

*though actually it is the same earth*

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Gail Sher



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*For Brendan*



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*Rat*



*Rat Dream*

An old woman is born. Her hair dries and her  
mother thinks, *I have been her mother again.*

Might the woman's nature leave? Rats scurry from  
baskets, which are old baskets, hexagonal fields.

A night bird sleeps. Its dreams are down to its feet.  
Which you say is the bird's body before the skill  
of the bird's body.

Its wings lay flat in the smell of new grass.

*Commentary*

A quality of him, *home words* say, is the same as the man speaking.

*I already have that person*, I think because his blood is smooth also. My blood is smooth also.

A person moves, effortfully or effortlessly, and she thinks, *Is this a waste or not?*

She thinks it is bliss but *thinks* it is *her* feeling bliss.

Is *filigree* air, like in the rats' playpen? What can  
hold between a feeling and a queer girl child  
whose boots tips curl in shame?

I am really talking about rifts, what holds between  
her fear and the rats' miserable-life fragility.

There would be an object connected to my playing,  
like *saying* playing, as though words are desire.

The likelihood of death browsing itself into *my*  
death could occur and I think, *O yes. It is death!*

Each word has a flower. The times of the flowers  
converge so that she conflates words and flowers,  
*speaking* flowers.

Pansies in sun beneath the red breast of a robin, here  
and there, merge with the robin's legs.

A duck in scattered ripples darkens. Snow falls,  
resting in a petal's shell.

An infant puts a flower in its mouth. The muscles of  
its mouth move by the flower's warmth.

Rats kneel to her and in her mind become true rats.

*The weight of the snow is heavier than words, heavier than stone, she marvels.*

*Is the Christ child born of air, through holes in the air?*  
For the blood on snow is real transferred blood,  
alive in the mind of the boy.

The beauty of a rat *depends* from its limbs. Snow  
folds and the boy becomes its eyes.





*Cow*



*Cow Dream*

A double flower begins in the folds of an infant's hands.

If you see its face, which is the fruition of your knowing, it may be a small, infinitesimal aspect of knowing.

*The fetus is standing*, someone says. She imagines her hands under its armpits. She spreads it on leaves, which look like artist's hands.

Wrapping purple leafy fingers around its bits of unborn life, she climbs a person inside the lark's mouth.

The fetus shines and she takes it to school. *The forest is ill*, she says. *Anything tall makes my blood quiet.*

A series of events moves in one direction only, like trees taller than sky.

A woman sees a bird and thinks something about its eyes. A clean, fresh feeling becomes that feeling regardless of her initial sense of affection for the bird.

Roots are veins ripening in her body though still hot as coal. This is why a bird's cool blood is the most delightful fowl quality.

*Commentary*

In the ether of white my baby fumigates.

The flavor of her skin holding a flower to her nose.  
Each particle is a bud and inside the bud's head.

Flower and water are protectors, with the net feeling  
of white, as if a lotus absolves its entire color into  
her.

*I made my baby backwards*, I say. I am trying to  
remember if the long lowered arm vibrates.

Trying to recall time, my baby, offing of morning  
fields.

Young rocks sit like cows in sovereign pasture  
squares.

Or you may instantly be the baby's wisdom mother,  
the stronghold of you and your baby going  
somewhere pretty.

A spider's thin web zigzags into sky, whereupon the  
sky's dimensions shift.

If you appear, my image of you shifts. Not having  
readiness for a person shifts the mind in which  
the potential person exists.

Which shifts the language creating that person. I  
translate you to being *in* and *out* of your presence  
and the translation is like your presence *within*  
the boundary of a word.

When you appear, the interior land shifts making  
sounds like stones.

A spider's thin web zigzags into sky, whereupon the  
sky's dimensions shift.

Later you say, *a spider drowned*, juxtaposing your  
seeing with what you recall.

But one imagines tall black trees or a cow that hangs  
in privy to the cow.

*If I see the cow with you, but if I see the cow alone, we  
have to know where it exists.*

If a cow eats air, the air still exists.



Each and every cow jumps over the moon properly.

Meaning is the experience of one cow, before dawn,  
slowly traversing the earth.

A falling star holds up the whole earth, so that its  
drop is a pin-prick against water or color.

*It is my mother born from my body, I'm thinking,*  
while at the same time seeing faces of other  
relatives.



*Tiger*



*Tiger Dream*

Sun from behind the mountain falling on the  
threshers and reflecting from the lake gains  
depth from the sound of falling.

The sound of water over stones at the lake's edge is  
like a darting bird.

If she wakes, she couldn't say the bird disappears,  
but its breath dissolves, like an undertow at sea.

*How igneous (fiery) and lucid are the bodies of tigers,*  
she muses.

*Commentary*

Each day the sun slips over the crest of the hill and  
lights the yellow grass.

A cat climbs the hill as though dawn were in its  
head, entwining pieces (petals in branches).

A day-moon slides below low tide. Fall-out from  
one's skin protects it from further harm.

Tide emits tide as she wanders down the coast,  
empty as a battered jug.

A woman carries a jug dexterously embroidered on silk. The woman's skin shines like the interior pink of a river.

The dimensions of the jug's magenta is implicit yet exacting.

*Out* is not a direction but an aspect of conference around the jug's battered aggregates.

Bringing yellow *out*, where *out* is a structure of color *and* light, intensifies *out*, as if its DNA changes.

There is an hour in which her memory will be there,  
where light falls in rain on a tiger's flickering  
head.

A stone woman prays, hearing sun in sun. (She  
dreams its *precise* nest.)

A magenta flower glows so that I feel free at last. A  
magenta flower glows, disappearing in its skin.

Light jumps back as if she has that person again.



Death is color-added-to-color.

Color *learns* color by touch, like the *feel* of rain from one's bed.

What if the occurrence of harm refers to the difficulties of *offering* the harm? In the broad space of an animal, a wound in a woman's thumb feels like embroidery of jasmine and honeysuckle.

The necessity of something and its form *is* the tiger sleeping, tail to tail, in tandem with something.



*Hare*



*Hare Dream*

An angel glides silently through air to where the  
child Christ sleeps. He sees her as a crow, wings  
folded, watching.

A blue flower in the wing of a bird hovering near the  
birth, is not *in* the bird, since it fluctuates in light,  
while the bird remains unchanged.

In my mind there is a bed where I drop off.

Christ and hare both slip through my mind and  
land where a hare might or where someone needs  
something.

*Commentary*

The bird whose markings fluctuate remains  
unchanged independent of its visibility.

Yet her girlishness has continuity. *Limbs jumbled in  
the corner are still free limbs*, I'm thinking.

All the animals are resting. I know them from the  
inside as if they have *said*, and their word is a  
death-rattle.

A golden crow or laughter is said to be a paradigm  
of activity then.

So there are words, then under-words.

Black words like a river so that her thoughts,  
pummeled, are the hard thoughts of stone  
people.

They burn a branch of all their people, then turn to  
ash.

*Am I the person? I am the person. I decide I *must* be  
the person.*

While a glistening star holds night within its skin, a  
twinkling star has no interior where night can sit.

So she lays with the animals whose foreheads quiver.

So many ducks and goats being *causes*, songs where  
voices are *tongues*.

Sweet air sweeps the ragged flowers. Sweet air  
sweeps her hair. (Winnowing its hair is also an  
object.)



The beauty of the straw in the wake of a bird flown  
away. As if the whole world encased in shadow-  
brought-to-bear-upon-a-field *stops* the straw in  
time.

I'm thinking time occurs separate from the straw,  
*beside* the straw, and in its looseness is neither  
created nor destroyed.

Seeing something *against* time, as if time were *old-  
fashioned*. A shoe, for example, is eligible to loss.

To be dead again, in the simplicity of its skin. I  
hear a leaf and think it is in the well, so we are  
together.



*Dragon*



*Dragon Dream*

*It is just beyond her body to sleep with him.*

*It is just beyond her body not to sleep with him.*

This is the moral of a little play. There is a lodge. A young girl is invited into the main room. She is black with very bushy hair, dressed in a silver princess costume, carrying a wand. She comes in and behaves very sweetly to a guest but her parents think she is faking her sweetness and really being sassy so they ask her to leave and come in again, this time being genuinely sweet. So she comes in again behaving slightly differently. Each of the two times signifies a different moral.

*Commentary*

A doll talks and if she's a tall doll, *in dependence on a listener*, her presence will not disperse far.

Her body covers her life as if it were a cast.

Mop-like braids fall to her waist. *If I were a Cyclops forging thunderbolts, I too would be being born* she posits.

A man binds his mind so that it doesn't scatter.  
He tucks it between his breasts. *How have you left your mind before?* someone asks, speaking politely.

After long rain a man leans on a gate. Hair-thin legs  
race along the rim.

A disappearing chirp *has* appearance, like its body  
is young yet forever carried in its old mother's  
womb.

For her presence *gives* also. Her feet and ears also.

She grabs her limb dangling in the breeze like a  
cocoon.

Cobwebs in sun are strings of pure time dangling in  
a breeze.

Cobwebs in shade land, decrepit before time, cave  
into time.

Part goes up. So that time feels like war.

Another portion rolls into air—holding air, lighting  
day back.



A whoosh of wings feels like an effigy, some sort of charcoal beast fluffing its feathers, eating sky with upturned beak.

If what is visible close by is remote, vast visibility, I inhabit my thoughts more fully.

Inside is a stage whereas outside is somatic. A great slaughter of beings is contained within their death.

As if a holocaust is *found*, as if future beings *trip*.  
Sky washes sky as I watch a dragon fade, wings rubbed by sky's shadows.



*Snake*



*Snake Dream*

A woman seeing an animal sees it belly-to-earth  
*raised above the earth so that it floats on a small  
peninsula.*

A python, like a bladder, coagulates the sludge,  
eating so much sludge.

Light from its eyes shoot out little tails of fire and  
she wonders why its death seems so friendly.

*It dies on the highway 'cause it's slow, someone says,  
thinking of sand. It vanishes in squares, as if  
striations of sunlight are old.*

*Commentary*

My mother is dead. *How could she have forgotten her shoe?* (A hazy memory of a dream where I'm a colorful bird's tail.)

She sees the bird hop and its hop disappears into the tail of the bird, into the tails of her children.

*Here is a whole bird, she thinks, its tail discrete like a discrete word.*

If one dies, among birds, a red-winged bird is heavier in its body then.

Caught in her own heirloom of light, a woman  
sleeps in distension of moments that appear to  
be there.

Old birds swarm. Quadrilles of people (fitting the  
crate around the edges of her body).

Immersing herself in a log. Some say she *is* that  
thing, as if she hops inside it.

*Mother, I am blind, I say. Your pink toes reveal  
nothing any more.*

A yellow fowl touches logs contingent with animals  
who knew the logs as sky.

Of previous people drawn on the backs of stooped  
women. She felt she was that woman. That her  
yellow earth bloomed in the night oil.

Afterwards there are leap years then. Like fields of  
potatoes.

A child hops, square to square, with her own  
convergent yellowness.



The emotion of yellow, say in meat or chirps. The same level of color in the blank place of sky is like borders in sky mirroring the bottom of her eyes.

*Is it painted?* a child asks. Her sewn face has alterity and depth.

Pink is here and you are *sure* of the color. Before being born, grass is this color.

To bring back sky, it *pulls* the sky so that sky folds comfortably over everybody.



*Horse*



*Horse Dream*

*Where is day?* someone asks, and I see the twin  
nature of black, oil of black, mountains stark and  
wet.

Pearls seem brown like the bottom of the sea.

I whisper something and the animal's ear flicks. So  
she lets her leg give this impression, a pearl in the  
dark, in the blue of its stomach's shell.

The mare's perch is illuminated because blood and  
ecstasy are to birth like an underlying river.

Air rushes in, steadying my mind. *Your words are my mother*, I'm thinking.

Long legs curl around a shriveled coil of knees.

An insect wanders off. It's a baby I see and my heart breaks for its infinite slow old non-knowing of direction.

*Just get through the line. Get to the yellow snow. To the bridge where you can puke. There. To cut yourself out.*

*Commentary*

The sky frames your face and all the different skies.

You're the crow against the sky or quadrants of an  
insect's shell from the perspective of sky.

The *place* of you is like the essence of your eyes.

So you're blind, sort of, and another person sees the  
tension of that space, the *acoustic* opacity in that  
space.

She may know a sound but if she turns, it becomes a  
measure of far and near distance.

*I wear sound*, someone says. (The slimy pearls are  
the physical sensation of womb.)

The woman's space, lighted by sagebrush, transcends  
the confines of a life, though it can pull life  
toward it without abrading its transcendence.

She wants it to be white, like space in a word's world.



Pearls are steam. The lug of its knee or inside the  
beast's thigh.

She may see blossoms, a sprig, or she may see pearls  
as old mothers marching.

The blue horseman is blue light, though we're,  
through it, seeing death.

On a bodice is a pony, which drips into me, until  
things become small, but they still die.

Watching-minds twist to a cumulative suicide. A  
windhorse flies but it is *still* still, asking me.

*My daughter is young.* I see her climb inside the  
windhorse, her long fore-fingernail painted with  
geese.

I determine to seek them, over the hedge, inside the  
parts where it hurts the most.

*They only read lips in the blinding darkness,* cries a  
priest from behind a screen.

*Sheep*



*Sheep Dream*

I have a memory of green, in a hole, in a moon's  
crater called *the bottom of the pitcher*.

A woman fills the hole with crenellated wings. I  
admire the wings so she cuts off a piece and  
hands it to me.

A man's voice held anterior to its space makes his  
presence real. *I'm not cold*, someone says.

*Is cold an image like young sea blossoms, purple  
flowers just above eye level?*

*Commentary*

I recall seeing myself in a dream with the sensation  
of something touching my toe-bottoms.

The dream includes a variety of skin sizes. Certain  
shapes whose edges contain sky, I clearly  
remember in my hand.

The skin of a lamb is irreducible, like the skin of day  
bound by fleshy rock and sand.

A day may not be prior to itself, happening  
alongside each and every event of breath.

Shells on the cowboy's coral hat are new surprising  
shells, shiny, polished, with no sea showing.

I forget the boundary of possible seashells while  
holding the thought of their appearing in my  
spine.

An appearance occurs against an old barn door. All  
stags as they are burnished beat their heads dry  
against some tree or other.

The parity of their body is the parity of  
voicelessness.

Flinging off his gossamer, hanging it up to dry,  
dancing about the pan, *drinking* the pan.

The memory of the color green is tinged with  
repeated time like little beats with a glove.

So I *learn* green. Whose solemnity is sky (*view* as,  
say, sky).

I look at green and become an old woman.



I *chew* green and the rich saliva gifted by him.

Is a *tenet* of color, a *primer* once left off.

As if the person were a taste congealing inside her  
very own wisdom.

I drift within its skin, an opaque membrane of light,  
allowing pale color to metastasize.



*Monkey*



*Monkey Dream*

A flesh-colored pear is with the heaviness of birth.  
I look into its head wanting an immaculate black  
stick.

The pear tree has birds arranged in its branches  
artistically.

Here are flowering birds, whose trees spin into air,  
her feeling for the blossoms, sharp as thaw.

Monkeys race, seemingly, though it could be bones  
rolling and disappearing.

*Commentary*

How the weight of a bird hopping along a fence, a tiny bird new to appearing, not yet carrying the birdness of its mother.

*The more anchored the mind, the more an appearance weighs nothing.*

Light is bone. Think recumbent, dead-seeming, like an animal playing but really guarding beings.

Fossilized wings show the giant wingspan of an early species.

If a bird eats a worm or if it turns its head, an  
animal sniffs age, sees age in the pattern of its  
feathers' colors.

Cells of color leak, wandering over the wing's rough  
neck.

The flesh of the bird appears in its hop, its last place  
of hop, what's possible before lifting off.

An animal gauges the belly of the hop trying to  
determine the feasibility of killing its hop's dark  
past.

A young bird stares and something birdlike travels  
upwards.

A mud-colored bird blurs into mud throbbing there  
in her mind asleep.

You could say she wears feathers and the feathers  
unfold like a resplendent bird catching its  
reflection in sky.

You could say there are rivers, battalions of orange  
light. A child spears light, ravishing light laid out  
as in death.



Seeing the feather of the bird through a branch in  
noon sun, one remains in the bird and is swung,  
like through an opening in sky.

So that there is both the bird, belly like an urn, and  
the bird so saturated with birdness that it is  
unseen against its own background.

A group of feathers on the same bird, for example,  
are separate and distinct yet we think of them as  
the bird's feathers.

The arm of the bird is crooked. In skinniness in sky.  
Distance is its face in the resting sky.



*Bird*



*Bird Dream*

Three birds move in air as blue as water in a dream.

Three branch-colored birds land on a branch in the  
borderland of the bird's robe.

Behind the songs of birds he fingers a chip. *Is it thin?*  
Without the chip's color?

Seeing its form as a bird, first eagerly then angrily,  
the way beauty through a gap in sky breaks into  
two whole containers of sky.

*Commentary 1*

An ebony feather shines, its blackness steely, like the  
hard black knuckle of a bird.

A discarded feather, arched like a fish, rests on the  
earth, its magnificent bow gleaming.

Sun-black birds hover over sea, so that black is both  
inside *and* the holder of itself.

Or like sea repairs to sea, *wraps* bird and sea into  
something apocryphal.

The time of the bird is *ideal*, you say, by which you mean *supremely excellent time* and I think, *Are time's qualities measurable?*

If it were touchable, the parts of a person might organize around it, like one's senses congeal around a smell.

Bird clouds drift. Sky too seems to be drifting but it is still, I assure myself.

I am comforted thinking the sky is still.

Time enters the wing of a bird where the colors  
break between blue and very dark blue.

An animal waits allowing time to sway between its  
belly and inhabited spot on earth.

*It limps*, she thinks, though it is a genuine limp, with  
each and every particle of limp belonging to *it*  
specifically.

In a certain angle of sun she is able to see the limp  
passing to a future animal at a similar spot on the  
hill.



*Are the birds girls?* The impact of sound makes  
slowness material while its *direction* is  
immaterial.

Saying it is less like looking than a cloven foot with  
little clea's or talons.

And maybe she is that or maybe her body is simply  
the thought of a bird-filled body.

Later I dream the three birds are crying. *Fingers  
of hair blow with the wind*, my mind observes,  
referring of course to the talons.

*Commentary II*

Three bird's bodies whose bones are like a forest.  
You know its color from the pure knowledge of  
color, without seeing its precise color.

Lines of light catch the bird. The motility of light  
critiques the contours of the bird's beak.

Part of the air surrounds a branch where three birds  
rest. Rays of light touch your back, which, if I  
touch you then, evaporate.

As if the boundary of your back were hidden by  
your back, but nonetheless yellow, like light in a  
dream person.

The profile of a bird, in a gold ball rising, *shapes* a mountain called *bird mountain*.

A crow erupts, turning gold turning curves. I cannot tell a crow from the image of gold feathers somersaulting.

The bird's dream arises from the ground of its own birdness. First moonlight on rushing water, then pink stars like angels, then tree tips in a treacle bar of sky, threading itself through the birds' raised mouths, beaks pressed apart like lips.

A thin sun crawls to earth and is maintained by strong earth, though actually it is the same earth.

How a beaver floats under *sky-words*. He *hears* the  
birds as if gathered together verbally.

An end-bird leaves its formation over water. Its blue  
bowl leaves, rising in sky.

Which somehow was known, the way a line is  
known as beginning *here*, though, as you say,  
*lines are concepts*.

How many meanings flow from the bowl into heads  
that look away?

*The robin's breast is red*, you think, yet you are unsure and think maybe it's a color that *contains* red but is not red.

Caring is present though you cannot find it in the bird's body.

An insect the bird eats enters the bird's blood. *Is its time the same? Likely not*, she thinks, since an insect eats and the food slips away.

A dragonfly on cloth (conspicuously beautiful) devolves into your eyebrows.



*Dog*





*Dog Dream*

I walk into a meadow and all the dogs' mouths open.  
Presences are out who remain unseen and may  
instantly slip inside.

A witch flies out but it is just a stick. *Mommy, it's just  
a stick!* a child cries.

A woman tells about her smelling, it being equal to a  
dog's when she was pregnant.

Crickets chirp in a field of rabid ones. Their  
intervals are pure, like the pure white flaps that  
poke from a new bird's tail.

If a dog is my interior ash force, it romps the hills  
with butterflies sitting there placidly.

If it yawns, behind its tongue are beings sucking  
flowers, looking like black ghosts.

Behind its tongue a world of beings cook. *Its  
unconscious is preserving food*, you say, but I think  
it's making speech, readying itself for a life.

A string of dogs hangs in sky. Daughters of sky  
gather cobs. Hussies also wear cobs.

*Commentary*

A dog in grass hears a young bird chirp and inches  
towards it. Hearing, but not seeing, one bird,  
then a group, early, as if the sky were nothing.

Or as if the sky were intelligence, like a presence that  
the birds knew about, but if you looked there'd  
be nothing.

*Another offers food, but I am offering something more  
gentle, she says.*

The dog's belly is in the grass but its ears are inside  
the hill.

Each day a dog returns to its spot on the hill. Its  
body rests but its eyes are vagrant. (By vagrant I  
mean slim—*the eyes of a crow on a wire in rain  
staring at wet grass.*)

Rain gathers above low hills, like rain in a painting  
stays mixed here.

Like the footprint of the doll, once left in a storm,  
has neither situation nor destination.

Five children laughing pull grass to the river. The air  
around it blurs, emerging from weather.

A bird and dog move, appropriate to pleatless rivers  
of air.

A bird and dog sit, appropriate to the posture of  
all birds and dogs, *which is genuinely sweet*, she  
guesses.

The time of the bird is not the dog's minute-to-  
minute watching, though the bird hunts from the  
sides of its eyes.

A dog has parts, which each have times, so that a  
*melody* of time pervades its movements *and*  
posture.

Posture, too, is a way the idea of an act is projected.

If it is blue there is a door so you *enter* the posture,  
though the light *in* blue might leave you  
suddenly.

The dimensions of a star are not of a star's body but  
are fixed in her, displaced by her movements.

She moves and the star achieves its posture.

*Pig*





*Pig Dream*

A longshoreman sees night. He looks at his hand. As  
if night or water or distance were simply depths  
for the color blue.

As if night were still night only very far away.  
The appearance of the color and its instant of  
apprehension is nothing more than an action.

Before the action the color doesn't exist.

*Where does aqua go?* she wonders hearing flowers  
falling, falling where they adhere, into a world  
of tea.

*Commentary*

I am today again. I fall within time, tall time in a  
frame of tall pieces of color.

A bird's red wing releases the inside of its color. I  
look inside. *If blue were there, its wing wouldn't  
exist.*

A teapot's rhythms are cascades of water falling and  
I imagine that I too am falling, in strands, like a  
geisha's hair.

*Is it the lines or the openings where things recede,  
emptying themselves out?*

Being moved she falls and I'm thinking it's a young,  
fluid sort of fall.

*But air is internal,* she thinks.

*O mother of sky lugging me forward. You break off but  
I catch you.*

A voice through fog portends the precise ominous  
chartreuse where your eyes look out.

When you see blossoms causing a two or three dimensional image to form in space, your eye opens to that space.

Space, she thinks, exists, crosses back from where the person was alive.

A bloody bird from the beak of a hawk clicks the nature of night. Its cry is her face clothed as a human bird.

*The blue of a cross pinned to the mountain.*

Thoughts divide into lineages of translucency,  
sun-dazzling corruscancy.

I define *grow* passively. I point to a flower and say,  
*That is a growing flower, unlike its shadow  
spidering sideways.*

Now she belongs to an infantry of animals. Packs of  
pigs form cover near the kraals.

For example, a girl *thinks* the hog, but tells her  
mother to draw the hog.























*though actually it is the same earth*

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.