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Spring 2006

Bones N' Things (a short book of poetry)

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Bones N' Things

(a short book of poetry)
by Tristan D. Hanson

HONORS THESIS

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Date 06/08/2006

Song: Prologue

Call forth the demon cast:

Brewers of fleshy stew

Bakers of bone-crush

Wizards of war and waste

Lords of detritus and effluvia

Poets of the infernal comedy:

You are the mouths of destruction

And we love your slime

And we praise you.

The Leopard, the Lion, and the Wolf

It is difficult to keep your composure when walking alone in a dark wood, each indistinguishable mass threatening movement like a wolf on the hunt.

The desperate man

curls his arm around your neck
and screams for your wallet, you too frightened and sad
to tell him the wallet is empty. The hungry man
spends his time with his penis erect on his thigh
or in his palm, staring at Ariel's thinly curved torso,
wondering what wonders lie behind those purple cockle shells.
If you were a woman, he would force you down on the forest floor
and rip you open as twigs lash your butt. The malicious man,
brimming with contempt, turns you into the victim—beaten
and shot in the head—
found in a pool of blood which feeds the roots
of a nearby hemlock.

Just yesterday I saw a plane falling from the sky:
a scan of red
followed by two impressions of orange
flashing apart by seconds—
the cross, nose first
speeding into triangles of needles:

After dinner, I thought, I'll write a poem about the crash
about ungingered ginger-shrimp
about the oozing red-orange island in my sky of icebergs:

But here's the unfortunate thing:
there was no blue crash—
the plane flaming into the sunset
into the end—
and I am beginning to question the shrimp
and the freedom fries
and the salad:

the free world will be expected to give their leader a cookie (every once in a while)

I remember a boy
poised on a stool. Stretching
his toes, pushing
a hand upward, probing
the gulf of the cookie jar.

Recounts are rarely in *good taste*
and who am I
to deny the navy suit,
the red white blue lapel pin,
the boyish grimace, his
cookie, crumbs littering his face,
dropping waste onto the bulging
microphone, accepting victory,
whether it has come or not

still the taste
of that cookie.

The Merchant Was Tragedy

I believe you said,
 The Merchant was comedy
but I heard *Yes*
and we found ourselves
matrimonied,
cubicked
in vows

when I heard your ring
tone, I smiled to marry
you, but your
father was against Christians
and I
was not Christian

my reflexes gave
chance and my tongue
—storing information,
complete—loved
the horizons
of your dimples

as pounds of flesh
were taken, even then
I couldn't bring
myself to
believe in demons

your father knelt
at tablets
cursing the transfer, we
were binary
unable to be understood
apart, incomprehensible
to those of letter.

I met a girl

A tangle of autumn strands,
sharp and slanted, rest on
my stomach—hair young but long.
Small cherries, impossible
to comprehend, straddle
my thigh—breasts dry but sweet.

Over me she holds thin lips,
flexing calves and toes,
wild under the heat and wind.
Spine arced, I feel each step
through cotton, climbing fingers,
grounding hands in curves.

I met a girl. And while the Law raged
around me, I dreamed. In the furnace,
cheeks and hips blazed.

Virgil's Tormentor

So then my guide embarked, and at his call I followed him.

Far off to the East, the City of Sin
rests in a shadow of fire.
A hazy beacon glimpsed by none,
ignored by arrogant sailors.

Spirits writhe in tumultuous water:
one gnaws on Phlegyas's sturdy craft,
two others, a blonde and a brunette,
lie at the surface,
eyes blank, arms twisted to God, white as Angels.

A man, hand full of beard, is bitten while trying
to drown himself.
Further on, another brown-haired man, eyes fed with death,
uses one of the look-a-like angels
as a foot stool. His nakedness does not seem to matter.

The jealous father, son of war,
crouches at the stern, pulling his paddle
through the water, his blue genitalia caught by the wind,
unable to show his face.

Flexed at the head, Dante, hooded in red, fending off deep clouds.
Dante whose eyes are forward'
when they should have fixed themselves on the sinners.
Eyes forward
but peering in the wrong direction, teasing the spirits with hope.
Dante has hope.

And poor Virgil, brown mass in the center. Eyes downcast
he wears his laurel crown
as though he were Jesus.
Virgil's frown is stuck in Limbo,
the creases of his cloak, life with no grace.
Right hand searching for Dante.

The seams lull and we stretch wide

At the keg, a spot
for my hand, and a slap
stuck on my head:
she had been detained,
an urge to foster neck,
and I *dropped away*

The slugs mull and drop away

At this point, the crunch
of a poet The clang
as he says,
No-cities attitude
and I drop away:

Years ago this bar served frittatas
and drank the words of a generation,
who drank margaritas,
the spirits of the times, the voices of a nation

Again, the clunk
of a poet, or maybe a shot
dropping like a hammer:
Today
I worship the Hammer
Tomorrow, something else
completely.

Life-giving

At the cliff edge
massive rock
below—

metamorphic back
cracked
 over the jut
of mountain

Consider my toes

weaving into crevices, searching
for water

Think of those that brought you into this

Impressions of my posthuman life

I came into the world through battery acid and hose-canals
my childhood was spent downloading memories
and learning basic maintenance:

--don't forget to oil your gears

and be careful with the soldering gun.

--I can hear myself ticking...

I was popular in high school

taking the lead cheerleader to prom—she was satisfied—

and playing chess on Tuesday evenings

I went to church

my aptitude was for programming, information processing, and sexual stimulation

and I became a pioneer in the production of digital adult films

I retired early

realizing that I didn't really understand technology

or my place in the world

so I bought a house on a tropical island

and took five wives

I never did have children

The Dress Becomes Her

Making her way past men
she begins to change
Straps stitch first
hugging shoulder blades
edging collar bone, perpendicular
Blood forced to exposure
navigating silk wave
of body
Seams that carry
blood; needle under arms
down to hips
tremble
to thighs
shaken
Black tightens, announcing
every line
every furrow
The dress becomes her
elegance and sex in flesh
material
soaked in
blood coursing through fibre

The Step Between Us

Even at my age I wasn't allowed in
to your bedroom--Father was frightened
of my shine. And still
our poetry (that which we kept hidden)

was close. Sunrise, breakfast (the cream
of your eggs), a lunch pale packed
with chocolates. The sweet
of your kiss, an imprint

to beguile the step between us. Tripping
with schoolboys I nearly forgot you
once. Alone in the afternoon
hour I enter--forbidden--

compose and touch coolly--you
always shudder--from
excitement? repulsion? Turning
a hand clutching--you want my shell. Emptied

beds give way to us. Doors
gleefully shut us in. Your intricacies
are beyond my liquid attention, but
you are caught. My youth was filling mothers.

More fit for a forest

(this poem must be wide
enough to float a ferry through)

Captained by Touchstone, Arden's fool,
and Dante's demon crew—
those with sinners shoulder-hung,
slung like sacks,
flung to the pitch of the sea—
the ferry waxes merrily on approach.

The hellrakers, frenzied,
smell torture and destruction,
joining the song and dance of the simpleton.

There will be no death involved,
simply the splintering of million dollar yachts
and a few marina fingers,
those sipping martinis will take digital photos,
call their insurance providers.

And what the pictures will not show
is *that bunch of devilry*
gnawing and flailing
as they fling themselves and their wards,
dissolving in the brine.

Touchstone replaces himself
and the sinners and poets move on
circling deeper and deeper.

(and the poem must be wide enough
for Touchstone and his demon crew)

Going to Gather Shells

I.

Feet
swift over roots and planks
this morning
on, to the beach
This noon
we were to gather shells
But look!
we have just one cockle

II.

Picnic
wine in plastic cups
Pelicans surf
stream the waves, break the sand
Drunk
hands grope under shirts

III.

Boat
whips the air, pushes through kelp
Your hair
a wing waving to the wind

The Dream of Dependence

when i found you—freckles
staining cheeks, tears
searing flesh-holes,
fist clenched

i reached to pull
a strand of hair
from the corner of your mouth

it persisted

Bones N' Things

A shop full of relics leaning in
South Kansas. Things:
locks of hair, fingernail clippings, and preserved
eyeballs. Bones:
spearheaded fragments, femurs yellowed
and cracked, and skulls without
their jaws. In the evenings, the master
of ceremonies wires them all
to resemble two-legged uprights, plugs them
into the grid—they wag their
thumbs as if they wanted a ride
somewhere. Each lifetime
a customer appears to purchase
memory: a hair brushed
by the hand of a lover, a bone broken
at age eight, you splayed
on concrete, wincing. *Bones N' Things*
where *human* comes true.

Cold

the road unknowable dressed in white
flakes threading a heavy gown for trees
used to life but ominous in the wash
forbidding passage

choice is not for us who follow the path
under veil and bough
lungs digging for air

snow is beautiful *but* our guide warns
it is not a good place to die
we wonder if he is lying
move on

the slope is down and in
time finds among the circles
lake flowing ice
adjusting to swallow and bind
those who would betray
body to
glasses eye, immovable limb

rusted in place above
iron strut bridge
of Traitor
gnawing on delectables

he can hardly move
his head he wants to help us
across

we too have betrayed our bodies

the Traitor knows they don't grant our desire
white with no cold
excuses

so we work for ourselves
ice picks and balancing acts
warm muscles and sex

father-poet falls to the clutch of ice
we move past clandestine
to hide has become our first verb
and once we have stepped lightly over the bridge
hidden under the bedsheet:

cover was never the problem