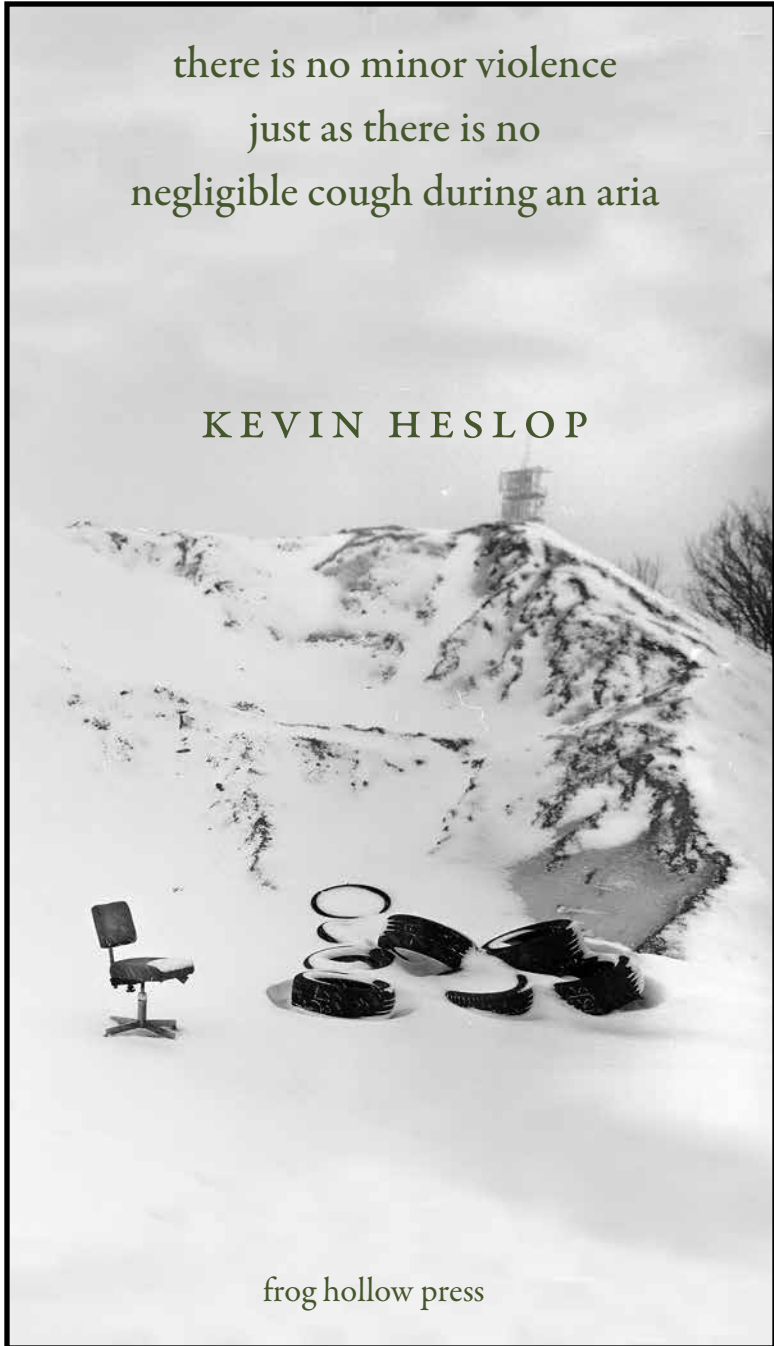


there is no minor violence
just as there is no
negligible cough during an aria

KEVIN HESLOP



frog hollow press

All the old thinking is about loss.
In this it resembles all the new thinking.

—ROBERT HASS, "*Meditation at Lagunitas*"

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Endmatter

forward

a thought, barefoot

slips

along a
painter's
tendon,

pools at the risk.

Wrist.

the rub of time

A midnight sky is starless and its new moon is a paring.
No: The last sheet of black construction paper in the stack
of 29 the first grade teacher didn't press the punch quite
through has three partial holes. Shine a high-volt flashlight
from behind the uppermost of them. There's your slivered moon.
The inquiry is whether we considered that the bleaching sun
would rub the stain from flags and abrogate pro patria.
It did: from weird, lunar trees time would have white flags
like twisted linen hang like pendulums like cab drivers. Tonight,
take a little comfort in the knowledge that the rub of time
will launder from the earth our every justified trespass.

poem, found

There's a sappy syntax,
lover:

nothing's out of place.
Every image shares

in the languid, familiar burning
of the sky

alien vowels so instant
they shimmer. Ash:

scatter-brained, tense-changing,

rhythmically-awkward poem, Ash;
Ash, spectacles and leather jacket,

vivid lover, sweet poem, my cohesion.

And I'm sorry these are unfamiliar
terms, substituting

the disadvantage of the penultimate grasp
for something easier:

you've got a love poem;
I've got an internal function,

and I hope this affirms your sense
of we as rhymed.

the chronographer

Here is where the woman made of rhythm drinks.
Anastasia cues a Chopin nocturne from her early years
when grace and prodigy and national endowments
flung her into something second cousins still recall
with quiet pride at home in Volgograd, in Saratov.
“Very simple,” she explains to her new students
who have lingered lithely after evening lessons ended.
“Do not show when you are watching me.”
Gym bags at their hips, ribboned pointe shoes
dangling from their shoulders, most of them leave
with quiet words or cigarettes; two students sit
in darkened quiet. From the stage’s right wing, Anastasia,
in her helmet of zinc wire, begins describing running.

Astoria

As a kid I had run up the stairs and slipped on the slick of the landing into an awareness my body was not just a means of exhilaration: I woke in stiff, starched sheets with a careful plastic clothespin on my finger throbbing synchronously with my skull, and a stranger explained an adhesive was used “right here: it’s just like the glue you have at school, but this is stronger and for healing.” Afterwards, I remember feeling deeply disappointed as if in this negligible way I had failed to demonstrate any talent for self-destruction: I’d be unable to parade the beautiful white cast which would magnetize the grace of girls I was beginning to notice or offer at recess the igneous stitchwork of another boy to inspection. And so from my first foray into the storm of harms the world can be, I emerged with a desire, with me still to have broken.

love is cathedral

I write tonight as what remains of much
of Notre Dame is sunken, smouldering, ash:

cathedrals can't keep morning light out.
To let the evening light return

and laughter govern gravity—
the vines we were at daybreak stir and ask

One minute more? Just one more, here?—
I'd have the earth stand still and sing

the sun forever fled.

winter night

Ben and that sax bent like a candle to its food
brings Icarus to envy for not singing falling.

all of language as braille

I don't know what's on the other side
of that pine fence but whatever it is
it is my neighbour

The centuries like stumps in a storm concede nothing

The difference between the glacialweight of a lockjaw solitude
and a tender sociability has something to do with steam irons

Crippled van goghs begging nickels of shined shoes
of the city millipede, hustling

A poem is a borrowed fingertip,
damp beach

They gave him a hero's welcome (which is to say
they said nothing of his inevitable decline)

Like teflon emptied of sirloins and just
the smeared fat beads reminiscing,
these modern syllables struggle to mean

What privilege it is to now read nothing poems

I go, you stay, two moons

Waiting in line at the supermarket, all this broken beef
in all this supermarket line at the beef, broken
all this line at the supermarket this line in
the supermarket all this broken beef, waiting.

yesterday, today

This morning I listen to a reading of Robert Hass's impromptu poem from a September night in Waterloo Village, New Jersey, beneath the pull and sway and simmer of my backyard's maple tree, tweezing loose hairs from the arms of the keys of my sterling typewriter which is itself an American product of enduring manufacture. It was issued (so to speak) like Hass, in 1941, a time, a social world when malteds were coming into vogue on the main streets of smalltown America—you'd see a family of four in a green Packard, top down, pulling in to park before the ice cream parlour's sidewalk filled with swarms of small boys in checked shirts and pomaded hair, clutching the promise of a little pocket money in their neighbour-loving fists, their sisters with blue or green or yellow ribbons in their hair, dresses blowing in the cooling but still humid twilight of that spent day—as Smith-Corona was beginning to assemble the first of the quarter million M1903A3 Springfield rifles they would produce during the Second World War. "Though the US military doesn't count," recites Hass, "Why put a weapon in the hands of your enemies? By conservative reckoning, 9 500 Iraqi civilians were killed during the invasion of Iraq. By conservative reckoning, 300 000 Iraqi civilians have been killed during the occupation of Iraq." A bright green key helicopters down from the maple in the interstices of whose movement, if you half-close your eyes, an enormous chandelier

sparkles, turning. “Two and a half million Iraqis have been driven from their homes and are living in exile. Two million Iraqis, having been driven from their homes by ethnic cleansing, are living in internal exile. Last night, on television, a candidate for the presidency of this country described the state of affairs as ‘winning.’” In the singsong voice and grammatical imprecision I affect when I speak to my five-year-old yellow lab, I tell him, as he heaves after having too quickly gobbled six scoops of red watermelon dropped on the tile at our feet as water was boiling on the stove for green tea, I tell him, “Hang on, puppy. I’ll get you some good cold water because what else is there?” In 1939, two years before Hass and this typewriter were produced, a Japanese scientist in Yokohama, Japan invented the first seedless watermelons by producing a triploid hybrid, a technique that would come to be improved upon and later patented by a Californian and lead to the obsolescence of the old American wives’ tale that watermelon seeds, implanted in the stomach, would grow. And it was one year before that that Orson Welles and H.G. Wells gave their infamous CBS performance of *The War of The Worlds* from San Antonio, Texas. Nearly 120 000 Japanese Americans would be forcibly relocated over the course of the Second World War, following upon what H.G. Wells called the war to end all war. But our concern here is not with the past: as I walk outside with the broad clear bowl of water slopping from lip to lip, I’m astounded

by the number of houseflies whom each morning and every afternoon appear about the screen door to the backyard's porch and overgrowth of green life with plaintive little supplications. Part of me thinks that, if they could, they would be praying. Each fly is about the length of your thumbnail and resembles a little typewriter with wings bumping against the still-unfamiliar net of which their tentative consciousness assures them, again and again. "Walt Whitman," Hass is asking, "Where are you?" The smear of applause that follows comes from the hands and throats of an audience at a poetry festival which, had it taken place forty years earlier, might well have been characterized as red, its members tracked. I reach back to open the screen door and most of the flies get caught between the screen and its now-adjacent pane of glass, so I slide the door back and forth on its dry track, back and forth, until the last fly tumbles into the freedom it has been permitted. "Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Emma Goldman, Rosa Parks," recites Hass, "Henry David Thoreau. Where are you?" I return again to the typewriter to tweeze the last hairs made to seem to symbolize a kind of longing in the breeze between the concave pedestals on which the Roman alphabet lies in ready repose and already two more flies are caught behind the screen door. Where do they keep coming from? I wonder. They won't say "No."

the frail light of birches

Like a just-spent flashbulb in its concave theatre tiring,
Czesław's mind incandescens, comforting the things
Of this tortured earth. When composing verses,
He abided by two virtues: diligence, and resignation.
I dreamt I asked "What is the etymology of literature?"
And saw a smudge of mischief in his eye, replying
"Well, the word is of three parts: lit, terra, tour."
Miłosz was claimed by a Catholic crypt. Bene Quiescas.
And the page, equally supine, remains, dreaming,
Perhaps in chalk, of thistles, of dragonflies.

the old poet in the other room nearly gets it right

There's something comforting about a nearby electric fan
whirling towards and into oblivion and back out again.

for Kate

Listen: someone's saying a prayer in a locked bathroom.
Peculiar this attempt to offer syllables as if to tell of her.
This mumbling under thunder. This candle lit
for that spectacle which ends not with a curtain falling,
but a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky.

Oh, that the sky were cloudless.

There is no minor violence just as there is no negligible
cough during an aria. Visitors are welcomed to the school
of lost tongues. History, by changing its name, is the hero,
or heroine, of this story. I comb my mind for images
and find women from some millennium gone, their fingers
singing in berries (must have been) Etruscan cloth
hampered in the wind blowing violet wisps of their hair
gathered in the manner of their mothers, of
their grandmothers, with brooches lifted from the land.
Just think! Not to be committed to any law of dissolution.
Consider the parlance of women battered as proverbs.

Listen: she is running into the rain, a swaddled nova
in her arms; the screen door like a jaw snaps behind her.

Listen: she is weaving a prayer in her hands like a basket
no crack of the tusk, voice of the angry man, shall touch.

Peculiar this attempt to ascribe brushstrokes to elephants.
Peculiar this star, this candleflame in the open sky at dusk.

Speak to me

How long a way you've walked, my friend, to go six feet.
How long, how long a way you've walked, my friend.

You seem to be a walking autumn. Speak to me.
You seem to me to be a speaking happenstance I love.

And when, in the blent, tense air of our first meeting,

in the long dew drop spinning
in the knot of the foisted cane
in the quiet of pianohammers
in the rain

the correct fury of your why is a mountain.

fiction

When David Foster Wallace said
fiction's about what it is

to be a fucking human being,
he didn't mean to insinuate

coitus is the principal occupation
of the imagination, but may have:

narrative, after all, loves the twilit
entanglement as much as anyone,

and the way the votive gyroscope
of a moving mind compresses

into the white-sheeted ordeal of a book
is, like the undaunted stain of lilac

later pressed between its pages, finally
sensual in nature and in name.

purpose

some

assemb

lyreq

u, i, red

in lieu

A truth is we hold memories too meaningful
to punish with the anecdotal telling of translation
into brittle words as equally there are some memories
too sacred for review: the ilk of faces they contain,
held wrapt in neural silk, suspend above the storm
of harms the world can be, like a perfect eyelash
on a sleeping baby's cheek, untouchable
because of that concern that sleep would not return
after a waking—so sleep, a little, memory: sleep.

ENDMATTER

NOTES

The covering photograph, taken by Derek Boswell, is titled
“Serendipitous Bruegel in seven tires and an office chair
(The Hunters of Snow).”

“winter night” is after the composer and saxophonist
Ben Wendel.

“for Kate” was written to commemorate Kate Wiggins’s
retirement as the Executive Director of Anova,
a women’s shelter in London, Ontario, whose mandate
is to be unnecessary.

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and the circle.

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The Blasted Tree published his first chapbook.
This is his second.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

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Anthropocene; documenting the threshold between natural
and built spaces, and the latent residue of human action.

Derek is currently an undergraduate-thesis student
in psychology.

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no negligible cough during an aria**
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