

Nation-State

Adam Strauss



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by Adam Strauss

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Acknowledgments

The Colorado Review : “Others necessary”

Nation-State

Retro Torso

When parody's
Classic
I'll be the original
The DJ's bustin:
How can I tell
Past from present?
What's joke
Verses *faux-pas*?
It's reigning pouring:
Dear I'm not in
Heaven snoring.
I throw myself
Out to be caught;
What else but Live!?
Try save someone's life.

"A Mind of Winter"

My feet are cold and damp.
Rust stains like needle-tracks.
I'll get going: speed time
Spent in desperation.

Rust-stains like needle-tracks
Look better in sun; I'm
Spent by desperation.
Wind's striking, damn. People

Look better in sun; I'm
Looking forward to spring.
Wind's striking. Damn, people
Ignore me: like tulips

Looking forward to spring
But once it comes they'll still
Ignore me; the tulips
Will pass, grass will coarsen;

But once come there'll still
Be more. This skinning snow
Will pass. Park's grass is coarse
And crunches underfoot;

Fallen, this skinning snow
Looks like mortar; walking
Ground crunches like my steps
Were intending rubble.

More mortar; if I walk
Till day it'll look less clean.
I wish moonlight were warm.
My feet are sore; I'm cold.

Others Necessary

The middle
[Of to]

Led me [soul]
[A]lied—
Elm mile [you]
Died

The [wrong way
By yew ewes
Were all bray
Sluice

Was] me
[Unheady]

From Affirmation Journal

Aural equal of sunlight dapples rocks
Along a stream—recovery stirs him

To the scene. More people suffer that spring
I spent wandering Gertrude Stein, Stevens

And Marianne Moore—there've been floods outside
My door, always oceans between wars, save

The one I don't wage
For my dispossessed

Neighbors. I don't know who "Kiki" and Miss
Margaret Jarvis are but wonder "what

About all this writing?" The expression
Of me absently there—wouldn't I be

Better in action?
I love words which aren't the world. I write

Trying to free speech—
Can I be worthy of how much my hands

Engage? Shouldn't I speak, teach how to read
To achieve this interest; sadly means

Seems duller than make
What's at stake—burning.

"History" is written by those who write;
Can I right something? Who reads anymore?

Taking part in the action, hands hold else
Than a pen. Freer

Speech is forgery. Publication may
Be “the auction of the mind of man” but

It matters: how else our work activate?
I’d like to believe

A reason for why
I’m good; I’d pray if

My writing could feed,
House the roofless; in

Ink I “cling firmly to the advance”: the
Medium rhymes to

Brink; I’m scared I’m

Making “perfection” of “have done nothing”;

How reach the common “anonymously

About us” in a

Medium doesn’t
Mean to exclude—does.

A gap “jotted down

In...midst of action”;

I feel I’ve been made

Without the world’s Interest; I do feel

Good. Innocent’s not

Course my blood—make love

A service, not vice—
Oh page—Paradise!

Morality

A cute guy in the American
Military isn't less so—
I'm not morally acute.
A king snake's face
Is adorable—
One of country isn't guaranteed.
I've been
Under the impression
The frontline's largely un-“white”;
In the airport I tend
To see Caucasians in uniform.
It's below 50' outside—
Somebody's blood
Is boiling with “Imperial Affliction.”

I'm Not Yet Newborn

“Sure I’d
Move there for a year,”
Then really think:
A hesitation
I’ve never
Before deemed fear
(Chennai doesn’t scare me);
Is it a not
Real enough issue
With money, the
Distance, distrust
Of having a
Sex-life, me
Becoming the
Longed for “normal”?
I love my country:
Imperfect tense
Full of beauty—
Love’s my duty.

Dream

I have a dream
Of a comedy
Of razors
We all
Go to see;
Come out
Hating our
Government and
Loving each other:
Electing a new
Kind of official;
Holding office
Happens in the
Interstitial;
It's safer
Everyplace
To leave home;
Home too
Is improved.

Trying To Re-Conceive

1

I wish to sit—
Rapt—
In a horse's
Amniotic sack,
Take a few licks,
Then lay, hug
My soul, dear hick.

2

Sitting in amnion
I wish to be
Delivered
To a state where
I'm good, not
Indrawn, out
Of control: I
Have too much
Over my soul.

Archaic Surfacing

Backwash
Slaps Achilles silly; tuna school in a trench

The sun Off the coast of Tunisia;
sets—harissa for eyes.

Great great great great

Great great granddaughter smells flesh, checks firmness,
That the eyes are clear, decay not beating her at this beginning of day.

Africa interested her like paprika and olive oil;
Heel shot a sting while tending smelt-frits.
Her expression towards the pot of thyme
As Achilles looking to sea pulling himself out there.

She wanted a child; her gait was Achilles' when he
Felt must be a father; Who could possibly co-create?

A boat licensed in Spain trawls a channel
Between Sardinia and his mind wandering: Abyssinia.

So much Bottarga!

A culinary mathematic of love lets us be good as true as
that is

To one another. She scores a sea-wolf's skin—
Smacks it on the scorching stone; feels herself emergency—
Cannot pay attention to else than at-hand:
The possibility of ruined reputation.

Attending a Talking Heads concert
Can be counted as one of her life's apexes;
On the flight from Milan (a friend lived there;
Friendly to her but disdainful
Of the rest of her southerner family)
She had nightmares of Texas.

A letter from her brother
On stationary from a lab in Rome
Where she'd almost forgotten he'd moved
From failing playing beatnik in Apulia:
A lifestyle she assumed would suit him:
Smart as a microscope
But undisciplined;
However dull reportage of his work was
His impressions of the election were deliciously limned.

In the P. S. he mentioned the effect
What he's studying may have on shellfish;

*If I were cooking there I might care;
If this said how to handle quahogs
I'd pay attention.*

She did wonder the precise differences between
Adriatic and Mediterranean water; *could one make sorbets?*

A rival—perilously close to becoming a lover—
Smoking pork-bones for a sauce to go with cherry-blossom steam.

*Always at removes from nourishment; only a boy would so seriously
engage in this foolery; why is this corner reminding me of Paris' 4th
arrondissement?*

The cab ride was dactylic; out the windows would have been
A pleasure if the seeing weren't so expensive.

Sir somebody finished the sauternes.
His—what—wife?
What is she doing?

Rustling through her purse is too vague.

Birds fly over—but don't fish in—the East River.
An apprentice stirs chopped nettles into risotto.

She scorned drawing parallel
Cooking and painting—parallax.

Discussion of flame in love poems
Threw her off; she wrapped a throw around her.

A bit dazed, a bit daggering:

Figuring out the soul of salting.

Knob of butter sizzling
While she goes whittling
Her body to a blade of spring.

Should she consult for Cunard Cruises
Or will someone's soup suffer too much?
Holding an immersion blender
Into a pot of cream of caramelized leek
Instead of tearing out her hair.

As a girl she scoffed at cooking;
Her parents were rarely looking
And her grandma mostly made meals:
Knew to let lithesome be in its not else' zeal.

The concept of burn.

Burn

Burn

Burn:

Each time a fresh failure.

The gender of the fire, the range, the line:
Always almost resolves in her existence.

Passing beneath a billboard for Chanel: *Oh the perfumes I've worn:
Alba gold; lemongrass; innumerable roasted roots.*

Nobody has yet to hate
Her chestnut papardalle with porcini:
It's only been on the menu for an evening.

Her dream lighting: a full moon.
Hell: music with ones' blood-orange and beets.

Asleep, a panoply—Turin, telescopes, figs, fatback, beer, bulimia—
Presses; her tresses a-frazzle; eyes fulgent in the dark.

Leafing through Vogue, reductions waver
Twixt skeleton and succulent

Slicks: red wine rice-wine vinegar pineapple juice port
Cider all kinds of stocks —
These mostly aren't options for our heroine, on her cell-phone,
Accompanying a friend to a clinic.

Almost impossible to think of in the heat of cooking;
She sears a serving of sweetbread.

The season's chicest fat's not well-enough rendered—not dusky crisp
Like coco-nibs; the reviewer swoons a month later about the sauce
While she drinks a cup of coffee haranguing
Her supplier about his grouse.

The dude making teasers looks tweaked out—bout of smoked-trout
tartar; he occasionally glares at one of the waiters: *so much fucking
dough each night.*

Jacques explains the salts on the table.
Clockwork within a messy matrix.

Her backers wouldn't stand for Achilles

So she's stuck
Representing a name she dislikes: Shrike!

On her way home she gets a twinge—
Dinner for those with plenty
Of disposable income
While so many eat so poorly.

To soothe herself she wanders her mind's gallery:
The wisdom of turbot, top-quality cinnamon, heirloom tomatoes,
Black truffles like tornadoes.

She chopped better than her teachers.
Made butchering meat look like ballet.

She prefers to hire people who aren't hot, keep cool as the wall of a
cave When fire flames.

An African girl stared at her as she j-walked;
She noticed the signage stitched in serge blue on her breast-pocket.

Our heroine glanced back: couldn't imagine
This girl working the line; assumed she stood
In that dreamy way all-day
Hoping to be discovered for modeling.

The girl could barely read English; for a week afterwards she
wandered
Hoping to find where that lady came from:

A placard glinting Jillian's

Neon tubing spelling Children's...

The girl was not a coincidence on the fifth day,
Leaving her each night thereafter for a week
(Midway which she'd gone)
Wondering what to do with, to, the need
To act other than now—her absence
Pressed more than presence—she longed

For precedence—to help make expedient sense.

When the girl was almost forgotten
A nerve was born: she asked
Why an African Immigrant might
Regularly be in the neighborhood;
The answers all sounded right
And none right now.

It's her!

The supplier messed-up the order
Leaving half the scallops short of lovage:

Spelt pine-nut pudding petit-fours.

She made an emulsion of the roe roasted garlic and verjus,
Drizzles lying on stir-fried chard:
She refuses to waste more
Paper in the name of honesty;
The scallops had only
Begun their run last-night;
She had Sandy check for repeats.

*There's so much hideous food
For sale, sold, which I
Would deem trash—mine is lovely,
There's barely any.*

She wondered if there's a way
To have good suppliers purvey
To NYC public schools
(Could they get tax benefits and
Make up the lost income?);
If the menu was seasonal
The bill could be
Almost reasonable to the board;

*Some asshole would probably
Put up money to open a place called Cafeteria;*

She felt uncomfortable in home-kitchens;

She wasn't good at domesticity.

She hired a 50/50 sex-split for the range;
The men weren't morons, listened to her prime-ness;
She wasn't a screamer
Just a keener
Eye—Someone
Who can make
You quake who
You cannot hate.

She peppered her
Overriding neglect
With hope—*if she meets an asshole,*
Please be I won't
Put up with this in my not quite
Anywhere yet state
Where only
Huge losses don't feel
Potential gains.

Interrogation

I'm keener on going to bed with hot
Than smart or makes good art: a messed
Up view. A poet would not
Be bad but the best Sanskrit's the best chest;

I can't quite imagine sex with someone
Black or Asian makes me nervous:
Bigotry or you must stun
Me to respect before lazing surface?

A double-standard. Perhaps I'm quick-to
TX dude because we're not like;
I hope I get my dick to
Be good. My logic should go take a hike:

Breathe an open air opposed this error
Which should hurt me in order world be fair.

In

Husband with me
In a garden—
Possession isn't the point.
In the milieu I ostensibly
Fit in nationalism's not liked;
I'm into generic American.
I've long thought,
A bit wistfully,
Of being normal:
This isn't what I meant
Though there's intent:
Foul root or subversion?

Forge

Meanwhile in a meantime
A budding terrorist longs for
Giving Jesus a big
Kiss on his dick in public.
Forging documentation is sketchy:
My life is needing
Go have some drinks—
Cruise—sluice frees us
As a crossbar
Holding up more than our
Combined weight:
I'd rather be picked-up
Than go on a date.

Subjectless

There should be no subject
Only swerve—
Pure how:
Spinal-print ever present;
Since you asked I
Feel weird passed on
Passing into—
Autobiography:
1981—now.

BlueStreak

“You need the untranslatable ice to watch”—G Brooks

The plosives came out fast—thick—liquid but the texture in
The mouth of ice, a cave, blue-streaks, for weeks nobody said
Anything, then newsworthy—snow flurries in July; yah right,
Only in another hemisphere, or frontier of ear—where there
Is a war: only loss is winning; truthful expression slips—lips
Willingly mistranslate the Sanskrit of the heart; we’re left
In a maze, not an argot of our making—why must there be
A target language; the tongue I started in ever-sheds, now
Across ocean—storming connective—on a continent of hear.

Coral Sea Aubade

A specific night's moon making coral spawn
While he mused on blowing a man but
His lips were chapped: one wrong
Expression—despite so many right—
They'd bleed as human-skin is guaranteed to
Touching reef a merest moment:
Pleasure's dangerous: safety stifling:
Safety a pleasure—I want to be
Measure in which life and living
Maximally connects—sunrise: one who doesn't
Get enough rest wakes up.

Agape

X-rayed
My soul
Shows a hole:
World goes.
If people strew
My way through
Grief with flowers
I'd be offended:
The petals
Would obstruct the
Gap—contact.