

Michael Gregory

five pieces from *Pound Laundry*:

Radiant instances radio corpses
tagged on the toe of so much dirty linen —
fascist modernist anti-Semitic
money-crank intellectual snob
revolutionary simpleton

a sensibility without a mind
vainglorious dogmatic ridiculous
opinionated wobbly in the head anal-
erotic anal-sadistic grandiose —
metaphors of metaphors for the act

yet something specified as experience
translative transmissive transumptive transformative
cumulative detail spontaneously
come busting through the quotidian into figures
indicative of alternative dimensions

so some feel it enough themselves to believe
or short of that at least see a path
to where the light may be taken up
the stones come together on their own
after the musician has stopped playing.

Mnemosyne his true Penelope
godmother of all imagination

whose daughters helping us winnow out the chaff
help us too to bring love into all our art

dress the stone skim off the dross
forget all we once set out to learn

remember our memories of a paradise
we never did real time in

All the sense-impressions in her keep
released at her discretion or not and when

to be incorporated by will and desire
projected outward by reason and intellect

the whole production process symphonic
a systole/diastole breathe-in/breathe-out hermetic

all one's faculties about one
dancing in peace and joy to sirensongs

All the idioms dialects
diacritical remarks intonations

this unforgettable taste and aroma
this breath of air in the maelstrom

this thread of this color traced back
through these cats' cradles of unspun wool

played out all at once on the walls of the skull
totalitarian in the sense of coherent

A fluid entanglement of economics
politics ethics art you name it

touching all bases all *p*'s and *q*'s
all prevalent mannerisms minded

cosmos and even the consciousness
inherent in that cosmos the whole

kit and kaboodle set close to the wind
some sense of pride in the clean cut of her jib

Flotsam and jetsam *gists and piths*
drafts and fragments ply over ply
all that glitters in the backwash
agitating the moonlit shingle

Upward working with the ear
more fanciful than Isidorus
in an effort to antecede
old Skeat's primordials

Fenollosa with the eye
intricating identities
stick figures and moving pictures
between nouns and pronouns, both eye

and ear more or less liberated
from the idea that the beautiful
is the hellenic caressible
the physically attractive,

both directing the reader's perception
to subsets of sense-data
not conventionally thought to be
units of meaning, both accounts

paying phenomenological
attentiveness to phonetic and graphic
linguistic paraphernalia
in their attempts to grant language

an inherent empathetic
immediacy by by-passing —
as the intentional structures revealed
by Agassiz' fish out of water

by-passed hit-and-miss evolution —
historically specific
dialogue that argues for meaning
as a collective achievement.

What are you, box? I am
goddess of all foreigners
diety of the Land of Punt
daughter of Horus daughter of Rē
wife to Horus wife to Ptah
a woman a cow a tree a sistrum
both seven and one goddess of the moon
of the earth of the western hills of the dead
goddess of joy and love queen
of merriment of music dance
laughter song the sovereign.

Yet with all the lower kingdom
goddesses available
to animate the final pages
where justice is said to lead up to
a non-artificial paradise,
choosing to fabricate his own
Nile princess Ra-Set
of two male gods morphed
into a goddess figure by simple
hyphenation of masculine names
a juxtaposition of hieroglyphs
composing a father/daughter androgyne.

Theory given the lie by practice said some
who might with just cause execrate him,
the conscience of reason and art founded on rejection
of the will to power foundered on the will to order

the luciform swiveling city built by voices
striking the air glinting in the sun *ever more*
luminous in the light perfectly beautiful
in its formal realization each word

conserving — consubstantial with — the person it names
or who utters it (the authority of the author
privy to special knowledge of how to restore
antediluvian hierarchical social values)

a house of fame storing rhetorical flatulence
a house of glass in splinters from a bent axle
transformed into a contradictory message:
not a one-way radio transmission

but a verbal economy of exchange
language not as *logos* but as communication
a democracy of words histories
cultures impossible to exhaust or rank

every grain strain and swatch its own truth
a constantly site-specific text with no center
a chordal simultaneity at pains to put off
any coherence save that of its own provisional nature.

Not exactly the possum's forlorn prayer that salvation
come after death but acceptance on faith hope
karites that art might evade the overreach
of the one true church might find perch and purchase

unconfined by the skull might spread the word that
belief in difference for the sake of the different
is *our power to resist provoke re-think take sides*
in a reflection of *a conception of meaning.*