

Ledger Domain

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Beachhead

I cast no shadow on this littered shore,
dark spike-shaped tails sag beneath the noonday sun
as gulls fall to the smorgasbord feasted
up from the deep beyond—all morning I
have picked my way through the tumult,
shooed hook-bills off their prey, hurled
those stronger horseshoes back into the ebb—
battered, buckled by breakers, taken
by the wash.

Too many armored warriors
dying and dead to tiptoe among—
on their shields, a beach-long hecatomb
of stilled pincers, bayonets, helmets,
mess kits, a marine armada wracked
by last night's storm.

I reach down to
save just one living fossil—to save
myself.

In Dreams Begin Reproaches ...

that wrenching ache when suddenly
I remember what I shouldn't have
forgotten that Mother was dying
 awed by that lapse's enormity
at how fundamentally broken
I was a stranger then the anger
raging ravaging raw
and as quick my quenching sorrow
desperate to make amends somehow.
But where is she? Where did I leave her?
as I lurch through the clacking old train
 car after empty car wondering where
 grasping any improbable clue
arguing still with my failed self
how had I not been and was not there now?
so clear so clear that much I owed her
utterly unworthy of my birth
and then at the last moment I slid
the door open to the room where I
 knew she had just died even then gone
flowers beside the newly made bed
a note in her neat hand thanked someone
for the last cleaning up with some cash
and on the bed in clear plastic wrap
a furled purple umbrella *So her*
I immediately thought after
 thinking the opposite like I did not
know her at all nor now ever could.
The train rumbles on and I
thoroughly corrupt take the money

For Good Measure

From vantage point to vanishing point
yetta to decca to nano to yacto
spark arcing across synapses
constant of light in one second's flight

high-wire net under the taut lyric line
one head plus six others equal a body's height
how cesium seconds fractionate time
span and cubit, foot and ambit, Scoville scale,

decibel, Richter, altimeter, calorie,
stem to stern, head to toe, from the summit
of ambition to despair's deep-sonar nadir
thirty-two feet per second per second

golden mean, Pythagorean, Euclidean,
A to zed then onto the extended units,
jogging along the Möbius Strip Mall.
Yesterdays roved by a tensile memory

four legs, then two, then three, then none
length, width, depth, time plus n variable dimensions
reentrant knight's tour on its 8^2
resonant frequency's threshold of sorrow,

epicycles and music of the spheres
celesta, theremin, didgeridoo, and viola d'amore,
reductio ad absurdum: binary one and naught,
hash marks on the highway blurring to a solid white line,

g-force traveler in a Coney Island cyclotron
aka The Kelvin Mansion on Lagrangian Point.

Palimpsest

Blind in the dark and mute with pen again,
fingertip parsing the rough paper pad
I know is yellow on a brown clipboard,
along these thin blue latitudes I tack
ink black and forth across my unmapped world,
sole discoverer, maybe not till well after
tomorrow, to decipher what the hooks
on those long lines, the net of their weaving,
what small word-hoard raised from memory's hulk
from that oracular deep where I sleep,
interior of my mother's lone child
hauling my way through the long night I flow,
seeds from my nib's groove sail on sinuous
riverruns, dark sea bleeding out of me.

Almost Six

—for *Lauren*

I heard her say tonight to her mother
in secret whisper not to tell that she
loves her dad a lot, smile over shoulder,
“No! Don’t tell!” as I approach, declaim, “Don’t
tell *what?*” in my affected Villain Voice
meant for impish enjoyment as she skirls

and I Frankenstein-forward claws outstretched
gesturing to “tickle spots” under her
armpits: “*NO* Da-ddy!” entreats opposite

replete with giggles and taunts that cast me
in the role of monster and hero,
and I recall her fourth Christmas when I
intoned, “Tiger! Tiger! burning bright—” she
pistoled back, “Won’t you guide my sleigh tonight!”