Me, I've just stopped believing in unicorns

and playing with dolls.

Grandpa says my hair is greasy.

It's called grunge, I think.

It's called hippie communist, he thinks.

I am ordered to take a shower.

In the bathroom: the smell of shaving cream

and the sound of Frank Sinatra.

To glimpse oneself there
and the glimpse of a glance

doubled over like origami
of light and water

The puzzle of adolescence

Flash grazing
my tender swelling buds
The darting white flesh

crisp as a wild orchid
peeking out from the bamboo.

Forgiving this trespass—

Its like crawling through a maze of tunnels

in the long Vietnamese night.

Recipe For America

I saw a car on fire once, at night. It was beautiful.

So American –

Our prime status symbol wasting away in the flames,

a beacon

for highway travelers.

I saw an anti-war protest in San Francisco. There was a Jew
wearing a keffiyah.

It was like seeing a black person wearing a

confederate flag,

but somehow less shocking.

In an Idaho gas station, women missing a few teeth

dancing

along to “Born in the USA”. It was a fun song

when it came out,

but post 9/11 it just seems desperate.

I study Melvillian angst with

Kurt Cobain.

I discuss the role of the double over KFC

with Mark Twain.

I put peroxide on the wounds

of Plath.

I cha-cha with Chaplin.

America is like a little girl wearing too much

makeup.

A bunch of older guys fuck her. She seems

proud

of it. Until you ask her if she's ever been in

love.

Then she twitches and starts to cry.

I resign. No more the Days of Wine and Roses.

These are the Days

of Vicodin and Orchids.

Sunrise over the Mojave

is like a drink of the purest water you can find.

Sunset over L.A

is like a Bosch canvas crossed with a Rivera mural.

Brash American Beauty: My great-grandmother

slapping two mafia brats because they pulled my mother's hair.

The South is an all-night Shoneys,

Johnny Cash on the radio singing

"Look At Them Beans",

beer and grits and a hooker

changing her pantyhose in the bathroom,

while her date, a Republican senator on his way down

looks completely blissful, in his element, really,

and the fluorescent lights make the barrettes in

the waitress's hair twinkle,

and outside on the pine-fringed roads

teenagers play the Allman brothers,

drag racing for some cool-headed southern belle.

My first experience with "white trash" –

Visited a trailer park in Pittsburgh (CA).

Noticed that some of the furnishings

came from Marlboro and Budweiser.

That neon Budweiser sign, that Marlboro

welcome mat, were the type of prize
you mail-in for, after dutifully purchasing
many cartons of cigarettes and beer.

One could compare it to
going to a businessman's condo,
completely furnished by the company he works for.

Recipe for America: Find a good history
of the Great Plains Indians,
and cross out all the parts that have to do with killing or drinking.

Add the testimony
of Ellis Island immigrants and bold the parts to do
with hope. Recite
it all to the sound of slave spirituals.

The Tiki Room

Elko's mom was from Nevada and that's how he got his name. Elko's dad worked lumber in Minnesota, where Elko was born. Elko's dad also molested his two older half-sisters and they took revenge out on Elko by putting makeup on him and making their mom worry Elko was gay or something. Finally Elko grew big and they couldn't do that to him anymore, but whenever they'd cry they'd look at Elko as if to say "child molester" and all Elko wanted to do was put on that makeup so they'd stop. Once Elko's mom took them to Disneyland. His sisters liked the teacups because they were fast and out of control, like them. Elko liked the Tiki Room, the way the curtain opened on the tropical birds with their yakkety-yak – it was like a bird opera. He began reading National Geographic, partly for the wildlife and partly for the naked women. He collected feathers and pressed them in a scrapbook. Once he was walking home and some electricians were fixing the power lines. They asked him for his shoes, and he gave them to them. When he came home his dad beat him. That night he imagined hanging from those lines. The next morning people would sweep aside their curtains and discover him hanging there, surrounded by birds. It'd be just like the Tiki Room.