



Any Given Moment

p o e m s

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Art Is Incurable	1
Flora	2
Forgetting Originals.....	3
Revelation.....	4
Turning to July	5
The Roofs of Providence	6
Thanks	7
Emboli	8
As If Painting.....	9
Fluently	10
Psychodrama.....	11
Innovation.....	12
Influence.....	13
False Starts	14
Specimen	15
White Chairs Over.....	16

Art Is Incurable

along with the one girl struck by lightning
out of twenty six thousand in the stadium,
a father falling down staring and unable
to speak or recognize the room,
an ant curled in its bite so thoroughly
all is excluded but that act,
the heat, the queen, my thumb coming.

Flora

In those words I am laden with flowers,
abundant with being, bacteria.
In those descriptions I am a garden,
something fragilis, something elegans.
A gracious host as if a hay infusion
that could be producing a meadow:
buccal, intestinal, beautiful in the light.
And how in my plenty I might gold leaf America,
or dismantle my roses to throw.

Forgetting Originals

One cannot study history fast enough or imagine,
so much is missing faster than before.
So I want to take Frances to Ozette to count mosses,
the zig-zag joints of salal
tacking to the coast before it's over, the old life,
see elk wheezing and bellowing
while there are some, remind children and visitors
the razor clam was named
for a look-alike, a steel blade they've never seen
folded for safety in its case,
a fibula, like a forearm touched back to its shoulder.

Revelation

Yanking smilax I received the gardener's stigmata
a thorn through leather
and found at the mailbox a rabbit like referred pain
one side skinned by impact
The anatomist foxes took it the first night
I then saw a fisherman offshore
and before he made it bait by the steel hook
he lifted his arm to show me
and a silversides frantically swam in his hand

Turning to July

Blue Jays flash down like pieces of Gulf Stream
and drink from the pie plate. You can't make us out
from the many salt water edges or the road.
On eclipse day thousands of hidden cameras
slip their efforts through the leaves and the acre
is littered with moons bitten exceedingly.
I turn the calendar to July a long blue lake in China.
While waiting for October three landsats away I peek.
It's the enormous Mississippi from the sky
where toward the bottom at the Gulf someone unseen
picks up the dipsy worm through their bare feet.

The Roofs of Providence

In Providence, I opened a roof
to see sunrise from stars, and the other roofs of Providence
were all books including mine
turned over, tented, so they could concentrate on rarity.
I saw whatever had fallen,
whatever was then thrown up from the bottom
buoyed by gas, saw the gulls come,
the laughers, the royal terns stroking like oars,
saw our shortcuts,
how gravity shapes our bodies, how the long black streets
struggled to go straight.

Thanks

Seaside looking out over its nouns,
arrow already moody for its taut string,
the cured preparing milagros
of silver, arms and eyes
of copper washed in gold and mounted
in a scene loaded with clovers,
all thanks for recovery as when Cortéz
was cured of a scorpion
having had it foretold by burning a crutch
and wooden leg before the Virgin,
and so had a replica made by plateros
discolored by venom and swollen in gratitude.

Emboli

Seeds were more trustworthy than he expected,
generously bringing up things not planted:
candyweed, violets, skullcaps; opportunity's
host to diversity.
Then there was grievance. The azalea died, magnolias
browned as if tourniquets strangled their branches.
When the gardner went white, you couldn't tell him
from gulls or the fiberglass Hatteras,
the clot black as the nerve in this pencil as I write.

As If Painting

I took the broom, the brush on a stick
and swept hickory yellows to the marble steps,
swept all the colorful influences
I can see from my window into windrows
understood imperfectly as gravitation,
as impasto, as the supposed governance of planets
Jennifer charts over lattés at Guilts-A-Million.

Fluently

Awake I saw the wasp that stings hickory
into a nursery and helped it
choose the leaf for stinging and writing
saw the spaces in the page
we call rivers the words then flatboats
though meaning does not run
like my face flowing silently
all night into and out of every window I pass

Psychodrama

Today a woman in frustration
spoke to a gas pump
and it spoke back saying depress the lever
and try again
So she told it how things went bad for her
confiding an anger so deep
that nearby sparrows startled and departed
from the looming sign
that said Goodyear with the flying foot

Innovation

For those with chipped flint and with obsidian
copper stopped them
and likewise the rivers like edged weapons
small blades under a snake
explain its swift sinuosity and how
one learned from the other
like the glowing fungal acidity of soil
under the flood lights
that keep night from crushing the airport

Influence

The moment is unchanged by how we dance
skip out or fidget in our seats.
In one explanation the Samba was derived
by a chance mating of willows and skeletons.
In another, the sky is spinning with the earth,
catfish are kissing the lake bottoms.
It is all so intimate the moon itself is painting
swatches on the doves while elsewhere a splinter
is sufficient to kill us. We patiently await
the effects of the more understandable:
wet lips, dry eyes, the single death lily
that honks below the pines.

False Starts

She said false starts. I heard false stars.
Like runners that begin and have to come back
because of someone too anxious.
Even if I started now I'd never get there.
It's too far and we can't believe that long.
We'd have to come back.
And they are false. They've told us for years.
They may fall right out of the sky while we watch.
They may not even be there now, the light's so old.
Silent light. An old unbelievable song
the farther back you go.

Specimen

A red wasp hovers uneasily as it homes in,
its small shadow cracked
and shattered by a thousand leaflets. Nearby,
a bird turned out not to be one
but three leaves sideways making a thrush shape
The wasp is precise and performs the acts
of its kind as a perfect specimen.
I could mention its name, but that has no bearing.
This is about the question for which
a word on a pin is the answer

White Chairs Over

The storm last night in its overbearing way
talking too loud throwing things around
turned the white chairs over as if we'd left
for the summer and forgotten the protocol
the slipcover forgotten to unplug appliances
remind our belongings of our lasting affection
for them that we would return to handle them
again saying our secrets in their presence
showing them our bodies



Allan Peterson lives in Gulf Breeze, Florida. He is the author of a book, *Anonymous Or*, and two chapbooks, *Stars On A Wire* and *Small Charities*. His poems have appeared in *The Gettysburg Review*, *West Wind*, *Arts & Letters*, *Northwest Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Agni*, *Drexel Online Journal*, *The King's English*, *Story South*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Beloit Poetry Journal*, *Mid America Review*, and elsewhere. He was the 2002 winner of the Arts & Letters Poetry Prize and has been the recipient of fellowships from the Florida Arts Council and the NEA. He has been nominated five times for Pushcart prizes.