

Recursions: A Collection of Original Poetry by John Peterson

Evocation

This is our story, frame by frame
The shifting pieces of a game
Controller: We send our prayers
And sacrificial gifts.

Sleeping on the fault lines,
Echoes of our call signs,
We balance on the edge
Of an ever-growing rift.

Recursion

I imagined myself standing between two mirrors
In precise alignment and flawless proportion.
And I came to believe that the person I saw
Was nearly myself but not; it wore subtle distortions.
Then I had the thought that in the eyes of the other
Were neither mine nor its own but those of another.
Those thoughts were the catalyst that began the recursion.

So continued the sequence and in each reflection,
Changes quite more apparent as the light traveled on.
Unrecognizable, the innumerable others became
Until they were blurs, then a point, and then gone.
And if sharper vision could extend their existence
Still no light has the time to traverse the great distance
Of a universe ever expanding, itself a recursion.

For even replicas are which from replicas come.
With this understanding, I lost my point of reference
To perfection, the infinite, the first and the last.
Those words from my mind, an irreversible severance.
Now I invite others to stand in that same place
And reflect on its nature until their minds erase
Any doubt that we are but a single frame within the recursion.

Ennui

It's as romantic as depressing,
Seamless as the second guessing
To be drifting on the wind but not to fly
What was frightening now is boring
Flash of lightning, rain is pouring
A revenant is not afraid to die.

It's the full circle of the weather,
Shedding of the scales and feathers
And the emptiness inside a crowded place
It's the countdown to the deadline
Here's a stampede for the headlines
And a meaningless attempt to keep the pace.

The weight falls upon the living
For the dead take their misgivings
To the great hereafter; they assimilate.
The swan song fades to static
The renewal's automatic
And there's pity for whoever can relate.

Nebula

The frayed threads of a patchwork in progress
A guarded conscience, it hesitates
Dare it be honest?

A kaleidoscopic view
Of collision course stars
Death on a pale horse
And the eclipse of red Mars
Deimos and Phobos in retrograde dance
Conceptualizing faith, fate, and chance

So natural it is to cling to a word,
To fall asleep dreamless is its own reward
Rarely acknowledged as most great truths are
Sometimes merely knowing will cut and will scar

The Gas Mask

To this face,
The gas mask is a most permanent fixture.
Does it not serve to intimidate?
But pay no mind to that wanderer –
Long has it kept pace in a predictable pattern;
It will never harm another.

Respiration is taken for granted;
How few are still thankful for breath
Such a potent cocktail worth its allure...
May the floodwaters stay with us
Once the storm has passed.
Settle in.

The afternoon had slipped under shadows
At just one particular angle;
Winds that gave the kiss of summer.
Deconstruct it down to the molecule
And know the pieces are still in place,
As is the gas mask now.

Point Nemo

Great expectations give birth to great stress
Don't pity the pariah who would settle for less
A legacy, a debt, a breathless race to success
One must first kneel down if they wish to be blessed

I've been living in a mad world all too familiar
Where every disappointment is déjà vu
With nothing but dull nails, I've been digging underground for shelter
Like when I sank beneath the waves to see the darkest, coldest blue

I march with the procession of the flagless mercenaries
In step only with the tachycardia in my chest
A legacy, a debt, a breathless race to the mausoleum
One must first be no one if they wish to be blessed

Western Star

A tarnished badge and the grip of steel
The order kept through fear
The oathbreakers are safe and warm
Inside their riot gear
Each treaty disregarded, stolen land under the gun
With tear gas and in chains, the west is won

Oh, the Western star is shining on
May it show us what the great new cause is
A city on the hilltop and defiled graves below
If only those graves were marked by white crosses

The eagle soaked in oil
Still unfurls its wings with pride
Should nothing seem so perfect
As a wall from our side
And walls within, a fortress land; so sacred this divide
No, you can't climb the tower, but you tried

Oh, the Western star weeps for the lost
Such a price for what we have defended
The legacy of conquerors who have in turn bestowed
Freedom to the in-crowd as intended

Drink up the poisoned water
From the lead and methane wells
And rise now for the anthem
Since you stand for nothing else
Portraits of lands once free adorn this hive city of cells
In submission to black gold cartels

Oh, the Western star is shining on
Glory never suffers short supply
And beneath the Western star you'll find a place of rest
A landfill for sterile bones bleached dry

Comatose Lions

This is the age of the great glass cage,
And the most impotent collective conceivable
The instantaneous, the effortless
Envision not how powerless you are

The revolution is not put down,
It is diluted and rendered harmless
Like some homeopathic snake oil:
A perfect formula for lazy top dogs

For we are lions comatose,
Our numbers count to billions
And count for zero
Our riot is a like and share; we care

Thunderous laughter in the board rooms,
Even outrage can be monetized
Controlled opposition made voluntary
Daily validation of action not taken

Alienated beyond reason,
Solidarity still not in season
21st century know-nothings
Who could easily learn quite a lot

This is the web of dull wonders,
Swept up in every soft breeze
To be carried maybe anywhere
Except to somewhere that matters.

The Shadows

Flashpoint, triggerfinger,
Patient zero, catalyst, dusk
The shell stripped bare
To the Earth it falls
As the soul departs from the husk

Alpha fantasy
Soar above the canopy
Descending
How the talons shine!
The prey was born
To a spider's web
And arranged in a most perfect line

Innumerable prayers
For a bountiful harvest
Yet for a legacy ask so few
The arsonist seeks
To cast a shadow
Infamous
As the first men knew

To be not an entity
But an event
To lock and load
As a sacrament
Yet no shadow is indelible

Awaiting Impact

Come find out, just let it out
The part of you that wants,
Lock on to the impulse and then
Purge all second thoughts.
Like a bullet through the thickest fog,
We're redlining with seatbelts off
Awaiting impact or the engine running dry
And once you get a taste for it,
You'll never care to brace for it
Someday you won't even wonder why.

Abnegation

Shadow cast over pitch black,
Shaped by the mind's eye
Six-sided photographs of
Panoramic blindsides.

There's a ceiling above the stars
An echo from below the floor
There's a feeling that comes and goes
In waves that my nerves absorb
But even touch can lie.

White noise, a voice
Ever so unreal, ever so inviting
White noise, a voice
Drawing me to the event horizon
I will sail there.

Separation, abnegation
Ever so unreal, ever so overwhelming
The subtle whir and the piercing ring
So unravels everything.
I will sail there.

I will build a ship and carve her razor wings
So unravels everything
I will build a ship and carve her razor wings
And ride along the strings
I will sail there and witness.

I melt into her
At loss for thought or word
The sky turns, sound burns
This depth I cannot discern
But I melt into her.

Poetrash

Well he's some off-white trash
And his skin is stained
He's got a tattoo
He calls the Mark of Cain
And you can dish it out
'Cuz he will never complain,
Never complain, never complain.
Says, he says
That he knows, he knows
There's one, one way
Life goes, goes, goes
And it's the subtleties
Of the clothes, clothes, clothes
That let the keen eye scan the ego.
But they keyed his heart
And dented his pride
His friends all died on a waterslide
He watched them die, watched them die,
They died on the waterslide.

Poetrash II

I built myself a time machine
And took a stroll through Sodom
I smoked myself a sweet pipe dream
Down in Bikini Bottom
My clients ring me off the hook
For rocks while I still got 'em
My kids, they made their teacher faint
With all the words I taught 'em.
But like God and punk rock
I'll be dead
Then you can all
Dissect my head
Pass the scalpel, add some salt
It's really not your fault.
Like God and punk rock
I'll be dead
Gone staler than my daily bread
Like God and punk rock
I'll have died
I'll have died on the waterslide.

Kiss of Clarity

God is the heat, God is the wind
A howl through time, waking chaos within
The void is the mother, the void is the reaper
Sunlight pierces waves but the trenches are deeper,
And colder, I told her,
To not wish otherwise.
For our wishes are earthbound,
Melt in front of our eyes.
Dissolved, we're absolved of longing.

Even so I embrace with the truest sincerity
How welcome to my heart
Is this kiss of clarity.
My muse falters when the void calls her
Yet still she returns to me
I hold my breath, tighten up my chest
And God comes rushing through me.

As We Were

Caught in a fever dream,
Touching unreality.
Caught in an eyeless storm
That stares straight through dead eyes.
We were no one special,
But we tried.
Riders on the razor's edge
Stepped weightless off the ledge.
The brave and bored were dancing there
Bearing teeth and scars.
Expecting really nothing
Except to be left wanting
We torched the house
Our past had kept on haunting.
And for what?

Birthright

The legendary real world, how my father loved to tell
It chews you up, rips flesh from bone, he knew it all too well
But son, you are prepared to swim that riptide on your own
You can wield the sword if you can free it from the stone

But we are paper airplanes nailed to the wall
We are the ones who were set up to take the fall

We don't fly, we don't climb, we can hardly look
As children, we were fish eager to bite the hook

In our own defense we never had much of a chance
We conceptualize potential but we're bound by circumstance
And if I dare complain, then I'm a walking stereotype
Of a cohort that failed miserably to live up to the hype

"Disillusioned" - that's the word of choice, the common label
But that means we see clearly; all cards face up on the table

So show me what it looks like when imagination fails
This vessel only drifts, I still can't raise these shredded sails
Ensnared by indecision with no timeout left to call
I tried to stand my ground but found my back against the wall

Yours

You are a swift swimmer
So fiercely determined
My body: your circuit
So warmly invited
My DNA willing
Each helix rewritten
I have been encoded
And you are delighted.

Divide By Zero

Who watches the ego die?
The dauntless psychonaut
The mindful monk
They say: "I watched my ego die."
But then, who is "I?"

A soul? An essence?
The cosmos undivided?
Oneness.
It takes more than one word
To explain "one."

Then duality:
Mind and body
Darkness and light
A concept decidedly trite
Of which I am not
The first, second, or thousandth
To write.

If the duality of everything
Is to be accepted as true
And the oneness to be
How things were
And what will occur
Then what purpose does contrast serve?

Naturally, contrast gives form
The eye of a storm
The long dead and yet to be born
No joy without pain
No clear skies without rain
One equals zero when there is no two
But two equals one as well.

If I were an omnipotent god
I would divide by zero
Merely to see what transpires
The bemusing paradox
The creation of a stone
Too heavy for God to lift;
Likewise
A god who cannot divide by zero
Is no god at all.
