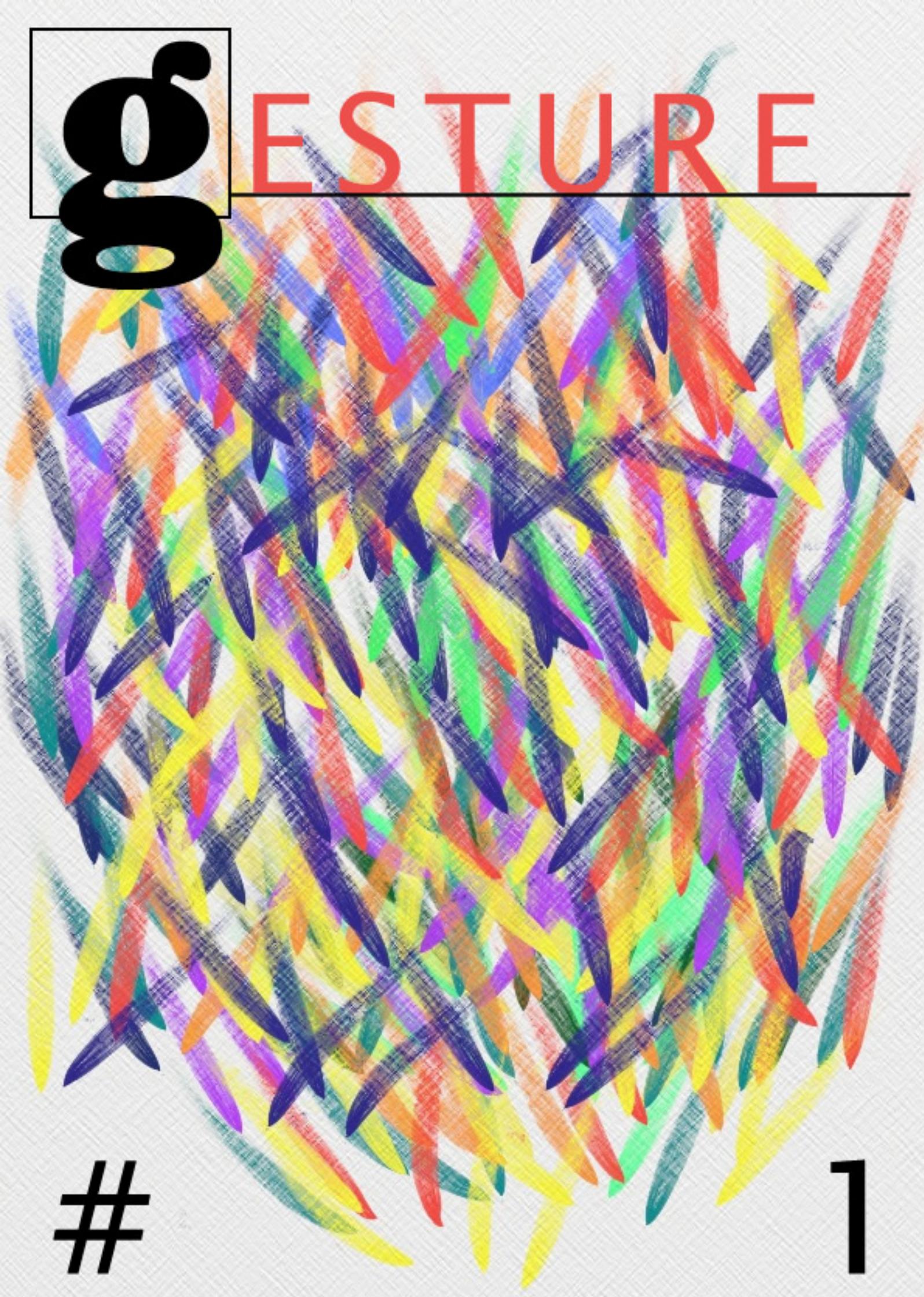


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ESTURE



#

1

Thanks for reading  
**gesture.**

**Matt**

**g = contributors**

Alone here with my thoughts  
it seems like snow has fallen  
everywhere around them

like skeletal trees in a winterscape.  
I feel a little overworked  
as though an unknown force

had worn me like a glove  
with which it performed  
the same magic trick again and again

all day. Can you picture me  
slumped towards a window hunched over  
a white piece of paper?

I am trying to figure out the secret  
of artificial intelligence--  
how to make something get up and live

all by itself. For some reason  
I believe this is possible. And my beliefs  
though flimsy and hollow like yellow

reeds bent low against the wind  
down by the black river where dreams  
kneel down to die in peace

are the only things that confuse me.  
And this is why I love them. This is how  
I would like to be remembered--

pulling a rabbit out of the air.  
A real rabbit made from paper made  
from imaginary snow.

It would be foolish to assume  
that anything is composed of tiny dots.  
That dots make up the universe.  
That the universe is a kind of dot.  
It would disastrous to assume these dots  
cohere by way of an invisible force  
which extends from nowhere  
into everything everywhere.  
When someone dies their soul  
looks just like them and floats  
above their gurney. If they were 30  
years younger, they would tear the dress  
off a nurse. It's been this way  
in every war ever fought. Souls  
hovering over the battlefield.  
Nurses completely dressed.  
It's impossible for a cube of light  
to exist. Impossible for you to carry  
that cube of light across a vast plane  
of darkness through a forest of pine trees  
to a house in the woods. It's impossible  
to enter the house and hand the cube  
of light to William Butler Yeats.  
Time flows up and down and around  
the tiny dots. Birds fly out of the trees.  
I don't care for perfectly clear weather.  
I keep myself busy all day.

A man who for years had been mourning the death of his wife by not coming out of the bedroom he and his wife had shared, and in which his wife had died, died.

They didn't exist until the first  
person who

saw them saw them.

“We are the last two men alive,” said one bearded man to another. “Whoever dies first will be buried by the one who himself will never be buried.”

Better they swing a scythe across your belly, stretch  
a taut sheet flat over your hips' corners,

split you open and dig out every last finger, every  
nail and limb. Better they stuff you full of thorns

before sewing up your stomach's bleeding smile.  
Better than hushing you into a room,

your heels hoisted into stirrups, cold metal tongues  
agape and toothless. A nurse whispers quietly

as she pats your hand, another clearing  
the evidence he was ever in your body,

ever smeared the wet mop of your back  
across the ground under clouds of charcoal smoke.

Better that you never look back after you sneak away  
with the scraps, slide into his house like a sheet of paper

pushed under the door and leave a jar on his mantle,  
tiny arms swimming in yellow brine.

but my thoughts are a broken shower head  
& I am forever realizing things too late  
so cut their throats w/ a bass solo or  
rebuild the image as a long lost puppy  
    first: give nothing away  
    lie if you have to the image is contingent on a lie  
there was never a puppy to begin w/ anyway  
A man boards a plane in Portland, Oregon in November of 1971  
I have yet to meet my father but I have heard great things  
according to an artist's rendering of a phone booth  
teenagers are bored many are jobless  
the problem is twofold & cannot be solved in this space alone  
but at least I tried silence is a story about a boy  
& his elephant no forget the boy  
I doubt the legitimacy of his elephant  
silence is this plate I found in my garden or  
the three blank pages at the end of a dime novel  
my sources tell me I am too circumspect to be confused for  
Abraham Lincoln I tell them to fuck off  
however elusive ampersands are necessary lies  
silence too is a lie but we are otherwise comforted  
by its vague gesture its silhouette  
a figure passing by a doorway

Gravity, the mother of all, separated herself  
from the strong, weak and magnetic forces.

Her dishwasher stacked perfectly, cups on top  
plates below, hair worn in a bun

so it never fell in her face  
when she bent to wipe your mouth.

it was in an english class in the eleventh grade third period i sat in the far left row in a classroom in a portable out by the football field i sat in the second to last seat behind a tall guy named rob whose brother years later would be eaten by a shark off the coast of santa cruz to my left was a fat guy named vincent who drove a transam that he could barely fit into its important that i get this right right down to the last detail because it was in the eleventh grade in my third period english class that the teacher mr allen said tuberculosis was on the rise because immigrants were on the rise they spat on sidewalks and during the hot months of april may june july the sun would evaporate spit on the sidewalks and wind would scatter it into the air the stats on tb were on the rise because we were all breathing the same air it is important that i get this right because it was in my third period in an english class in my eleventh grade that he said tb was on the rise and i was sitting in a classroom in a portable out by the football field the tall guy farted and blamed it on the the fat kid sitting in the seat to the left of me the fat kid decided that he was going to blame it on me it was in the far left row in the second to last seat in the english class in the third period of the eleventh grade that i saw snow for the first time it is important that i get this right it was snowing in november in san jose it was beautiful sitting in that seat in the far left row in the third period english class looking out the window i remember saying go fuck yourself its important that i get this right because in my eleventh grade english class i told the tall guy and the fat guy and the guy i referred to as mr. allen to go fuck yourself it was a single sentence stated just loud enough it was meant to be a shared experience in the eleventh grade in the third period of an english class i was kicked out of school for the duration of a week because in the eleventh grade i said go fuck yourself in an English class in the third period i remember walking home it was a fall day and the leaves were changing colors and it snowed that day i remember because it never snows in san jose i remember thinking it was beautiful but strange the changing of the leaves and the falling of the snow it was beautiful that fall day

Shall the door moan behind me with the voice of a cage in a cage  
Shall the cage the house once was be gilt by the soot of its owners  
and shall that soot coat it all even the words I use to describe it  
Shall the latticework balancing grapes from two seasons sag and crack  
but never break and shall this promise never be broken

That there is but one house for every fear ox-blood red fat as a barn  
squatting on the humblest hill  
That the hill be named something terrible in Spanish or Hebrew or Russian  
That the name be the name of the worse war to pass or the last colony  
of lepers or the false smell of cardamom covering the rot of a body  
That the name be your name that there be only one name for you my lover my body

And that I should come to the birthplace tonight of your terrible name  
o house you tenuous tendril you rake to rake with  
And that I should cross the threshold held beholden to the warp of the floor  
and rake the naked beams with the sole of my shoe in which have come  
tiny gems of you spent so long overlooked  
And that I should pass through the gem of the parlor now thick with the mystery of frogs  
and yet should never see one not one I swear  
And should I send them out into the air the cool night air  
And should I send them out

They coat the floor of the shallow pond like a coat, or a dead goat over the smell of itself  
which could never be  
Which could never be the name of the house I once lived in  
Which could never be the same as the name I gave it

I have run from the house and the vineyards crucified on the hillside  
I have run from the crucifixion my entire life and sleep and am wakened by the smell of  
burning  
I have run down the hill so fast I lost count of the bees festering in blisters in trees

I have run down so fast the bees of two seasons dropped their heavy burdens and be  
came another  
color another blister which is the ground and the fault of the ground  
I have run down I have been run down in the house of my making  
In whatsoever houses I shall enter shall my entering become the blister of a bee on a  
sharpened  
spear which is a token of peace and a piece of the cross

It should not alarm you that I despise  
something other than myself. I'm not

a feminist for nothing, or else those songs  
taught me zilch about owning a vagina.

Sometimes I peruse through the make-up aisle  
and think about how nice it would be

to dab that glistening guarantee  
of sex on my dry mouth. But then

I remember, when I turn my head too fast,  
my hair sometimes sticks to the new

chemical radiance, and I want to return  
to skin, to the essentialism of matte lips.

I always loved experimenting with you,  
lip gloss—your delicate shine, that love

for contact, the tease. You're first  
after a bath, the initial layer of distraction,

but then I wipe you away, forget I don't care.  
Truth is, I look forward to liking the thought

of liking myself, becoming a kind of first  
woman before the others came along.

of                   dissidence towards hospitable · · f-stop exactitude · · a scalpel  
seemingly on loan from a dispassionate orchestra · · atypical &                   aquatic · ·  
rubbing herbs into the open wound of a symbol · · semiotics, as the word suggests, is  
the study of signs · · to wit, a Manitowoc wrecking ball covered in the particulates of  
sideswiped flowers · · in circular motifs · · every artist                   speaks for themselves,  
in some reflexive sense of isolation · · w/in the selected surgery of                   scrivening  
· · living through humdrum self-reproach · · you, immediately                   in a curious  
medical chapter · · biopsied on white Eskulan paper · · w/ well-defined words which  
are sincerely                   inexplicable · · yet somehow connect · · through a Hasselblad  
500C/M w/ a 50mm lens— · · slightly out of focus · · one starts to fathom · · this lion  
is a grandpa w/ the dreams of a sleepwalker for a watch fob · · ribboning the rumina-  
tive elements of Aletheia · · but “a drunk man looks at The Complete Poems of Hugh  
MacDiarmid” · · isn’t anything like Heidegger · · as the words swerve w/ the accuracy  
of engineering · · a looming storm front tumbling · · from the take-up roll on a vener-  
able Geo. Hattersley Standard · · slumming antique w/ all the connoisseurs · · the phi-  
losophy of solitude                   is a factory · · the elevator inside is a birdhouse, the ap-  
positions become                   funeral dirges · · the transcripts remain                   doctors &  
nurses · · on strike you were just like everyone else · · wearing                   this horrifying  
hearts-and-flowers gibberish · · so let me introduce myself · · i                   don’t really  
know what i’m supposed to do w/ all this moody ambiguity · · often the                   ab-  
struse delete-key allegory · · makes each primary colour sound like                   a  
prominent component of The Bodyguard soundtrack · · every breath                   incor-  
porating elements · · of contemporary hallucinations, crime fiction & southern gothic-  
tension · · it exercises the third-person · · omniscient,                   · · nonlinear narrative  
· · where                   a handful of Spaulding yachts & Creekmore sailboats anchor · ·  
during the yearly                   charity golf game · · w/ an encore of analytical                   aes-  
thetics where                   my past contrasts as a houseboat · · set adrift                   on “Set  
Adrift on Memory Bliss”

every dream is a fire drill & i/m [a nude fire extinguisher]  
 assimilating nicely—  
 & i miss a lot of things  
 somewhere, along in there, i think i miss you, samurai self-esteem

the belvedere moments  
 of auto-affection & i think someone just  
 aimed a revolver  
 at a raindrop ~~thinking abt suicide~~

No—

i/m really leaving this time  
 cataloguing references to dismantled dreams in old books  
 like it/s the ides of october

[sorry, i cdn/t find synonyms for “April is the cruellest month”]

but, you are a dreamboat,  
 Anne, estranged

but i/m, alas, [do geese see god]  
 a made-for-TV special  
 abt Dexter, or ~~high school athletes~~

maybe my only source is  
 what if Abraham Lincoln were a confessional poet#—

[the absurdity is an affirmation]

w/ the historical potential of a forest fire  
 [we can meet again] near a deciduous tree pining to be coniferous  
 & maybe we can stay awake & say  
 “i don/t sleep anymore” to each other

[or]

~~fuck it~~ i/ll stay i/m taking a walk  
 to dash myself against  
 the petrous origins  
 of love songs

there was a gallery of motives or motivations  
 leit-motifs for a Baedeker to the Alcatraz  
 of this harbingering elegy  
 to the runways & doorways toward an executioner/s garden

a plastic flower  
 still burns in my [complicated] hand  
 [dear Anne:]

an art just subtle enough to dream  
under, the cursive stitch, the prostrate hem,  
the mountains carved from textile, the dreams  
you had of your mother too. Down, cotton,  
wool, she is blending her trapezoids, paisley stripes,  
silver filigree patchwork into something warm that says  
you'll never be alone. The sharp dullness  
of that first quilt, recall, the little television  
on the corner table recording the arias of soap  
operas and the soaps they pitched  
at low, low prices. The coverlets  
piled in corners, closets stuffed with generic sweat-  
shirts (my name embroidered at their hearts), little epaulets  
for little generals on Halloweens. Tonight,  
in concrete sweat, I dream of my mother sewing  
in the basement, next to the water heater.

Affection is merciless: the wind, the excluder.  
So much ruptured attention, so much pillaged from the stalk.  
Even the nerves stray from precision, announcing  
Their stunned subject. Merciless: a field of snow  
Flying like jargon, sweeping the issue away  
In a halo of cold, its purpose  
Lifted from the flat climate, from its nub or throb,  
Lifted on impossible wings we are generous, we dare.  
But affection is merciless: **the dead** in their thin garb  
Walking the ruined streets, inventing us in stride and envy.  
It is said they will make their way  
Back to us, as what rises **saves** itself, falls.  
What is the speed of **this doctrine**, what dividends,  
What annual yield?  
When will he give it back,  
When will I laugh in the untidy yard  
And when will her eyes, staring at me  
Because she sees only her departure **from me**,  
See me left here. Further adventure is further delay.  
**I used to count the days. I do not want to count the days.**

I am not a painter, I am a poet.  
Why? I think I would rather be  
a painter, but I am not. Well,

for instance, Mike Goldberg  
is starting a painting. I drop in.  
“Sit down and have a drink” he  
says. **I drink; we drink.** I look  
up. “You have SARDINES in it.”  
“Yes, it needed something there.”  
“Oh.” I go and the days go by  
and I drop in again. The painting  
is going on, and I go, and the days  
go by. I drop in. **“The painting is  
finished. “Where’s SARDINES?”**  
All that’s left is just  
letters, **“It was too much,”** Mike says.

But me? One day I am thinking of  
a color: orange. I write a line  
about orange. Pretty soon it is a  
whole page of words, not lines.  
Then another page. There should be  
so much more, not of orange, of  
words, of how terrible orange is  
and life. Days go by. It is even in  
prose, I am a real poet. My poem  
is finished and I haven’t mentioned  
orange yet. It’s twelve poems, I call  
it ORANGES. And one day in a gallery  
I see Mike’s painting, called SARDINES.

We waken next  
to strangers we  
pretend to know  
intimately  
eat a normal  
breakfast

In the evening  
over supper  
we find our old  
expressions  
smile inwardly  
restored

help  
each other dress  
(yellow blouse  
navy blazer)  
head off to work  
with kisses.

and kiss  
as usual  
before sleep  
happily uncertain  
whose lips  
we meet.

33 years of watching a mountain  
in between 33 waves of weather  
and the stone is watching me back.  
I return  
at last  
to the ground.

every day takes me further  
away from you and i  
think i'm finally  
ok with that

the ocean is bitchslapping  
the shore and seagulls run  
away from the water

there's this girl i sleep with  
and when we sleep  
i don't have dreams  
it's like i die  
for a few hours

lately i've been feeling my heart  
do this weird thing in my chest

like it wants to bust out  
and send drunk texts  
to all my lovers

dan lau [A Tuesday]  
*for Jane Wong*

I saw a dead starling at the side  
of the road and thought of you.  
How you'd examine the discarded  
parts of animals as we walked. Like  
on the beach, how you simulated a battle  
starring your hand as a legless crab  
and your other hand as an ornery fish  
now reduced to just a long white spine  
curved into a shallow arch. The crab,  
a simple broken star.

I know now the logic in the macabre.  
I see the beauty in the symmetry stilled  
by death. Perfection in the small body  
of a mouse before it bloats and reanimates  
with fly larvae, before the skin collapses  
into a loose suit on the child that body  
becomes. Each feather on that crumpled bird  
stood up on end to greet that brutal grit-filled  
wind, and curled into iridescent pearls.

from their boats  
fishermen discard  
the heads and innards  
of freshly caught fish  
onto white sand  
attracting flocks of  
seagulls that peck  
through the remains  
turning their  
yellow beaks red

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