

Figures in Blue

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# Figures in Blue

*Gail Sher*



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*For Brendan*



## CONTENTS

<i>Daffodils</i>	1
<i>Eagle</i>	5
<i>Spring</i>	9
<i>Juke Box</i>	13
<i>Fuzz</i>	17
<i>Sprig of Laurel</i>	21
<i>Tulip</i>	25
<i>Tree</i>	29
<i>Thumb</i>	33
<i>Black</i>	37
<i>Cow</i>	41
<i>Meadow</i>	45





## DAFFODILS

A woman alone at a large open window gazes at the sky. The soft flesh of her arm folds around a basket. If she is dead, the colors may be alive.

Her soft flesh holds a premonition of her, calls its form within the form of its space in sky.

She is miming sky with her body. *Taming* its color, like a double her of color.

There is a sense of intense activity in the buildings and neighborhood, so familiar, yet her skin is not that.

Angst from the street, but what prevails is the face  
of a person waiting.

An agony of light chugs through her body.

If she could roll out her body, like make a road of  
her body, there is the sense of that being all there is.

As if her flesh were a habit, a woman stands in sky,  
catching it in the drape of her dress.

As she rests in the bare window she is dead. *I (am dead)* she says. It stands like a point of view.

A strip of death is on the woman's arm.

She wants the death eagerly, like time tucked in her arm. *On the crest you can just touch death*, she feels.

She sees an arm (the boundless ordinary nature of her arm) in a gown, in the sky, wrapped in a column of the unsaid.

Sky like sea, around a woman hugged by sea.

A man is a response (like sky and a sea wall). The  
*float* of him sinks, then appears on the horizon.

*I am exempt from sky if I empty myself toward it.*  
The flaccid man's ribs absorb the thick musculature  
of her arm.

Daffodils range, placated by time, but it is the habit  
of deep slumber.

## EAGLE

An old man sits, quiet like a log. His knees are  
crossed. Somehow he is stalling, unplaced, like the  
woods of his head.

If he sees age, it is good age he feels.

As if time happens twice in the crux of his body.  
But it waits.

The spine of an animal coils in air as it dangles from  
a limb, sun stroking it nervously.

The man sees blue in a bulbous core of light. His  
outline bobs just outside his body.

There are animals in his body (the knowing of what  
locomotes the folds of a man's body).

Sun spalls time. Something is heard but he is dead.  
*Giddy* describes the animal climbing out of his eyes.

As the animal creeps away, a  
rising eagle empties (gathers slowly) into his body.

The eventual empty sky or incremental bardos of sky, as if sky is one continuous living membrane.

The ridge of the eagle's motility in my mind dwarfs its vanishing in clouds.

I *think* I see the contour of its movement (the bird's flying outside the possibilities of its body). It leans into the land, then drains into sky.

As if a boundary included in its disappearance also imprints the bird, sky and the part of sky that's thought.

I dream myself to being the majesty of a body, a sphere with an eye as in the self-view of a mental body.

I dream myself to a shape that looks like a fresh smell.

The sloppiness of birth, if I seek its tail in the crack of myself, whose poison, excrescence, great gelatinous spookiness hang like an old breast on the person.

The androgynous bearing of a breast, sagging in day like a normal breast, the normal day of *no-day*, as if she were a fog leaning over and asking a question.



## SPRING

A child peers from the spines of a sapling, tender  
like soft eyes. A knuckle propping her cheek seems  
stiff, awkwardly awake in a dark rivet of sun.

Now is *between* joining what is present to one.

Light on the blue wall is making the child public,  
though she is alone, miscible, her feet are alone.

To replay time, like a child's favorite story, has the  
same soothing sense (her being a rabbit) again.

The foreclosure of a life being locked into this sky,  
this orb of seasons and death, such as the spring of  
sky.

If a baby walks in sky, she too is an example of how  
containers simply amplify karmic structure.

Pink flesh makes a covenant. An eye is silk and  
slips out.

The play of a person's face, in perfect precision  
with her, drifts in sky like a boat.

Like she might trip over her body wandering  
through a scarlet field. If the container formulates  
from inside, slippage becomes hostile.

Spring touches the nonlocation of her ground, the  
pace of her mind as a shield.

There is a string around a mind still *situated* in her  
body though no longer biologically *seated* in her  
body.

Many insects collect there. It is a grieving ground.

Sometimes the sky looks like ducks and I remember floating on an arrow toward a city.

Like time in a foot where sky is the foot. A thinking person's thoughts die in little clumps.

So the impact of the arrow, the *brain* of the arrow.

When it dies its bones and tongue smell of spring as if spring were something *made* in its body and later revealed by its body.

## JUKE BOX

A woman in her doorway looks up. She raises her hand to her hat as her head tilts back. Summer is high. The image of sun fusing with her body such that she *becomes* the sun, its place in sky resting back toward herself watching.

Her feet are bare in high-heeled shoes. Soft folds of her dress stir in a slight breeze.

The description is a protection, a barrier placed as a scene. There is tension between herself and the scene.

The brim of her hat dips. Its motion is time. There is tension between the time of her hat's dipping and the time of the sun streaming through sky, creating decrepitation in her body.

The woman is loose. Her bones move as she rests back on her lungs. The woman breathes in conjunction with her lungs as if everything in her world were contained within a bagpipe.

Her body no longer shields her, she feels. She lowers her arm and brushes its skin to remove the tension that has resulted.

It is a thick body, like tea leaves or lamb. A body like sweet fruit.

She leans against a piano. Her body is not a pianist's though.

A woman hungering for her body moves along the  
edges of her body. She moves it to her heart,  
toward the belly of its hair.

The chaos in a hair, a flank of hair, but the true  
flank refuses to spread farther than its own body.

Sound cuts space bleeding in her bones,  
tourniquets of sound in her hemline.

Being the grandmother of her sound, the great  
great grandmother of her highest lightest sound,  
like an unsound, sound with a backbone.

A moth spreads funerary wings across a fragment  
of sky. I see her skin (the *sound* in skin) hovering in  
its body.

Dusk over grass lights a spot on the moth's wing.

There is a dance in her, but she will not know it.  
She looks away because she sees this.

A juke box dissolves, calms into a shuffle, a slow  
dance of days in which she can be ready.



## FUZZ

If you look you see a little fuzz of hair above the head and neck of a blonde woman. She appears to be standing, waiting in a stall, reading a magazine.

Her headband clears a space that she inhabits if I think of her.

What is the real face? The photograph of someone living, but it is a paper face, double non-living.

*Is how we wait for our mind to know what we are, the fragrance of a number gone.*

I want to cry when I see her hair, stiff with an idea  
of a place she might take up.

Her skirt is loosely feral. Gravity is a lesion on her.

Her laugh I infer from the hair. *I live in my hair*, she  
says to you casually, like a caucus of hair  
opprobriously abusing its own hair.

She will relax and be her hair, the spine of each  
hair. Little hairs on your forearm.

Sky gathers around her hair. She lifts her hand.  
Sky crawls under her hand as if it recognizes its  
mother.

Her hand *is and always will be* the life inside a hand.  
The belly of the hand is in the woman's eyes.

Time is umbilical, as if her hand suddenly defines *my*  
amount, more accurately than my amount.

A cop's black leather hand pushes back night  
because he knows he can. (He is a shepherd of  
fire.)

She passes herself (and her periphery) walking  
*down* as if *down* were handcuffing her.

All arrows point down. Night abides making space  
for its light because night recognizes its same light  
family.

There is a robbery. The lapse of a person (the  
mulling of its eye) whirring in air a few centimeters  
off.

Night rubs night so that *death can carry the sky to  
the people.*

## SPRIG OF LAUREL

A woman's full body in the folds of her soft full  
body may be a portrait of death.

She is looking at sky, loosely alive. The painter  
paints light so that its breath is exposed in the folds  
of her t-shirt against her shoulder.

Her hair is loose, pushed back behind her hand. It  
bends *in* like a child.

May I loosely let go of her emaciated hand, like a  
turkey in flight hangs in sky, loosely falling away  
from its flying.

That the painter requires a sprig confuses her. He sticks the sprig into her hand. *The gnarled causes of a hand are beginningless*, she's thinking.

Air seeks the awareness of her, making a thin film between life.

Soft desolation keeps churning against a wall. *If I carry my shell up, the image of a bird. Hell is a bird which flickers in and out of being married like that.*

The room exists partially to mimic a bird flowing, but it leaves a bad color.

The wait of a woman at the edge of air, sweetly  
like a wing, swift and awake, so as to sweep the air  
close in.

An image of her heart is showing on its face, which  
turns inside out so that the heart is holding the  
face.

She smiles the smile of the face as it has appeared  
both during its growing and later during its  
samadhi. Even angels have faces in her, she feels.

*Until* is the memory of one—*until-when grasses*—or  
*how-long grasses* is her own memory of one.

*Is there, without the girl, a girl holding a sprig?* (I'm wondering if she is simply an old longing.)

Like if you die but you don't, does your feeling for the girl disappear?

If air dies but the girl is living, what happens to my feeling if she is Vajrapani?

I offer light and smoke to an unassailable space, an aphasia of space, like a *belt* of space.



## TULIP

A woman sits facing light. Sun hits her hands resting on a flowered dress. A long row of windows stand in the dawn quietly.

So that we too (*that's* our mind). She is not existing in sitting's aspect.

We don't see her eyes. We *infer* that she is reading from the texture of her skin. As if her skin is reading.

To which her body, she feels, is surrogate. The space is there but not available, which the act of reading addresses.

The resonance of a reader's mind coagulates in her earth sign. Earth is time, then making a little bowl of it for her head.

As if time were skin, like a family of her body,

*I want the boy erect, she says. I want him like a card as its colors fold around it.* She sees the color of the dead one so that she could be dead again.

Autumn is the frame. Red leaves, violet sky, like a chop signing him off.

Sometimes I hear her death, like lip from behind a word. Words are a prick, *prick, prick*, thin as air, but some say. *No! She's round like a ball.*

The word is alive. I speak it by touch. *My eyes bulge and my mouth puckers, but I am dead first,* she is saying.

The lip moves sleepily. In sticky summer like a heavy foot. *See, it's wandering through a vibrant field of flowers!*

No one arrives, which has the pleasant feeling of continuous sky.

A moth breaks off sky. It spins around then lands  
on a blue wall. A marking on its wing trails through  
its fur.

Wind through a hill *because* of the hill holding a  
place for it, is how it can be that.

*Its feathers are broken.* Whose long arc of pastness,  
like the wings of a crane fanning out in space.

Death is imposed on blowing branches against a  
wall, like nearness and life, beauty and wilting tulips.

## TREE

A girl lolls on grass in a tutu. *The blue ruffle of a violet is the same as sky*, she's thinking. (Blue is not a location but a warmth of pressure around an object.)

Gathering rain presses against sky, then falls in squares mirroring the farmland.

Tonally it is dark. The musicality of a land (almost *neon* in the palm) plays a doubly dark magnetic field.

The *thought* of sky, dispersing itself to its own full origin, may be death in its still quiet flush.

*I am older from sky, such as a waltz dovetailing sky. A guardian of sky sprinkles saffron across her body.*

Appearance quells in patterns against light, the curve of her hip, then flaring and draping over something we can't see.

If she could rest in sky, but she is aggravated. A tuft of cotton sticks out from an ear.

A fundament of time is exactly a cigarette, the vagaries of a thumb suddenly weak and drifting.

The dissepiment may be a tree. Roots are bones,  
bone to bone in strange woolly clusters.

The corpse is alive though. Its tongue is its mind as  
soon as it wakes up.

Mountains of sad trees but one tree lays its limbs  
out wide, direction carpeled to a simple fruit.

A caravan of heads, rolls and rolls of swaddled  
heads, fades into a bluebird's call.

Rain through sky, through the greenery of sky. Fire  
and rain create a pocket.

You are dead. Something in the pocket reaches for  
you. The spirit just sticks its hand into your body.

Then he gives it back. *A golden carp of golden bones  
escapes you*, it says.

The ache of a tree, like an arabesque of bones,  
sheds its trace imperceptibly.



## THUMB

A woman partially hidden by a wall stands in midday light. She is a rounded person with soft brown skin. A curl falls on her forehead.

The fullness of the setting demands a potential connected object so that the image of her doesn't fragment.

A second woman seated facing away eludes space by an unseen motion, the peep of her hat, the beauty of thin leaves layering sky onto the woman standing.

Wings of sky make flowers that look like birds, a spire of delicacy inside the person.

The view of a partially hidden woman is absolutely alive. Someone is jealous. A man shuffles by if he is alone.

How light hits air is how the weight of her appearance, a tulip feathering out, a painter paints *that*, the feather-weight of appearance carried by a woman's body.

A town of women grow in light. If she's free. (A dab of blue is not freedom though.)

The man wears blue but he has not achieved the purity of blue. What is not blue's purity is like another person.

I am watching sky and a dark man watching sky.  
The time of this sky is the non-time of looking.

A vast amount of sky may take place inside his  
belly. If he sneezes it is there like his own twin  
body.

Part of sky is a clear line of intensity but part  
scatters like sun over a pool.

In the lordosis of sky the pulse of his blazing white  
undershirt refracts such that light stops *behind* itself  
inside his belly button.

A person waits. A brown bare body holds the tension of waiting. Nothing moves except (slightly) his thumb resting on the waist of his jeans.

The excursion is in the neck, like sky along his neck. As how the eyes of a bird to a person from a distance form an intimacy one can't touch.

I make pleasant. If he waits for the portion he will ultimately be, like shine in a deep pool or wind in a rabbit's eyes. I place my heart in some wishbone there.

The wishbone pops like time in the dead man.

## BLACK

A humpback wearing red fishes in black water. He leans against a tree if it is angled in a cloudless morning.

A bird flies out. Pierced hair slithers onto its wing.

I am startled by the parity of a simple action by a simple person relatively relaxed, covered by time.

The size of time works through day, like fish breathing mud, squirming against day's barriers.

Perhaps the artist, as an effigy of death, makes the bird to avoid or ward death off. The bird could be suicide (or way of performing a natural process).

Since the wakening of the bird, correlates (empty of the bird) may look like a higher stage of bird.

Mountains and rivers are faces with hollow eyes.  
Stiletos in air hang prettily from blue satin.

Clouds are like a string of pearls where one pearl is black and that's why they're all there.

A cloud in the shape of a bird hangs low in evening sky. Its shadow forms a hump.

The cloud could be a door swiveling in space, a spark of lavender in grass, only it is black.

*If black peers from the death of me, I may lose track of its trajectory, confusing it with life, thinking it is my life.*

A nerve of sky pierces my side so I walk with a limp, which reminds me of a mountain's breast.

A painter paints a mountain, *shedding* the mountain.  
(Black replaces black in the subtle crevice between  
himself and what he discards.)

If he is where someone lives then. *We place ribbons  
on our mountain and let its water fall out.*

You can kill a mountain by shutting your eyes or  
looking at the mountain thinking of your dead  
mother.

No color rises. Orange turns to sand in a country  
without flowers.



## COW

If you throw some earth on a table, the figures in the earth, what is there to be derived, from air, from a spell, like a flavor.

There is a geomancy *there*, taken from the harbor.

Immanence in eating, what stands in front of it, so that when something happens, it has already happened also.

*Also* is time. An eater places that against a numerology of color, like the brown wall of the room, which is neither earth nor his dark hand.

The thought in a wrist and each bare lobe of hand.  
Yellow is crucial in the gentle unfolding of its earth  
element.

Hunger is the border, divination the table, a  
context clean of all past expression.

I am born each minute that the man eats bread. I  
place a palm against his brow. My mind is what he  
digests.

If I think of the person, yellow almost *becomes* the  
person because my mind and the thing don't  
separate.

An eating man's neck, free of all justification in him,  
is a portrait of time swallowing a neck. Electrical  
swallowing speaks the ache of time in his chewing.

I'm reminded of a dog, knocking over cans, scarfing.

A neck is a mental neck and the throat swallowing  
death thinks that it is still lunching.

*A petunia taking birth near a cow means that the  
teller (time) will definitely complete the yugas, it  
rambles.*

A cow wearing red is gliding toward rebirth. Its mind is a plum that it sucks while they tear up its body.

He draws the cow down into his body so it can rest and finally sleep within his body.

Like if snow were food, the sense of miles and miles of snow. Still, the person's throat has not even a particle of snow in it.

If snow were crafted in earth with it in mind instead of sourcing it from sky (like the pair of lovers floating in sky with death in mind).

## MEADOW

A face in the light of you, which is dusk or early morning. Wind in hay and the tall anchoring of a blanket, as if her hair were the blanket.

A cat bays in the moon whose face appears in the light of you.

Dew is thick. The loosening of its weight holds an even placement of view.

Arms and hair curve like grass in the exact amount of their sleeves.

Acres of red born in the same sky. A man watches  
light stretch and thin across the hay bundles.

To comb a flame, his face against her hair. Aghast  
is what abides beyond the scope of shape.

Shape is space in its aspect of brilliance, her face  
through shifting breeze brushing hair over shadows.

The *waist* of a scene expands beyond its boundaries  
so that meadow convexes anterior to sky, like a  
bulge in sky, as if it were dead.

The eye of the painter focusing on a meadow is  
how my mind wants the space of its real dead  
body.

They want it to be kinship, *we two together*, but in  
fact it is a splurge of shape (the potential shape of  
sky).

Someone paints night, space consecutive with  
darkness, as if one space is *more* dead.

Death is space whose appearance results from  
space, unbridled in the soft of *low*, emergent face  
on stone.

Night releases to *I* as an object. A winterland of limbs. (The winter of her body *is* this very body dead.)

As if sky were alone a century beforehand. The sound, heavy through night, retains its weight in light.

I locate you back to the outreaches of sky. Low slow land is a transparency in her body.

Prehistoric quiet covers up day like a sheet.





*Figures in Blue*

is set in Minion, a typeface designed by Robert Slimbach in the spirit of the humanist typefaces of fifteenth-century Venice. Minion was originally issued in digital form by Adobe Systems in 1989. In 1991, Slimbach received the Charles Peignot Award from the *Association Typographique Internationale* for excellence in type design.











