

Eight Poems by Paul Ilichko

Obliteration

We did defiance straddling the in-between waiting
 for the war of art and stupidity waiting
for the expelled voices that drew
 into peculiar shapes and angles

we did the ground/mind problem a cacophony
 of birds trapped inside imagination

we did the second part of a three part investigation
inspired by the killing lost within rows of data

we screamed across the sky as if
 a blueness tracing itself through clouds

we were no longer ourselves

we found the gentility of a form of sex that was practiced
 deep within blankets
a cushioning of sound a closing of windows

obliteration was always behind us besmirched
 by language smeared like pigment
 onto the walls of a cave

we were the obliterated ones.

A Bulb is an Egg Before it Cracks

And once again a forensic incident
defined and measurable
a forensic incident having form and width
each incident requiring paperwork
foldered and sectioned

sections flowing downstream
with following hands
a roundness understood as hollow
as graspable
as poetry
bulbous with concept

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*a bulb is merely an egg
without the fragility*

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they hitchhiked from phone box to phone box
in the days before connection
every day a new map created
from the traces
that their feet left in the dust

seeds winged across the atmosphere
planting themselves as richly
as ideas in a fertile mind

they arrived finally
and found themselves
on a street without shadows
failing again
to recognize the work that is required
to build a skyline.

Ditchwork of Trench

Surrounded by diggers the steelworks belched and bellowed its thickness and its texture
scarring the sky on a cold day of sunlight with just a hint of acid rain

surrounded by diggers the outrage fell from deep within our thin-lipped mouths the slightest
drizzle of phrases that interleaved permissiveness with wonder that mingled threat with sanctity

surrounded by diggers our choices gapped the river our emphasis scaled the joys of naked
banks toward the towering fields of foxglove amidst the tumult of merry-go-round and
landslide

surrounded by diggers the moon-split intervals of reading are interrupted by the thunderous
sounds of narrative as our loves and our lives are cleaned and polished and selectively quoted
from

surrounded by diggers we stumble through the answers of the questionnaire lost inside a maze
of bright and sharpened language that slices to the bone that cuts to the quickest of the fastness
of our homespun yarns

we sit on the edges of ditches deep and rotten and filled with parcels of ivory sadness waiting
for the diggers to return.

Titanium

The beauty of nothingness
a titanium plated façade

that hides the inactivity no feelings
no consciousness no status

no gender this steel-cut
power-lathed doll strip-mined

and fracked this actress cracked
like a dog leashed a horse hobbled

so blank and empty a white canvas
or a tabula rasa all claims settled

for negative entropy all bank
accounts emptied out all lawsuits

forfeited eating from an empty
plate with a broken fork and no knife

a starvation diet of dirt
and metal shavings encased within

the purity of a titanium shell
oh such loveliness in a metal hell.

Colorblind Redemption

The alcohol flush of
the liver and kidneys
the field where a chord sounds
the rush to a feeding
the sweat and the muscle
the untouched white canvas
the disclosure of systems
the surviving inferior
the silence of the stranger
the scissoring of meta
the bruising of bodies
the negative destiny
was translated mechanically
with wire-line components
to an increase in tyranny
as voices are spoon-fed
while children obstruct us
from reaching our targets
in a Nevada motel
where pilgrims trace shadows
and the wisdom of solitude
is the ghost in the attic
but the tube was extracted
when the plastic was melting
and the smell was unbearable
as they wept through the season
and a stranger with cloud hands
with cream clots and coffee stains
was grateful for the outcome
for the colorblind redemption.

Life Makes a Completion

Priest will speak in ancient words floating up from unknown depths as he examines the parental teeth and the childlike wisdom

his sermon is a wilderness restructured as hypothesis

your origin story lettered across a screen is a computerized summation of those years of organic ritual a veiled mystery drizzled into a time without ink

you remember the years of wings and hooves of ochre and umber somewhere deep in the High Sierra where leather scraped raw on rock and stones tumbled across the dryness of an unlived life

you remember your mother when she tied you to a chair when she surrounded you with newspaper and buckets and the songs of her generation that infiltrated you to a level that was deeper than you ever realized

and now you raise your head and howl as drool soaks your chin and you stumble with your walker across the polished floor that stretches out into the distance

into the far away light that beckons you into a kind of certainty.

Leaving Grief

Leaving behind the grief-church
face to face with ...

Leaving behind ...
face to face with the soft
green rectangle ...
the orange soft surround

Leaving behind the sadness

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Subtle edges of pigment blended

Canvas as synecdoche ... a Rothko mooring
an oceanic color system

Mixing ourselves a softness of pain

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Leaving behind the grief-garden ...
the ocean of color
that metaphors as sadness

Leaving behind soft edges and richness
and a failure to advance

A color field escaping from orange
(from carnage)

Color ... washing into green into ocean
into escape into emotion

From orange into green softly ...

Why Unpack in a Business Travel World

Why unpack into temporary space?

the body being a furnace while the room
is set for refrigeration

life is a leakage of calories
into the infinitesimal

a space designed for temporary
a space designed for passage

why unpack into emptiness?

such a moral vacuity
why hang yourself
on hooks or ladders?

oh what the hell why not hang yourself
on the emptiness of life?

so close to silence
so close to stillness

the room is a hunger
is a sickness
is a burning

body burns green-gold
the body flares

into the end of light.