

1/3 of the Western World Can't See the Milky Way

On the light pollution maps are black holes where the stars show through.
You call them a shift from two to one or me to you.

But there is too much world tonight my love, the black holes are ominous,
help me remember the great rift is luminous.

When I come home let's take the truck out to the third gravel pit and build a little fire.
We'll stand away from it and turn the black holes inside out,

shake the lint, lie on the sand in the circle of our own galaxy
and tell the four in five bereft of lights,

how the sky descends here in fly-over and Cassiopeia gallops,
the sisters shy, the painter who drives too fast catches up

with the tone beyond the trough. We'll tell the deep story of the evening star,
how lights come on each its own and we'll name the ones we know

and make up angel names for the ones we don't.
As the great rift settles over us our lives will kindle a rage in ourselves

to never leave this place, through bliss or the desperation to recover.
We've been pulling on each other's dark matter for years and yet,

here we are, still vibrating like a drum to match Milky's three tonal notes.
You'll arc your arm under my head and my leg over yours,

we'll cover ourselves with milk stars warped like an old board
you'll use to fix the fence.

The Expats

It's been four years a drought on the edge of the desert,
their crepe is unused to water down, up, in their pores.
This spring, their two good legs shorten their morbidity.

They don't eat much idle bread.

They pay their board, their fire, and build a sea-shore garden at their front door.

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To keep it interesting they walk the field to hunt horsetail,
no wrist band needed for two hundred miles.

The transplanted horse tail will be an amuse-bouche,
as they are, code switch survivors in this dry land, their imagined

composite of elsewhere. They won't say they're bored,
or lonely, their exile imagined, they dumb it down in town.

The horsetail is picky, doesn't want to move to the front-door-shore,
to tip its skull cap to locals, as they do.

Between asphalt and rose they persist.
With a light shovel and bucket they dig it up.

Surety

So you promised me directions to Mt Limbo, god knows I went by it dozens of times,
I never saw its holding pattern of hope and things unsaid.

You promised me the Black Rock, god knows I imagined it every time
I measured the green train tracks, the green limestone,

all I saw was alkali dust, no, not dust like you think, a sticky cloud unclaimed.
Today was different and the same, I crossed the tracks,

looked left and there clickety-clack was water, top and bottom of my eyes,
washed, rinsed to a mirror. And upside down mountains where mountains

weren't before. So naturally I did what you would have done, I self-ied proof
but the mountains disappeared.

You said it would be simple, but here I am stuck in Gerlach, a mirage of intersected surety.

We Never Say *Glorious*

Around here we talk flat and don't know why, or care,
and short,

we say it quiet, owl wings are more ecstatic than our questions,
north wind questions— go to the bone and we chatter.

We're mostly from civil war deserters.

The meat cutter at the store she talks to her knife,
the dim man on the post office bench, he talks to

everyone a little, the store owner, she's pissed if
you don't yes ma'am her hello.

Flat aaaa's / not quite up in our noses, sure not back in our throats,
we're stagnant fourth generation keged up in a corner,

a constructed dialect of sinkers,
passion words thinned out to a historical present , we never say *glorious*.

The fair manager confessed she
didn't see the mountains until a flatlander from

San Diego pointed them out to her.
Bookie thinks It's a subtle but virulent contradiction,

valley floor monosyllabic directly below
this spectacular sky place.

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Alkali Haiku

I want to dust from an alkali flat like a jack rabbit
under a brush, hunched, breathless, on a alkali flat jack rabbit
is the shadow of brush, hidden or so I think it.