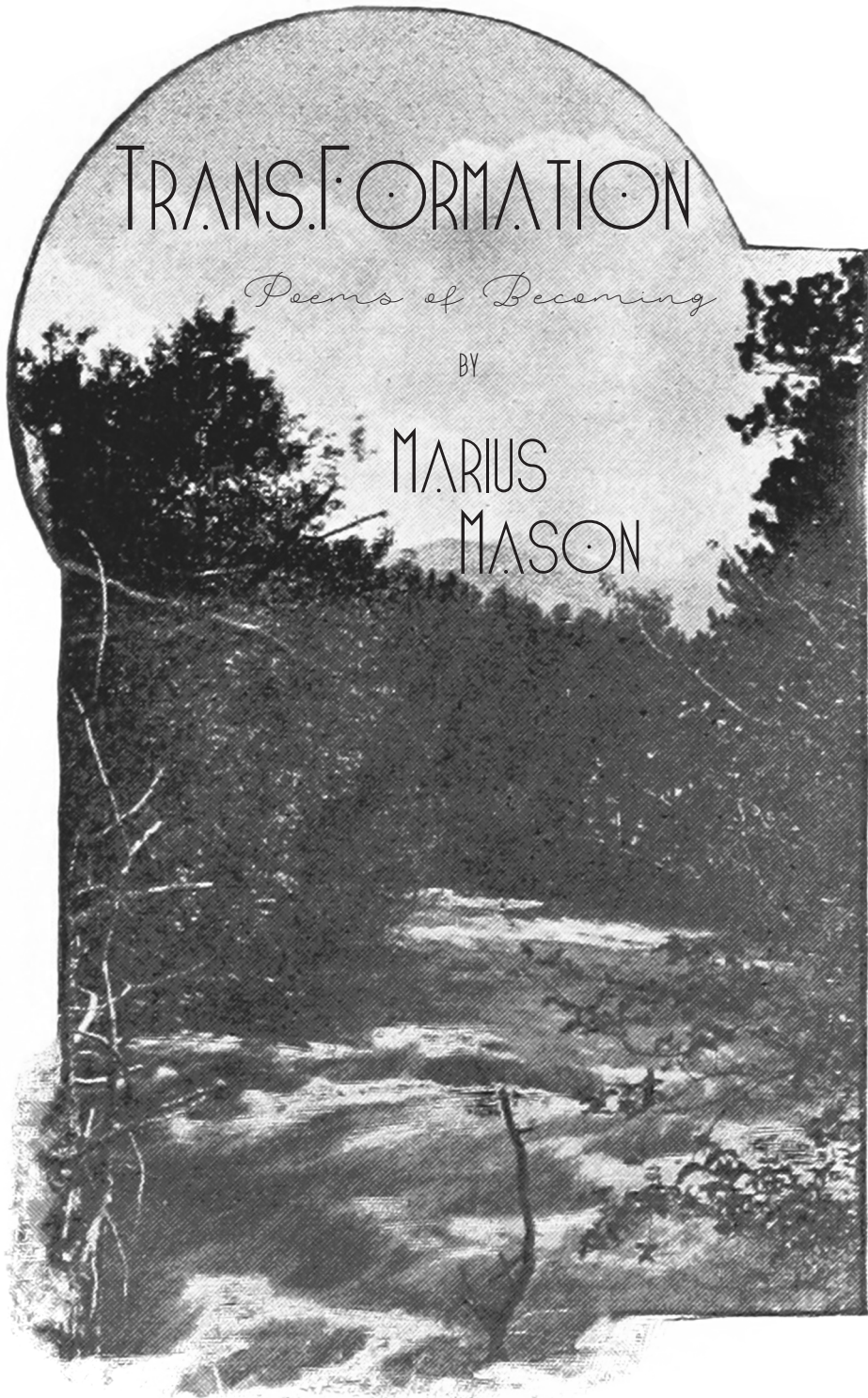


TRANS·FORMATION

Poems of Becoming

BY

MARIUS
MASON



Introduction and Notes on the Text

In February 2009, Marius Mason was sentenced to nearly 22 years in federal prison for two acts of resistance: an arson at a Michigan State University genetics laboratory and an arson of logging equipment in Mesick, Michigan. As part of the plea agreement, Marius also admitted to dozens of other attacks against ecocidal companies, animal exploiters, and other purveyors of domination and control. Prior to his arrest, Marius had been involved for decades in the anarchist, environmental, and labor movements, participating in eco-defense campaigns and union organizing, among other projects. He is also a father, a musician, a painter, a journalist, and, as you will find in the following pages, a poet.

In 2010, Marius was moved to the Administrative Segregation Unit of the Federal Medical Center at Carswell Prison in Fort Worth, Texas. The move separated Marius from his friends and family, and has resulted in restrictions on communication and repeated disruptions of mail. On June 11th, 2014, Marius announced that he is a trans man, and in August 2016, after years of fighting for his autonomy, he became the first known trans man to be allowed to pursue transition from within the federal prison system.

Marius, despite the heavy restrictions put upon him by the prison authorities, despite the curbing of his autonomy over his body and expression of self, despite the many attempts by the state to bury him, has never stopped speaking for and with the earth, animals of all species, and the struggle for liberation of all life. The forms Marius' speech has taken – song, communiqué, poem – exemplify the constellation of subterranean languages available to rebels striving to undo the master's world and unlearn the master's language. The communiqué is words joined with concrete action; the song is words joined with the body; the poem is words trying to unravel themselves from the snare of domination. Destroying this world will require much of us: concrete acts, but also new ways of speaking which put us in communication with the irrepressible wildness flowing beneath our domesticated armoring.

Prisons are defined by what they keep in (our loved ones, our friends, our comrades), but also what they keep out (communication, creativity, beauty). We should not overlook the fact that Marius is held captive in an acutely-repressive prison, where beautiful things are beaten back and any sun that shines brightly is crushed. Faced with blank walls which mangle the imagination and chain link fences which impede the marvels of free life, Marius has not surrendered his inner world to the enemy. Every free breath taken in this hell is a revolutionary act; every word that escapes is contraband.

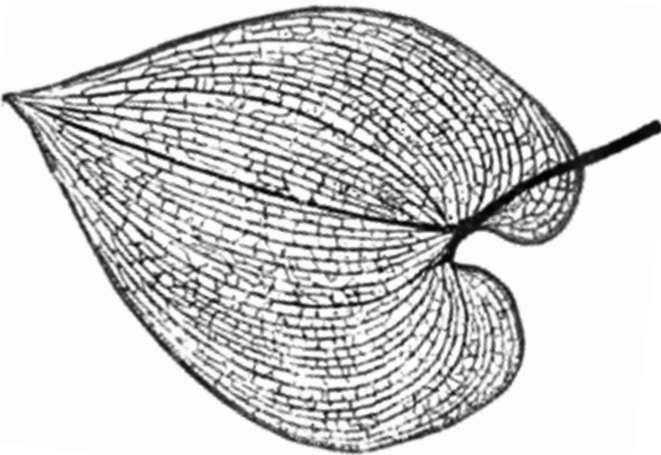
It would do us well – as revolutionaries, and as human beings – to aid our imprisoned comrades in dismantling the fetters placed upon their tongues by the state. It has been said that no one should be able to go through their day without hearing the words of our prisoners. Much remains to be done in order to make this reality rather than rhetoric. This publication is one step in that direction.

We must continue walking the difficult path toward a free world. Marius and all of our comrades deserve nothing less.



Knowing our own, Knowing the other

All places have their own untouchables
Legions of the silent wraiths who carry away the nightwaste
The wrathful ones who dig the ditches or dream outside the lines
Whose livelihoods are distasteful
Whose demeanor is deemed the same
Averting eyes, you might avoid contagion
Move quickly into the light if you can
And the Empire is yours- privilege
The detested take the shadows, the alleys
Stroll slowly to be over-taken
Murdered, myth en-misted, shame veiled
But parallel lives entangle like
Electrons in distant universes
Quantum physics struggles to explain
The mystery of separate but conjoined lives
Particles or souls
All illusions of distinction fall away
If we accept this insight
Knowing our own, knowing the other



Prison Visit

Prison is
Hushed and heavy
Like water near the Ocean's floor,
Then loud and bitter,
Like fractious storms lashing the sky
Everything cement and nerves
And too many years gone by...
The heart requires a place to rest
From all its maddened wanderings
The raft of the Medusa tossed
And trembling in the sea.
Or just this table here
And you across from me,
A sunlit sail
And I this aching castaway.
I cannot touch you – it is not allowed.
Our eyes hold
Hanging onto words
Until a hand falls upon the back
The narrow hall, the clanking keys
The door, the cell
And under.



The Griffith Flaw

When I lived in the world
Of laboratories, glass, machines and noise,
A white-coated novice in
The delicate chemistry of mixing things,
We were warned of the Griffith Flaw in glassware
The crystal lattice structure bruise
From bouncing, banging, bumping
A thousand times on unforgiving surfaces,
Heating and re-heating beakers
In repetition just to prove a point,
Until one unexpected day
The slightest touch of cup to countertop,
It pops.
The shattered pieces propelled out
At last revealing an atomic dysfunctionality,
The reality
Of things rushing towards entropy
As just this morning, likewise
Brushing teeth and peering in the mirror
For the billionth time this life,
I couldn't see me anymore,
The damage of reflection done
And pieces flown away,
What was left, was changed
In ways I could not say.



Entropy



What do you see
In this Winter face?
The imminent decomposition of the unbeautiful?
Even so, even in that
I see that all my pieces
Have their own story.
My hands have worked a brand of
Entropy
That is much more sociology than
Physics.
My body has bourne children
who fly away from me
In becoming of themselves.
This body burned and burning,
Flies apart in exothermic birthing,
Molds again in endothermic coupling,
Touches ground and stretches to the sky,
Dissipating heat.
My hands move across the page
With words this time,
The taste, the sound of them
Drips, mists, rains in torrents,
Common-tongued as a storm on a street corner;
Cursed and shared and necessary.
Fingers pushing colors from my eyes into images that speak,
Or pulling the taut metallic strings of a guitar,
And waves flowing between notes
Falling from my lips
Joining with the air,
Streaming rising, molecules
Dispersed to dance,
Becoming something new,
Somewhere else,
Again.



Untitled 1

An evening like this: summer sunset
cricket song, peachy sky
reaching up the vaulted ceiling, cathedral clouds
clouds shaped like mountains along the Yangtze River
improbable, fairy-tale bubble domes, drifting closer
stilling to stalagmites all along the stretched horizon
quickly darkening to throw this garden into bas-relief
The air no cooler than my blood, and still, so still
The tiny humming of mosquitos hovering in my line of sight
I will remember this when I cannot see
the sun for days on end.





It's Like Aesop Said (an Election Year Cautionary Tale)

Oh these silly frogs, all day long they cry
God tossed back His head, annoyed, with a sigh
They pray for a King and don't want to be free
What shall I do for them, why can't they see?
A King is a dangerous thing
To have or to be
An idea came to Him then, with a smile
Alright, alright, He shouted down to them, just wait a while
I'll make you a 'leader', let this praying be shushed!
Now get out of the way, or else you'll be crushed
From the high vaults of heaven, dropped the prodigious log
Crashing into the waters of the little frogs' bog
It settled, all sturdy, a place in the sun
And the frogs all jumped up to sit, one by one
An evil-eyed pike cruised the shadows and pouted
I can't get you up there, not at all, he shouted
With a flick of his tail, he swam away fast
The little frogs sighed, safe and happy at last
But quickly grew bored, as little frogs do
Oh this log is no King! It can't say what to do!
Their cries rose to Heaven and managed to reach
God's angry ears, and a lesson He'd teach
Oh very well, I will send you a King
One made in Hell, I guess that's the thing!
Enough of your whining, your foolishness dooms you
Here comes your King, you deserve him to rule you!
A black silhouette blocks the sun and the glade
And the frogs all look up from their place in the shade
An imperious heron, a beak sharp as a blade
Feathered pompadour floating, with tons of pomade
Has come to be King of the frogs

Lion

I have been a lion on the plains of Africa
Matching sinew against sinew,
Timing, speed, all considerations
In the meditation of the possible
Measuring the balance,
Risk and resource,
Gain and gamble,
Life and death.
Now I am a lion on a fabricated rock,
Dozing in and out of dreams
Golden eyes reflecting faces
Indolent and gazing,
They at me,
Me at them,
Shadows of ourselves
No longer wild.



Sex and Revolution

As I move my hands my lips across your supple
body blending everything becomes bewildered unpretended
in these moments of ecstatic rhythm
reggae sweat your breath so still
lingering upon my lips
your body mine the last of the wine
spilled between us in a kiss
an offering not offered to some other god
but shared
these moments of ecstatic rhythm writhing
in abandon Dionysus could not have taught me
mysteries more powerful than making love
all acts of pleasure consummate rebellion
all conscious nakedness can shuffle off this mortal coil
and by expanding span the growing chasm between
Self and Not-Self
eliminating borders to abandonment's continuum
a communion of surrender and resistance
which is survival and our happiness
think this: distances are dangerous
illusions of distinctions are conclusions of
extinction
we must be in love with the world become it
to save it from our own self-hatred
lover, I caress the whole in you with every touch
turning us away from sure destruction
bring your lips again to mine
and seal our sweet conspiracy of sex
and revolution pleasure is our bread and wine
and Anarchy our paradise
chaos comes into the inner heart surrounds the world
around just at the moment we dissolve our barriers
against it in these moments of ecstatic rhythm
we become the everywhere and everything
at last, uncontrollable and free

Untitled 2

I am filled with the need to do something sensible
I am filled with the dread of the perceived inevitable
I am fired with the passion of a love unconquerable
I am filled with the poetry that runs a blood river
 Deep within me, moving through me
 Coming out in ways where I've been wounded.





Pain

I bear a present witness to the face of misery and madness,
Tortured souls who across my eyes and sweep the soul aside,
Collectively to hide inside the anus of the body politic
Drenched in offal, horrified, the soul forgets itself
Remembering nothing of its shining, lofty ways upon the wind.
It weighs terrible and heavy, a constant painful witness to this misery and
madness that
We embrace as “civilized”
But we are better than we are, and once we were
This pain deforms us, even as we hide in it
Oh, let it be a chrysalis and not a cage!
As we remember once again together our constant and true nature –
Forever Wild & Free

Isle of Widows

The Isle of Widows, Nicaragua
The heat rises, steam
Moves
With the breath of trees,
Into the air
Haunted eyes speak
Their questions of a mystery
The men of science come to study
This embarrassing plague
This withering away
That leaves the widows wondering.
What is the science of oppression?
Dr. Mengele knew,
Lurching through the labs
Of a past that keeps repeating.
One watches without compassion.
One takes notes.
Hypothesis:
Can we demonstrate that decades
Of muscles, tortured and stretched taut,
Dessicated and starved,
Both trees and men
Carved
To pull the juices out
That make the wheels
That run the Machine –
That this is what makes husks of men?
Hypothesis:
The delicate dust, pot-pouri
This chemistry
That drapes the trees
A veil for the bride of industry –
Is it reliable to say
That this is why the kidneys
Fail?

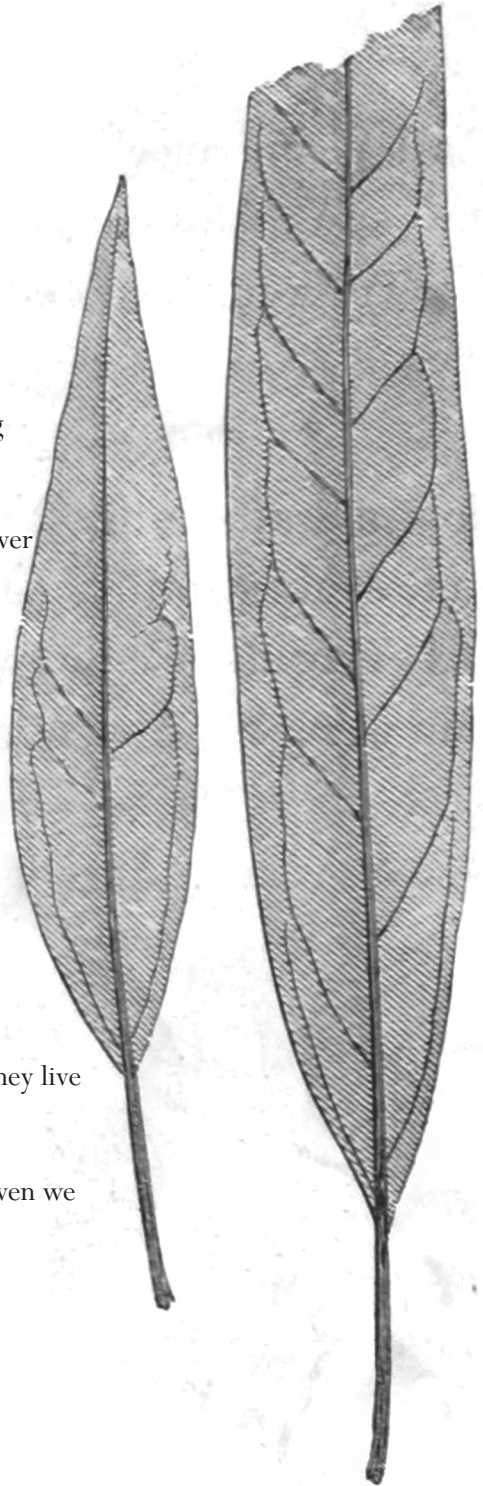




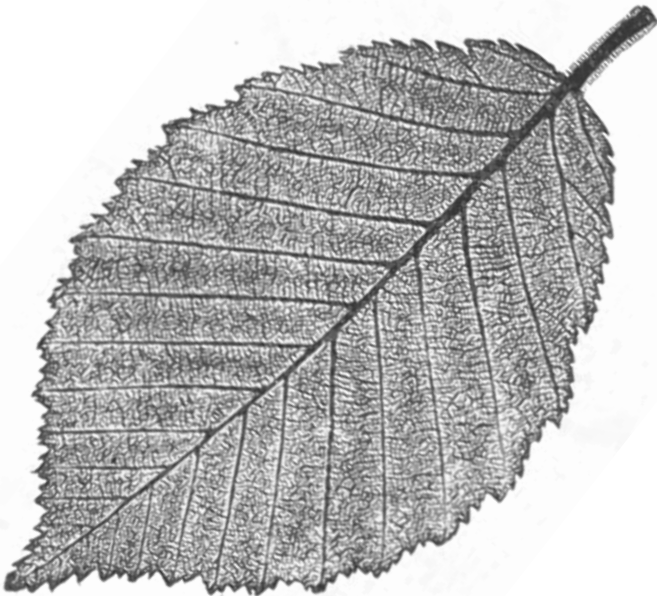
How can we conceivably equivocate?
Data must be reproducible
After all,
We are concerned with methodology
Not murder.
But by measurement,
We engage and change
The very thing we measure.
Heisenberg knew everything.
The possibilities of multiple hypotheses
Obscures the issue
Like a miasma rising from the
Fermenting swamp
Of colonial relationships.
Old at nineteen
The bones pushing the envelope
Of brown skin
Internally imploding
On the Isle of Widows
One boy wants to know why he is dying.
So they take his blood,
Then shrug
And send him home to die.

Pattern

What lies within, still ties without
One flowing through one
From one into another
A filament of Spirit
Spun spider fine
And finite
Just enough to touch us all.
Tying tiny threads of possibility
Tangling in the warp and woof of being
Of beings that combined begin to be
A Pattern
My blood a river running through forever
Traveling through Time to be, to die
And yet again to Be
A Pattern
And even so, it is illusion
Everything that is and is not
Solid matter moves in mini-galaxies
Of energy, attraction and repulsion
Particles partnered and divorced
In constant cycles
Spiraling out from tiny orbits to
The constancy of crystals
As they form a myriad molecules
Then break free to form another form
Until the forms are so expanded that they live
Like nations
Sovereign and undivided
A wolf, a man, a mouse, a tree – and even we
Are only parts of something whole
Portals to an entity that seems
Complete, complex
And yet
Spins within the galaxy of
Planets



Space yawning cold between
And all in turn in motion
Moving as a single Universe
A Pattern that is, is not
And is again
Only the most dangerous and
Arrogant of soul insanity
Could dictate that the thread
Be cut
At any point
For we are tied
One to another
A filament of Spirit
Spun spider fine
And finite
Just enough to touch us
All.



Untitled 3

stagger drunkenly towards truth
meaning circles in a dervish spiral
spinning, coming closer to the center
reaching out to grasp the bigger picture
beneath this night sky, blackened and still
blanketed with stars
what hand moved this chaos into beauty?
each point singular, unique and self-sufficient
but collectively, contributing its own fire unto the
whole
and all of it so huge past understanding
a wonderment of firmament proportions
rooted in the Earth, my toes dig in to hold me
stretching up to touch this light
with hands aching to be more
I am a tree, the bridge between,
And revelation slams into perception
like a comet skipping on the edge of atmosphere
And She is there in pieces
within me and without me
She speaks to me in stars
you are the everything and nothing
of your own desire and detachment
be with Me
and We
are Beautiful.





Help

“Refuse no one the good on which he has a claim
when it is in your power to do it for him.”

-Book of Proverbs, Bible

“Refuse none help that cry for it”
And it is celebrated virtue
So exhorted for a thousand years,
But still the trees are mystified
That in their general innocence,
Their generosity and grace
That lifts us all,
Their cries for no more help
Than to be left alone in endless peace,
Each Bodhisattva bridging Earth and Heaven –
These cries
Fall into the graves
Of human ears
And seal our fate,
Entwined.



Still and Yet

Still, the mid-wife's jar
sits in a corner of a solemn room
ready with the herbs, ancient and almost reliable,
for cleaning house, a tug within
that leaves & black hole, gaping,
hungry
for the time when we will have our freedom

freedom not pulled out
bloody on the hook of a hanger
illegal instrument high jacked
for a purpose larger than life
Or children slapped away,

Mothers catatonic and despondently cruel at the dead-end
Of the spectrum, parent and child alike robbed of nurture, famished,
Babies thrown in garbage dumps and children,
Sight unseen, snatched away by grasping, greedy
hands, the wealthy parasitic class came to claim the prize
or fainting, standing at the health factory, daunted by throbbing hordes of vigilantes,
Or inside waiting to be counseled into dropping
\$300 bucks and a fetus
Into the corporate bucket
Of commodities and dreams

Or hand out ready, shaking a bowl
At the government
Aims to terminate a life
With no other script than conscription
Clutching Uncle Sam's knees
Perpetual multitudes born already
ploughing, eyes cast down
Living small in the belly of the beast
Belly broadening, a serf to Greed Incarnate

I am sick to death
Of men forcing women
To have babies
Denying gender gifts
And raping their own issue,
Be family these enforced new lives

And I am sick to death

To lose babies

Emotional blackmail of abandonment

In convenient and slippery denial

Is this progressive?

And once again the woman bears

Or bears responsibility and risk alone

Until it is no more

A question of financial obligation/devastation

Or external pseudo moral pressing down demand submission

We do not have our freedom

Until it is an unencumbered choice

To live one's life without entanglements

Accomplishing the hearts desire

We do not have our freedom

Until the balance zeros

For every woman, every time

The fact of imminent potential issue

Must be faced

We do not have our freedom

Until we complete the circle of community

Where all ways of living joyfully and harmless

Can be practiced in the light

Without impediment to any path

We do not have our freedom

Until the balance zeros

For every woman, every time

The fact of imminent potential issue

Must be faced

We do not have our freedom

Until we complete the circle of community

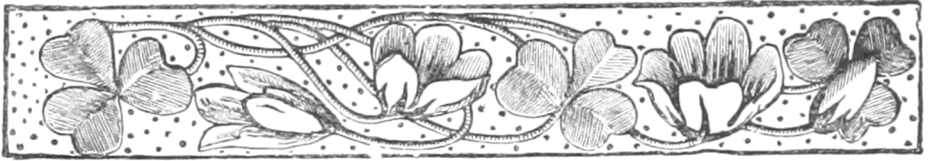
Where all ways of living joyfully and harmless

Can be practiced in the light

Without impediment to any path

We do not have our freedom

And we do not have our freedom yet

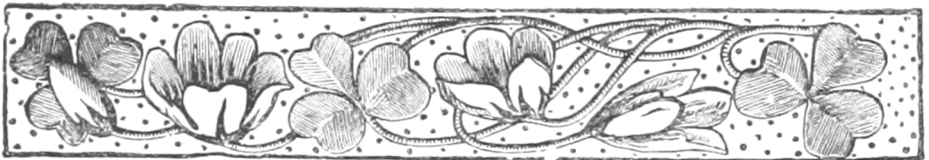


Fire

My fire once spread like a California blaze
Summer hot and crazy fast
Words hitting the wind like bright, red embers
Bursting into stars along the dry framing of developments
And hurtling like comets through the hallowed halls,
Those ivory towers keeping harems for the
Masters
or chewing through the chipped remains
The blistered remnants of a leveled forest
Cleared away like so much trash
So that they can slather asphalt
On the butchered ground
Just one more senseless road
But sometimes even now, a wolf cries
And that howl carries cinders and a song
The woods alive under a full moon
The gathering of tribes
Feral al fey
Raucous rhythms to alert all demons
and their demented minions everywhere
Our hearts are full of good intentions
And we have leashes in our hands

Open at your own risk

Just another ripe fruit thrown
Discord's golden apple at the wedding
Not just a raisin in the Harlem sun
Denied manifestation, that quotidian portion
Of the desperately quiet man,
but fermented, full and hot
Of juice and rot,
It has to pop
Unloading multitudinous and messy variations
Of a self denied
A continuum of approximations spread far and wide
The money shot is never a surprise, really
This life is a letter bomb and clearly marked
'Open at your own risk'
But neither Pandora nor I could ever resist
Compelled to play Russian Roulette
It's the third spin, it's your money or your life again
So spin and see what happens
Next





The Blues Are Older Than Memphis

From mem'ries of Eurydice
The living Orpheus retreats
In agony condemns
His gifts and disdains life
A lyre that fills with song inspired,
By grief beguiled
The breathless trees lean in and fill
With silent, watchful birds
Who
Bearing voiceless witness, sigh
This love denied
By death and second chances lost
Entangles all
Who hearing,
Are enthralled
In most exquisite and
Connective pain
('cuz everybody loves the blues)

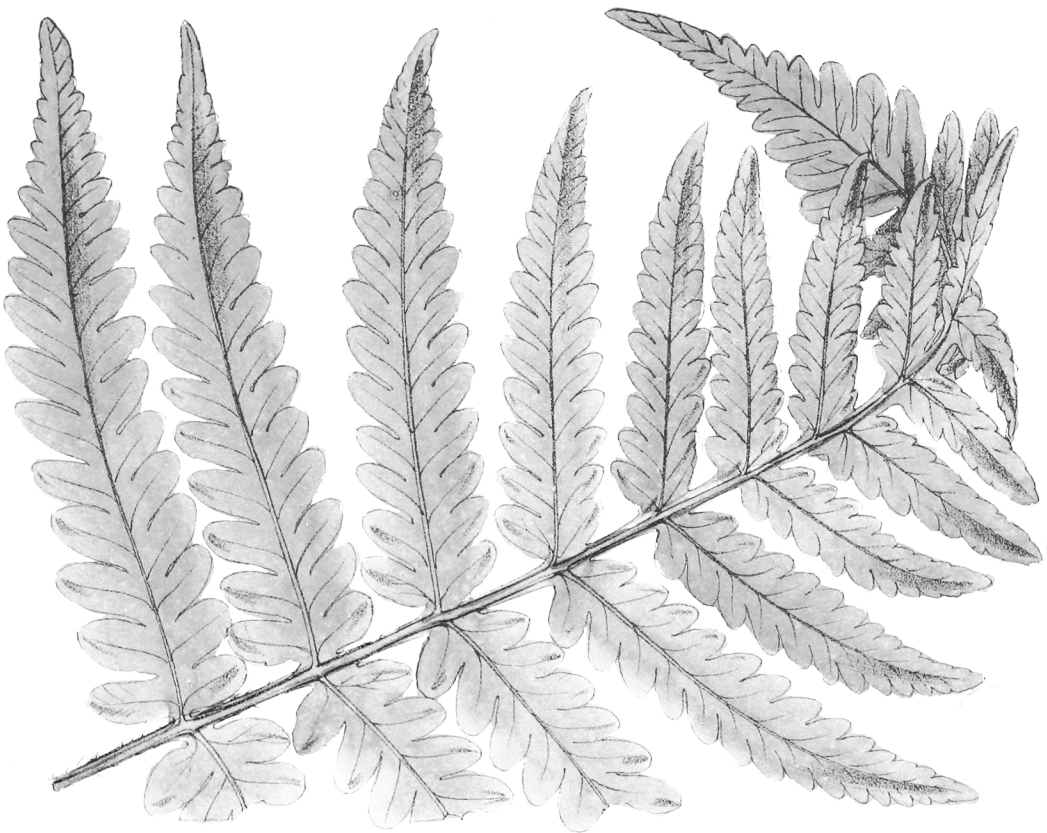


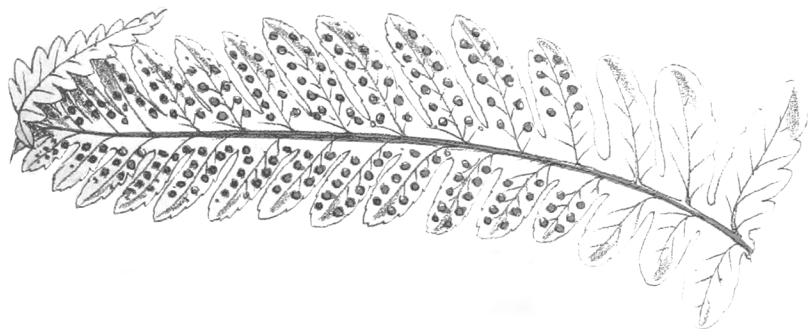
Bathroom Law

I am in the middle of a shit storm without a scrap of toilet paper
Trans and token and barely tolerated in Texas,
Though way past school-age
The news these past few days like a Jerry Springer marathon on one topic
Unhinged angry-faced bullies, Rainbow hearts and brave allies
Accusations and absurdities fly around the room like spitballs
All about who can do what where in the bathrooms at school
We all gotta pee, it's a commonality
In history, predictably, there's always the backlash
Every tortured step forward in civil rights progression towards equality, humanity
Is met with tragedy
From battered Medgar Evers' body
And Billie Holiday's strange hangin' fruit
To secret sailors flung overboard at sea and
Harvey Milk gunned down for being gay
How many years of little white signs on Bathrooms, drinking fountains, busses
Throughout the taciturn South
That said that to share this American life as equal citizens
Was to be contaminated
Those thugs worried about safety, too
They were protecting Southern womanhood by killing four little girls at church
What a load of crap, a tsunami of filth
A backed-up toilet of ignorance, no less dangerous
For its lack of common sense
But here's the clincher
We all have skin in this game
No matter what color you are
We all gotta pee, it's a commonality
and just like those wily old Nazis
Who knew to go for the edges, then cut to the middle
If they can make laws shaming and blaming and curtailing the rights
Of people like me, now
Then they can make a law stick to your sore spot, too
It's all about power and precedent,
And really, we all gotta pee
That's just human

Minotaur

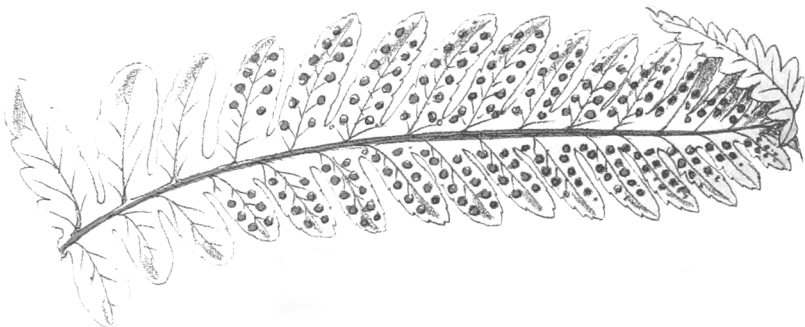
Bull-headed, yes
That's what I'd say
Crashing around the world like in the proverbial china shop
All those broken pieces left behind
No wonder it was the Labyrinth for me
Still, my fingers touch upon (from time to time)
A silken thread in the half-dark
Winding through these endless, circling halls
And somewhere close
I smell a torch that burns





Pacing the Cage

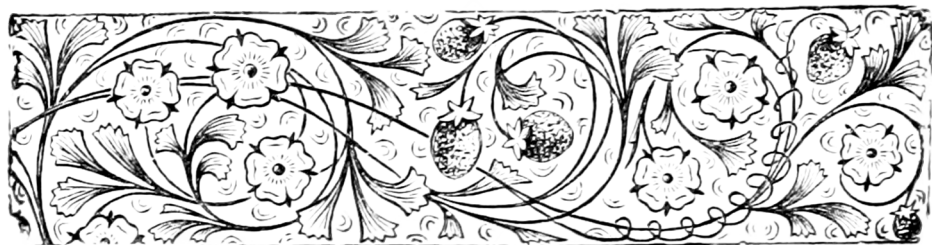
Clicking like a June bug's coat
 Against the window's glass
 Smash and smash and smash
 Each sharp sting separated by a bout of drunken flight in helpless swirls,
 Like how I put the colors on a cardboard plate
 Forming an idea, but monkey mind is
 Off and running, endless leaps and lunges
 Tethered, tempered, tested, defining territory in resistance
 Just like I touch the metal fences
 As I run the corners of the yard
 Like some ancient Irish seventh son
 The expendable one
 Who sounded the alarm
 And marked the boundaries of home
 And where the war begins



Like Waiting for Godot

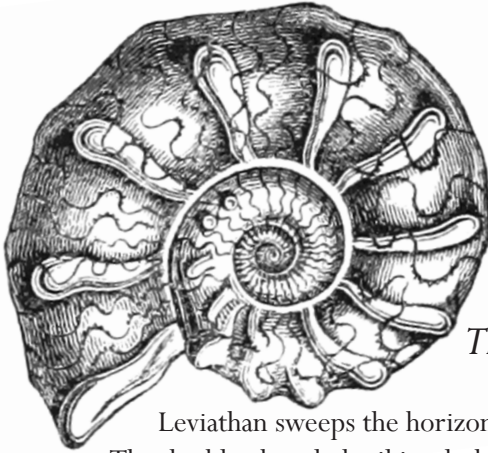
So many years spent living in this cement fruit bowl
Enclosed on every side, almost to have forgotten the horizon
But, eyes closed, I can still picture it across Lake Michigan
Travelling on a barge, the edge slipping ever out of reach
What stays just beyond
A defeat measured in distance
And time, as well - always the untouchable future
Existing in possibility, but not in the present
Like waiting for
Godot
Who never comes- the sign, signal and release
of an arrival, withheld
And the poison of inaction
The inanity of inertia
Undoes my last hope,
Bleeds meaning from my life
'Hemorrhages my identity
And dignity, until my life's empty husk
Blows dry and brittle, rattling
Around in this uniform
An unformed and unrealized
Unperson





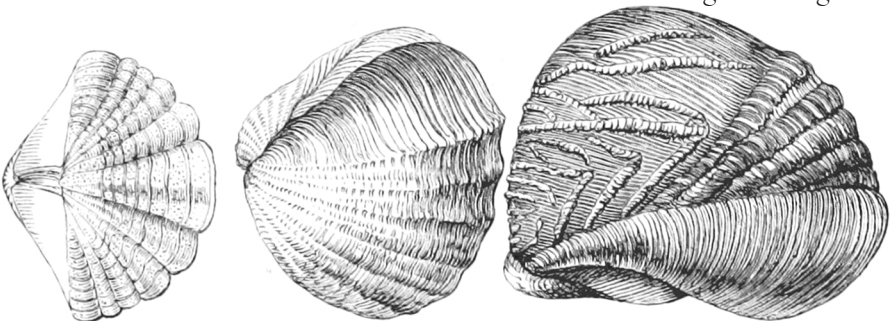
She Steps In

A man
Is falling through my passing dreams
Like Icarus, a disastrous precipitation
Repeated endlessly each morning
Those broken wings and feathers scattered
Molten wax and metamorphosis
As Jezebel alights upon the bed and stretches into being
The alarm clock buzzes, angry bees announce her time
And those praying mantis limbs unfold, feet touch the floor
She casts a wary eye around an empty room' Then stoops to pull the covers
straight again
And in that deft, small gesture
She has erased the last imprint of
A man



The Critical Krill

Leviathan sweeps the horizon, beloved behemoth
The double-shoveled tail implodes the space between
Water and air
Seen from space by busy satellites
Passing past Greenpeace zodiacs,
And cruising trawlers, stories high
Scraping the ocean floor with nets so wide and deep,
Everything on such a grand scale that words like
Huge and monster are beggared by the truth
A world away, a billion mouths in a hundred lands
Gape and gulp at the riches of the sea
And fancy themselves the masters of the Universe
With all the world their table, spread with delectable's
That once were lives
And all those grand illusionists could not exist at all
Without the tiny, glassine, fragile, impossibly fringed and fancy crustaceans,
The critical krill,
Hidden in the dark waters
But holding all the light.





I Shall be Released

It may be years before anyone sees me here at all
My transition is a conceptual art installation
A work in progress – with no progress
These are mean times, in the meantime
There's a rhythm to my heartbeat that's
Faster now than it has ever been
And I speak to my heart in meditation
The self selling the self
Try to whisper an apology
We are not at war
The flutter of my breath on my lips tells me
I shaved today
Though I realize that is not wisdom, I should be less aware of that
Thinking, I am thinking
And not meditating
(which is failing to meditate)
But for one fragment of a space between breaths
I am off, I am with, am not alone as I
As such, per se
Reprieved of this iteration
And can believe (perhaps, tentatively)
That I will be released.



To get updates on Marius please visit
www.supportmariusmason.org

Letters are a life-line. Pen-pal's and responses
to the poems are always appreciated
and help Marius stay connected to the outside world.

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