

ALTPOETICS

Winter

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(End of the Summer 2015 Part two)

An excerpt from: Reptilian Audacity in the Age of Psychic Neighbors

by Frankie Metro

It's a common understanding in S. Central KY that there's numerous fundamental differences between blacks and niggers. Stochastic variables like interracial relationships, dependency on state funded assistance programs, use of Ebonics vs. enunciation, and even trivial marks like smell and skin shade (how black is too much black?) play into the dynamical system that dictates the evolution of fair assumption. Danny was never shy about his contempt for "spearchuckers", "porch monkeys" & "octaroons" on the rides along US 210. I was just learning how to drive, as he would let me take the wheel going home from his job at the hospital; sitting in the passenger seat, in between micromanaging my steering, he would illuminate on the subtle differences w/o regard to how uncomfortable such discussions made me. "Niggers were just lawn jockeys around here when I was a boy." He'd remark, but the ornamental discrimination that was prevalent in his youth had proven futile in the face of things like affirmative action/desegregation, leaving my father's innate bitterness absent a manifold to harbor it outside the cab of his truck. Although I'm certain he was unaware of his memetic influence, nonetheless I found myself holding a derisive self loathing toward "the blacks". When asked about my nationality by other kids at school, I'd say I was half Cherokee (per the instructions of my mother,) and if pushed further on the matter, would simply reply: "I don't know. I'm adopted."

The last time I spoke w/ Danny was around my 32nd birthday. Although there was a score of naive kids that bought into my faux Native American heritage, I don't think I've really forgiven Danny (or Marie) for feeding me the lie. I haven't forgiven myself for regurgitating it like mother birds down the culturally oblivious throats of my peers. But talking to the man now vs. then, I can hear the senility setting in and truth be known, I find a little comfort in the notion that maybe he's been this way for longer than anyone in my family cares to admit. On the phone it's his weather/social climate vs. mine. He repeats himself verbatim, the running script he's adopted as a deterministic gauge for dealing with a son he never connected w/, even on a level that was superficial at best. He wants to know all about the drunken Navajos on the sidewalks of Albuquerque. They're (LPD) shooting niggers everyday in Louisville. He never mentions his COPD issues (Since the diagnosis he's quit smoking but still chews Wintergreen Skoal,) and I don't ask about the atrial fibrillated dementia. He goes to VA counseling every other month in Lexington. He can't remember where he left off; only sleeps during the day when Marie can watch over the property and keep an ear glued for a phone call, any phone call that might be dreadfully important.

Over the past year or so, he's taken to carrying a .22 gauge pistol in a holster on his hip during his country road constitutions. You never know this close to the county line. Ever since that Riggs man was killed back last fall in what Danny surmises was a deal gone awry with the Cornbread mafia...

"You just, never know this close to the county line son. You. Just. Never. Know."

I've never mentioned as much during our atmospheric comparisons, but from my balcony, if you focus on the S. Western horizon and keep the treelines in your peripheral view, at dusk, you can see the Earth spin like a horizontal clock or a turtle on its back favoring the left side. I think it's a simile Danny would appreciate, given his connection w/ nature and his magnetically polar intuition. He's not a man of much faith anymore. Even between a hypothetically subjective rift in reality, it's fairly easy to notice both a subterranean and high rise appreciation for his unparalleled suspension of adolescence, you can see where he gets his fascination with lightning storms minus thunder and dry heat. Hidden beneath his embellished anecdotes and perplexity, he exhibits this wanderlust for places he'll never visit. Admittedly my biggest fear is that this recently developed sense of Afrocentrism is merely a psychosocial byproduct to my time in the South, that I'm a Bmovie, blaxploitated plot line in place of the carbon copy Uncle Tom from my youth. Danny's voice is a constant source of self imposed shame, and although I can still fit into the suits of blissful ignorance and agnostic rigidity, I know when to leave the conversation. I know when to disconnect the line w/ just cause, absent any obliged/preconceived notions on matters that are important to me/trivial to him. I worship only glory, thrill and conflict; those autodidactical shrines built to my vanity, the many Gann angles that calculate units of price, direction, strength, support and resistance. I know the equation! 45 degrees times whatever horizontal inch denotes epigenetic inheritance! 45 degrees times whatever vertical reach that says I was worth the trouble all those years in KY, and with a lion's share of what some may call moxy, I'm willing to bet Danny knows his position on this hypothetically square grid, and more importantly, how farfetched is the idea that we'll find a common ground someday...

A Journey of Haphazard Miles

a chapbook

By

Raymond Farr

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There is no “history” but a multiple, overlapping
& interactive series of LEGITIMATE v. EXCLUDED histories

—Michel Foucault

I: All Laughter Some Bitter

1.
Someone just like us
Is taking our place

In the march on Absolutes
Their leaden sentiment kills

Their heart is a poem & a place
Beyond what is named

What is felt is all wrong
We must justify our version

We must walk without hesitating
Nothing is measured

We must always
Persuade them

To listen

2.

We are leaving
You alone

We no longer feel
Any empathy

For the tumult
Of the 20th Century

We are beginning
A new plot

Chock full
Of new twists

Better than
All our previous

Attempts
At gore

& redemption
The last thing

Anyone needs
Is a vibration

That's only
Mostly human

3.

A man named Sherman

Married a woman named Sarah

He opened a dry cleaning business

He died the next day

He was one who looked out

He was buried in winter

The very next day his dog ate a raven

His poems were like persons

All laughter some bitter

II: History of the Suffering of the Foolish Computer

Forward march, shouted the One Story Prefab.
& up the driveway we stormed!

The instinct of a skunk, says Noah, *is a fierce ideology*.
At the corner of Fleet St & a man with amnesia for instance.

Noah says, *A man who explodes is also a skunk that explodes*.
But lacking understanding a deep sadness derides him.

In the song of a cricket is the soul of a suicide, says Noah.
This is the myth of the broken down dreamer.

His deep-seated angst is a line dancing bear.
His history of the suffering of the foolish computer

Is a startling biography but no match for a human's.
A haggard man, Noah handles the wheel.

III: In the Heart of a Bar Code Nothing Is Random

1.

Information is a beautiful thing. We imitate it & hope to die with it like money in our hands— more information, more delicate flowers smuggled in in bar coded boxes—this is love without angst?!

2.

In theory a bar code is just information & not a form of expression we grow like tulips raging in a window box. A bar code is a breathing child. A breathing child must never play god with tulips in a window box or with bar codes in nature. For the bar code is god.

3.

We never wanted to interrupt you—the flow is mysterious, a nuance of pain from inside a bar code & in the confluence of majesty & egg rolls & bar codes—the poem is enlightened. It's what we understand—small bites of information packaged like something tasty.

4.

A bar code transcends human desire to be something it's not. A bar code is an egg roll is a moment hopelessly captioned—we need the specifics. We need a funnier way of saying we're empty & a bar code's to blame.

5.

Cookie Monster really do dig his blonde scrambled egg roll!—in a Bavarian accent. In one moving irrational place in the line we are flooded by specifics—bar codes of consecutive apparitions!

6.

If the word “bulb” is twelve thin vertical lines interspersed, in a form like a box, with five thick vertical lines then a bar code is a poem, a second language we don't understand like math or science or whatever—Elvis Costello.

7.

& a bar code, like light itself, is a stagnant effacement. A fake solid linear progression—a bar code is always the same person. A bar code is a man on a ladder of talk speaking strangely to himself. A bar code is a tabloid. It can't keep a secret—Brad Pitt wears Fruit of the Loom! \$3.99!

8.

An infinite system of parallel lines, a bar code ascribes itself the function of a brain. A bar code is a bucket load of tiny white breaths for sale. & spoken into the panic of a shared ear in the storeroom, a bar code is eternal. In the heart of a bar code nothing is random.

IV: The Fall of Saigon

It was totally phallic, my son scoffs. It was b&w & from another time out of history, he says. I think that rowdy guy who rode an A-bomb waving his cowboy hat & a weird guy in a wheel chair were in it. But I might be wrong. It all kind of blurs. But when I tell him to Google it he looks dumbfounded—Oh, he says, It was a real thing.

V: I Feel You Pioneers!

1.
Whatever one of us is about to tell you...Look away!
The pit falls of love are darker than standing water
2.
Gazing down from the open window of a dark parlor
& 3 stories up—winter in the woods is finally imagined!
3.
The carpet we stand on is a black fire—a determined fire!
Whatever you hear is a kind of trap
4.
The bodies bob to the surface of Mystic River in the spring
& Time is heavy under the feet of dusk
5.
The silence of any compromise is a long steady bloat
We just turn around & where are we?

VI: China Dolls

I once dreamt I found a strange man sorting thru clay shards where I had left them broken in piles in my yard. This strange man called himself The History of Art after 40 Minutes Soaking Wet. & in this dream I watched him drop his pants out back of my kiln. "I'm making this angel, see?" Then he laughed & shat on a mushroom clump hugging my down spout. The year was twenty ten—the year I gave all & asked nothing in return. "Every star..." he sd, pointing at the sky, his voice trailing off, the shit steaming between his feet. He had no concept of small. He laughed like a child. An hysterical laughter eked out of him as he stepped from the shadows of this vague, dusky, dream-world & onto the small drive beside my house, the street lamp sharp against his face. "I mean if you drop like an A-bomb..." he sd, zipping his fly. "I mean if you manage existence like a struggling culture...Or some version of the imitation of the imitation of history..." he sd without finishing. Then he turned & looked blankly ahead.

VII: This Idea of Childhood Is a Lost Tree a Garden State

1.

<SPACE

Garçon,

What is this Gill Ott fixation

A product of?

If not this idea

Of childhood as a lost tree or a garden state?

If not a nectarine?

An id?

Shall we prevaricate?—

We think volcanic god deflects occasion

Nietzsche before horses, altered perception etc

But it was Jon Donne's

Perverse beauty—Canto size 8

& bent on commercialism

That paupers

Groomed by wild beasts

Adored

VIII: Minding Our Analgesic Ps & Qs

A berserk St. Bernard traveling uptown on the L rewrites itself the comfort of another passenger—a person or thing doused by the flames of its own golden momentum.

The unknown, we surmise, is a beautiful horse. & a stream in the middle of a beautiful horse tells us the names & meanings of things reversed. & like lovers of keys unlocking nothing,

we mind our own analgesic Ps & Qs. We emerge from a tunnel—blue sky in our hair—the subway tracks disappearing on which all pejorative apples exist as a voice in our heads.

But its dynamite we wish for—sardonic worms, extinct birds, fountains of quanta, ambient rodentia—a fancy way of saying—*You may pass but it will be over our dead bodies!*

IX: The Mythos of Winter

Prologue:

Let us not haggle over
Minor points

Let us take meaning
From the cold & bracing ice
Instead

Our flesh is one flesh

Same as it ever was
Same as it ever was

1.

The woman has breath I can see
& stands in a free place

Some silly lunar mythology
Has taken death for a walk

& left her behind To get
her story straight

2.

We were sitting across
From some Maryknoll nuns

Waiting for
Space Mountain

I remember feeling
Blatant cool black Daunting
holy & dissembling

The black hat of space-time
Sitting on my head

3.

The dog is
Nonplussed

Clarifying little
Or nothing at all

You called me Yr wet-headed
Fascist lover boy

I came from the future, you sd
You named me Mussolini the Mouse

You thought the name funny
& me absurd

4.

A word
Is a martyr

Canonized by silence
Nothing seems real

Or possible
Without it

I scroll
Down

& there is
Wyndham Lewis hailing a taxi!

In his left hand
A book

In his right hand
An ego

A thing black as
The plague

5.

The dog whimpers
Wanting out

Sacrosanct shit
Bulging his anus

His tracks in the snow
Are eerily cliché

& thus symbolic
Or eerily symbolic

& thus cliché
Tonight, there is no going

Anywhere Near
the ending

X: & Where Something Is Always Wrong Now

In this city of empty gestures
We are walking along minding our own business

& it's almost like dying & being shoved off a ledge
& into a giant green dumpster situated below us

There are answers in the form of a question, etc
A theory of everything pushing up daisies

There is a group of men like twelve empty windows
Pulling open a stuck car door in winter

Their breath is white frosting on the air
& the question is: we know something is approximate

& we can't quite put it in the form of an answer
& have people like us

& taking out all 8 sides of a STOP sign
We're shooting a bird of constant sorrow in the foot

& the question is: a remnant of blank sky is a remnant
Of blank canvas placed over the eyes & made interrogative

The question is: Yr dad was a perv!
& in the superficial end of everything

Someone out on the fringe of winter streets
Is collecting what they're owed

XI: In the Glare of the Particulars

1.
Face of howling blue morning
& earth on stilts—

A farce
Whose dream was a moment

2.
& withered by rant—

The hours ask nothing
For dolor for color

3.
& there in the glare of the particulars

& dozing to many dozens
Of songs—

A point both backwards
& forwards in time

XII: A City Built Out of Old Calliopes

It is said a moth's quiet wings can
Punctuate trances we live in

& so we live like small tragedies
In complicated triangles

Exaggerated by the emptiness
On the edge of everything we own

& like nail biters
We find what we find there

Too unexpectedly somber
The wooden moon splintering

Where we rub up against it
& feel we are not to blame

That this is how a city is made
Out of old calliopes—

Music in a swirl of close proximity
It is a grudge we bring with us

& seems only as brilliant
As the last shining corpse to enter it

& make-believe in it—
A living breathing facsimile

& like some boisterous son or daughter
We tear at our own teeth

Our tall shadows stooped like vagrants
In the unpainted tree house

& never moving a muscle—
This is what we need explained to us

This single quivering eyelash
Lodged in the empty chimneys

Of our 21st C throats
How like a ghost in a ski mask

We survived the small talk
Of the 20th C—

Our tongues still intact
Our lungs burning

Like a mockingbird's song
In the slow winter sunlight

XIII: Samuel Beckett: Writing of a Sky So Distant

1.

You. You who are reading this. You have been realized obliquely from a distance. From this distance in the poet's mind. You have been realized again & again for all that it's worth. You are not real in the ontological sense. Otherwise why all these shenanigans about origins & actualities in the physical world? You are not the word *sphagnum* heaped against clapboard. Or that clapboard drying in the solitary Irish sun.

2.

¹The scent of confederate jasmine overwhelms my nostrils. Anselm, my mailman, hands me my mail, his jaw clicking in a friendly way. We agree upon the dastardly unseasonable, early heat. He smiles & salutes, snapping three fingers tiredly against the brim of his cap before returning to his truck. As I watch him wend his way meticulously along his route, I realize, he takes nothing for granted. I go back to my chair, my reading of *Waiting for Godot*.

²A bureaucracy's fatherly cold shoulder

³A great man greets us underneath an EXIT sign looking for love. He climbs up sick of his grave & stands in palace halls echoing with hisses of accolades & whispers. Rumors he couldn't forestall or ignore go round about the blind poet who would ruin him. Could it be Godot was listening?

3.

Less lust-wedded debacle than vacant chuckle...

I only write poems to save the earth from my mind.

4.

Dream of the put-off arrival!
History now a paying tenant

[Godot] in our house!
No party favors

No gifts to cheer the scenery
& I love you, I hate you

What is this place?
Once, in a cake, he placed the word "file"

For all the good it did us
We cackled like hens

One festooned fragment of truth
Flexed at arm's length

& barreling full throttle
Through invented cosmos

Neither morning nor evening
Both radio & heart

XIV: So, He's Romanticism Personified?

& Napoleon
(not *that*

Napoleon

but *her*
Napoleon)

asking through
the bath room

door

if when she is
ready

could they
please fly this

frigging
chicken coop

& drive to
Mont Blanc

& have their
evening

meal
there

together?

XV: We Loved a Good Lemon Poem

The epitome
Of amber caution lights

Just dangled there like daisies
Someone sd the wars of the 20th C.

Were poems with eyes
Like rambling steppes

& I sd they had no eyes
In hopeful words as

Soft & yellow as beams
Of summer sun

I sd we were there to observe
We loved a good lemon poem

As we loved our own
Bebop tapping foot, I sd

XVI: a loaf of bread in her smile

there is a girl in a blue dress
painted on fence lines meeting the highway
there is a loaf of bread in her smile

& she keeps a house full of delights
& she's dressed in a garment blue as the sky
& like the sky she's almost invisible

she almost seems naked—
a girl painted on a fence line out
in the middle of nowhere it seems

XVII: Where Lovers Write Death

On sedate & sunny hillsides
Where lovers write *death is a desert*

The sky is a melting cartoon
& painted on the windshield of a burning car

A dead bird takes orange flight from our hands
Our searing condemnation of the particulars

Is just like we used to be—
Men bitching for a day in the whirlpool

& like a single red heart abandoned on the sprouting deadness
We're stranded in the image of a broken psyche

& things could only go wrong for us
A road runner dies panting for air in a cloud of exhaust

& artless comedy breaks like a sunset on all our statue-heads
& as we text the word water

We're making things pretty again
We're licking our fingers clean of the prettiness

& we're dying of thirst
& from the desert's opaque blandishments

Comes the noise of a solitary cricket
Like bad luck in the asylum

XVIII: Arts & Leisure as an Excuse for Not Having Called You

1.

The man on the intercom sd, tell us about yr husband, yr friends, yr co-workers, the people you meet on the street & talk to in the package store—the ones you call stranger—who are they? What are they up to? Why don't they love me?

& leave no stone unturned/write poems as weak as a bad heart making love impossible/pose yr own questions to the instructor in the form of a mock ironic elegy to provocative mass delusions of grandeur. & read it like you mean it, even if yr friends aren't sure if it's avant-garde enough.

Pose yr questions to the instructor like yr *so over* yr crush on poet, Octavio Paz—"Man is the only being who knows he is alone." Imagine you're in love with the woman next door, who skating impromptu on the driveway ice at 2:41 am doesn't know yr alive. I know yr not in love with her but pretend you are—you'll give yrself the edge.

2.

There is a box full of corks in yr soft petal of a heart reaching for the sun—let me in! This is the derivation of blood thirsty—a box full of corks is like a woman menstruating in bed with a fringe element—like whatever a truce between us calls “an acceptable loss.”

I am into Arts & Leisure as an excuse for not having called you last Wednesday. But I was reading Eric Baus—*The blooms grew large & blocked my path. Normal hello.* & as for my rapid eye movement I am a paranoid son of anarchy. I am lost on the island without you. I stumble around blindly running into a skull & a hand in the bombed-out ruin Greenwich Village has become—a waterfall of secret messages no one is supposed to know about but me ...& now you. Together, we alter the landscape. & like a baby sitter we listen.

The colors of my palette are the colors of a bruised rib cage after interrogation. I see stars circling the drain & then myself—hot in pursuit of them—a man walking thru plate glass as clear as, as distilled of light as a thought. I thought I saw a new beginning lying on a dusty mattress out back of the house where things pile up—no words for life’s discarded cogs. & so we call them 20th C.—something we find & use again.

If I hold open my heart to the engine’s continuous roaring sleep becomes impossible—living each day is a nightmare! If I worship the blood orange nestled in yr hair & eat it...then pain becomes a kind of false memory. & my memory of the pond & the willow a warm wonderful dirge—the only sane choice, as far as the tyranny of adjectives go.

3.

In what ways does the 20th C make the 20th C. its subject?

The 20th C. is the lucky number 7 turning tricks on Marigold Lane

The 20th C. is a double agent of love staining our damp sheets with its shit

Even if we decline to answer we must beg for our lives as we polish

The toxic plastic apple of the 20th C. on our sleeves

The 20th C. leers at us. Even now its thumb is the size of its penis

The 20th C. is a freckled man-boy focused on something off in the distance

The 20th C. makes “something unintelligible” part of the poem’s structure

The 20th C. is a man in a ski mask writing the word apple on our cheeks

The 20th C. is the result of this something unintelligible

The 20th C. looks at Tom Orange as he skims *A Book Beginning What*

and Ending Away & finds him in contempt & this is how whole passages

Of a book of experimental poems get deleted, expunged by the 20th C.

The 20th C. exaggerates the grief it feels. & glossing over our critique of

Certain passages it never asks why—its lips move while it’s reading

It fails to contemplate answers to the problem its own muscle-love poses

We tell the 20th C. what it is we feel “inside”

& if time permits we tell its muscle-love to eat shit & go to hell!

& the 20th C. only writes how we are better persons now

Because we are able to move about the page with a blind self assurance

Wearing only our straight-person’s armor—our fathers’ well-

Intentioned if somehow besotted & lunatic legacy of sex & death

XIX: It's the Fire Next Time

*I'd like some good cod, she says,
& a beer floating a good head on it*

& the territory is blown away—
The mundane having mined their flesh of Spectacle!

& so, ironically, he drinks the gasoline of pure Spectacle
& blows it out of his mouth—spewing fire!

& she remembers fragments of a quote:
It's the fire next time!

XX: 99 Tulips

1.

Oceana, my ex girl friend
Told me—

*Write what you know
From personal experience*

So I wrote this thing
Called “99 Tulips”

A lot of
Uneven lines

Dragging their feet
Like—

*Picking out victims
Is thirsty work for my Ouija—*

But nowhere in the poem
Are 99 tulips

So I went home & had ice cream
& no one was there to say:

*Write what you know
From personal experience*

2.

In my haste to believe
In something

I count 99 sea gulls
(Not tulips)

Grouped along foot paths
In Haymarket Sq.

& then there is light (the quantum bomb)
By which I see to count

& measure the measure
I take of my loss—

I am a sick man, I am a spiteful man.
A man without purpose

I am that which can never
Simply

Exist

3.

I was arrested once
In Holopaw

For reading *Novel Pictorial Noise*
Aloud with a gun

I am waiting (still waiting)
For crumbs

From the Bozos
They have seized all my books

My assets are frozen
I look out for myself now

I am subpoenaed in winter
Already, I'm in

Over my head
I grow 99 tulips

In the jail house
Of beautiful balloons

But ice cream's an answer
I can't live with

Much longer
& a poem is a poem—

A thing more
Inscrutable than words

4.

They say I am weak
That I love too much

The things I create
That writing and loving

Are political acts
& I shouldn't be appalled

That 99 tulips
Are not just 99 tulips

That loving what destroys us
Is not the reason we love

Bio:

Raymond Farr is author of *Ecstatic/.of facts* (Otoliths 2011), & *Writing What For? across the Mourning Sky* (Blue & Yellow Dog 2012). He has a chapbook, *Eating the Word NOISE!* which is slated for February 2015 publication by White Knuckle Chaps & another full length collection of poems *Poetry in the Age of Zero Grav* due out from Blue & Yellow Dog in mid 2015. He is editor of Blue & Yellow Dog <http://blueyellowdog.weebly.com>

Artist's Statement:

I am usually led to the poem thru some excursion into language, an image or phrase which then grows, expanding until I have raw material enough that I might hack away at it, concentrating on "concentrating" the images, a sort of smelting down process. The poem's meaning may present itself at any given point as I continue to experiment & reconfigure, discovering what the poem is attempting to accomplish thru me. The poems in "A Journey of Haphazard Miles" began as separate entities but I noticed that though they exhibited a different aesthetic, voice, syntax, etc they had some unifying characteristics in common—subject—the American version of the Western ideal of civilization in 20th C.

