

Don Eulert

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BUFFALO WALLOW

(Buffalo Bill Productions, Ltd.)

Buffalo wallow! Has a nice sound to it.
they would get down in the mud
to get the hornflies off, rooting
and rolling. That time Doc Ballard's
grandmother as a girl watched them
go by for five days where highway 281
crosses the Smokey Trail. They
drank the river dry.
They cut the banks
for crossings we still use, wallowed
out the flats and laid trails
you didn't have to be a scout to follow.
Through the grass and flowers.

A kid walked out from the claim, got lost
in the grass, they never found him.
A man on a horse could see out,
the big bluestem would close up
behind anything else.
Bill's fort was
up Salt Creek, he didn't follow the Saline
he followed the buffalo trail to the Smokey.

Take a day when we've had five inches of snow,
go up about 5,000 feet, the wallows you can
see them still, dished out on a span about
eight miles wide, going on out of sight.

Spud Whitman, I think it was, rigged
his pickup with a dog wagon on the back,
jumped a pair of coyotes up Rhine Creek.
Gain' about fifty across that pasture
to head them off before they could get
into that cut through the bluffs just
back of Eulert's place, you know? he
hit a buffalo wallow hid by the grass

Tore his transmission right out
frvm under him, like to drove his asshole
up between his shoulder blades. Them
buffalo wallows!

CURFEW SONG

What they call earthquakes
are the mutterings
of a perverse man

who sees the land around him
as closed as a cave,
gets drunk to look at it

to look at himself
from the constellation Orion
the hunter in western skies,

sees himself bloodied and stupid
as strong drink can make him,
and both throats moan night
wolves' long-voweled resonance,

What in other drinking men
would be nausea and vomit
he makes into strange music

he as a child who read
hieroglyphics from the mouths
of large-bore rifles

OF HEARING, OF LISTENING

This world is made from sound;
it was made rock and blue distance
from the shock of a great breath,
melodic light and matter keening.

Women and men stood up at the sound
of a voice singing inside them
and slowly slowly turned in a dance
and slowly lifted graceful arms
in a dance, and the rise and fall
of melodies from their mouths
made analogs for the world made
from sound, named rock and blue sky.

Now I attend stars that each bear
a note of light in the night, have we
eyes that can hear such songs?
My eyes can be convinced by canvas
stretched above a small light, and
my mind follows my eyes, deceived.

But sound links fast to the world.
Hearing you, next I will feel you,
and I listen for your humming soul
high-pitched, rapid: across distances
only a skillful hunter can hear it.

As for you and me, believe my love,
time is only Great Silence. Listen,
blood and breath sigh in our bodies,
everywhere goes a tiny singing in us,
in each part of the world a voice,
while time reels off invisible to the sea.

This world was made from sound;
It was said; it was made; it is so,
Standing high over the sea of Spain,
Do you hear any song in this rock,
Is this standing too far from the
First Singer, is it only wind?

THE. BONES

The fishermen of the delta, long-bearded priests of water,
build their houses on stakes and never go back to land..

They strain green alcohol through black bread and drink it
raw, wanting a blaze to run desert through their bones

never dry, bones that wash after them to the sea
when no more they ride that current in black tarred boats.

They scar their throats with hieroglyphics of fish bones
swallowed for breakfast, which teach them no new tongues.

From the level of water they watch white cranes ride
bright air above the rush-walled canals. Their mouths open

and closing like carp, they finger and say the knots
of their lives in nets let down to where sleeping sheath-

fish drift whiskered and open-eyed in arithmetic dreams.
Sometimes one fisherman without a woman at home breaks

the night's membrane and pushes into the water's dark:
he looks for the sign of what moves under him, pleasure

or something darker, but cannot find her eyes to say it
among the stony glitter of broken stars on the water.

THE DREAMS REMIND US

- I. The dreams remind us that we are alone
on the track of an animal we can describe
only when we look back at the paths left
between stars and see them dot-to-dot
filled in, the tracteries of our mind
scratched in lines of light stalked
across the black soil of the galaxy:
a great bear, a lion, even creatures
that we follow under water fish-like
to our beginnings, that artless question.

The old man has lugged his telescope up
the mountain to the clearing, looking
for company to exhibit the converging
of Saturn with its Cardinal's hat tilted,
the four moons of Jupiter a pendulum
of light about 4 O'clock off his face,
Venus blushing at their upper left.

The old woman here, up from the desert
for her two weeks of beating the heat,
stares through her jiggling 20X binoculars
and will not look at his backward mirror,
but they join in hunter's glee to point
that not all of us will see this again
in the year 2023, while Saturn visibly runs
out of the telescope's eye during my turn.

I leave the man trying to get it back,
go sit where the Milky Way holds constant
it seems in the slot between pine trees
while stars and planets slide faster
faster off the side of this glass hill.

- II. The dreams remind us that we are alone
and often motionless; we wait in the way
a great nerve cell might be said to hunt,
an amoebic net that turns itself into
whatever it touches. When this happens,
you might say at a moment you were a cricket-
song, an amorphous fear, a dragonfly, a
crack of light in a wall, or a long journey.

I give you now a place out of sight from anyone
high up among house-sized granite boulders.
Down the drop-off below, details are lost
and the wind breaks slow-motion through trees,
like breaking of water on wide-away cliffs
(the shore goes on, I know, around the point
there's a beach party going on since noon)

But here nobody else can see how, motionless,
a red-tailed hawk has traced a double helix;
you alone vault from the rock in his scream,
a clean sherd of airborne flint, a talon
of sound that returns, curving at its sharpest,
into silence in the throat of a hovering bird.

THE JOURNEY

They wait beside the dark pit of tracks.
Train wheels scrape to a stop on some
line, the cars jolt small explosions
each more distant, the night's images
printed on the skin of Annie's body
come to mind now, the breath catches, the
dawn a thin whistle in a foreign station.

With the insistence of a sharp bell,
with the clarity of frozen metal,
some link is opened and tossed back.

The man and woman wait in early morning,
all the belongings they need leaned
together like the senses to a center.
They walk a little way in the direction
they are going, and then come back
along the open track. Beside them
people turn and settle themselves
inside compartments going other places:
yellow squares of light tick them away.

For a moment they are waiting alone.
The way distances have closed on them
they laugh their breath joined white
the cold air, the snows that start
this week in the Engadine, the desert
winds that clear the Pacific for sun,
floods that unexpected wash over them.