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## House of Women

Robin L. Rahija

University of Kentucky, robinsontheimer@gmail.com

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Robin L. Rahija, Student

Julia Johnson, Major Professor

Dr. Andy Doolen, Director of Graduate Studies

HOUSE OF WOMEN

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Thesis

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in the  
College of Arts and Sciences  
at the University of Kentucky

By Robin LaMer Rahija

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Julia Johnson Professor of Poetry

Lexington, Kentucky

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### HOUSE OF WOMEN

A collection of poetry dealing with women, language, and Bachelard's concept of the poetics of space.

KEYWORDS: Women, Language, Gaston Bachelard, Feminism, Poetry

Robin LaMer Rahija

April 26, 2016

HOUSE OF WOMEN

by

Robin LaMer Rahija

Julia Johnson

Director of Thesis

Andy Doolen

Director of Graduate Studies

April 26, 2016

Date

*FOR GREG*

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*Gritty Silk*: “The Rules,” “The Secret Rules”

*Magma*: “A Man is Shot in a Drive-By Across the Street”

*The Tusculum Review*: “Dear Gregory (III.)”

*PANK*: “Gregory’s Monologue”

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	iii
The Founding 1843 .....	1
The Vinosgrad Book of Riddles .....	2
Preparing Temporal Explosions .....	3
Boss Tom Shakes Young Margaret’s Hand Circa 1935 .....	4
The Landfill .....	5
Founders Day 1994.....	6
In the Morning We Must Sweep out the Shadows.....	7
My Teacher in the House of Women.....	8
The Rules.....	10
The Secret Rules.....	11
Retrograde Dance Party Explosion.....	13
A Man Is Shot in a Drive-By Across the Street .....	14
Then My Mother Dies.....	15
Imprecision of the Inner Life.....	16
Dear Mikey (I.).....	17
Dear Lewis (I.).....	18
Dear Mikey (II.).....	19
Dear Phil (I.).....	20
Dear Mikey (III.).....	21
Dear Phil (II.).....	22
Dear Mikey (IV.).....	23
Dear Lewis.....	24
Our Melancholy Fates.....	25
Arcadium.....	26
Another Temporal Explosion.....	27
How to Avoid Second Person Point of View.....	28
Dear Lewis (III.).....	30
Dear Gregory (I.).....	32
Dear Gregory (II.).....	33
Dear Gregory (III.).....	34
Perseids Fall.....	35
My Lack.....	36
Mikey (V.).....	37
Table of Contents.....	38
A Bird Cant.....	39
Transitivity.....	40
Modernist Insects.....	41
Two trains kiss lightly.....	42
Gregory’s Monologue.....	43
The Fountain Across the Street is a Spectrometer for My Mood.....	44
It Don’t Mean a Thing if it Don’t Mean a Thing.....	45
Two Fools at the Philharmonic.....	46

Our Nonverbal Conversation Translated into the Syntax of Fodor's Language of Thought Hypothesis.....	47
Robin LaMer Rahija Unlimited by Time and Space.....	48
Alive in the First House.....	49
Vita.....	50

## The Founding 1843

The blacksmith  
pours smelt  
in the shape  
of a city  
next to  
the tree  
with hollow  
for bones.  
People  
from Virginia  
to Oregon  
hide treasure—  
letters in the tree  
are want  
to be found.  
The vintner  
turned blacksmith  
caresses  
the tree  
fences wrap  
round  
and around  
and around.  
The people  
he offered  
wanted  
to die there  
a legion  
of suckers  
to build  
a new town.

## The Vinosgrad Book of Riddles

### I.

The Thief who swallows the song  
thwarts the Knight and swallows  
the sun burnt the meat and wallows  
in mud stabs the Maid and carries the knife  
fights the Vicar and steals his wife  
is not the victor is in the wrong  
The Thief is the knife his hand is the song

### II.

I have a lie and a secret  
The lie is that I am a woman  
The secret is that I am a woman

### III.

The Mechanic of horses  
laces his braces  
shoes and muses  
doctors and nurses  
wounds and bruises  
cursed by the palfrey  
witch of St. Newswick

### IV.

The rood births  
the rude witch  
who in turn  
births crude me  
To conceive is forbidden

### V.

The Maiden of Vinosgrad  
no maiden all  
not really from Vinosgrad  
from no where at all.  
Was from Nowhereatall  
over the wall  
No Maiden came safely  
with no wherewithal

## Preparing Temporal Explosions

On the day I was born  
a hundred years ago...  
they had phones back then  
with buttons and cords.  
A voice would fly  
like angels to sing  
on the day I was born  
in summer in Vinosgrad.

The woman spat juice  
on the grave on the body  
the day I died  
in Vinosgrad in summer.  
Everyone should have  
this kind of kiss  
the day they die  
in summer at rest.

Boss Tom Shakes Young Margaret's Hand Circa 1935

Your father won't starve  
tonight. I'll put him  
in charge of the water.

Your old maid aunts  
are lovely and talk  
a good socialite to death.

I know all the angles  
of organizing and every man  
I meet becomes my friend.

Remember when you turn  
eighteen and the ballots bark  
for your hand—

under the creek  
are rabbits buried.

## The Landfill

There are women here  
clad in ragweed.  
They love  
birth  
and grieve.  
Tiny nature creeps  
in the crevices.  
A vine stings.  
A bird crawls.  
A beetle sings.  
Anything you want  
is here  
somewhere  
under the seething fires.  
And what can I say  
about the men  
of this village.  
Walking fists  
with glass in their feet.  
We start a seed  
and grow a mountain.  
Once we come  
we can never leave.  
We can wade  
through the bodies  
of ghosts and beasts.  
We can scavenge  
for meat  
and rupture our throats  
just for the chance  
to love birth and grieve.

Founders Day 1994

The carnival  
a death trap  
we wanted  
to break us  
the Octopus  
to fall us  
around us  
and crush us  
a legion  
of children  
who wanted  
the death wish  
who wanted  
to not have  
to try not  
to want.

## In the Morning We Must Sweep out the Shadows

Abandoned at grandma's Friday nights  
my sister and I banished  
to the front room that functioned  
as the old storefront in the 60s.

In the darkest corner  
the ancient window fan  
chops slowly unplugged  
propelled by a slow hot breeze.

The deep freezer for past-butchered shanks  
grinds into the carpet by its own husky weight.  
Clear glass top and curved corners  
and stainless steel patina.

We bury wet rags  
under the TV dinners  
and gallon tubs of cheap ice-cream.

Hard to wait  
for that brief rough relief  
the frozen rag on  
our burning limbs and necks  
as big sister kicks  
the sheets off the hide-a-bed.

We dare not turn that bestial fan on.  
Barely a rusty wire mess separates  
our small fingers from the blades  
our humid suffering outweighed by our cold fear.  
The horrible growl of wild machine.

My Teacher in the House of Women

She pretends  
she isn't Catholic  
but she is.

    We all are.

She tells me  
the big joke God played on us  
while we all crack eggs together  
every morning for breakfast  
    To make new life is too easy.  
    He could have made it harder  
    but he didn't.

I want new shoes  
and a Walkman.

She says  
    Don't go out there  
    There are people out there.

I dream of touching the faces  
of many many boys.

She says  
    Magic is real and love  
    is a just social construction.

I prepare to sneak out of the house.

She says  
    Trust no one.  
    Especially men.

I fantasize about burning the house  
and perhaps cracking the brains  
of everyone in it first.

She says  
    Fire is inevitable.  
    Things will find a way to ignite themselves.  
    Things want to burn.

I covet many dramatic and generic  
objects and actions now

that won't be important later.

She says

To make a new life out of the mistake  
of an old one is too hard.

He could have made it easier for you  
but he didn't.

## The Rules

To look is to act especially  
if the look is really a stare  
and the gazed upon  
pass in a silent cloud  
of social ceremony so soft  
you could nap on it  
and by nap I mean  
glide along the sidewalk  
with a cocktail inspired affect.  
If you pass through the cloud  
everyone will look like your mother  
but they will like you even less.  
Your embrace of the lover  
inside the stranger will look  
from the outside like a bear hugging  
a small and very scandalized pine tree.  
Inside the cloud is hazy like  
a dream in a bad 80s movie.  
You might need to focus  
your wit and words into a sharp  
stick to wave around until  
you hit the heart of your enemy.  
After they are slain you find  
oops it was your dream friend  
the whole time. *No one likes me*  
your dream friend whispers  
and then dies  
with a passionate flourish.  
They lay with the cracked head  
of a child who looks very  
much like a kid with whom  
you went to grammar school  
whose name was  
kid-whose-eye-leaks-a-sticky-grime.  
And you point and stare and beat  
the eponymous eye  
and want to shout *I like you!*  
but the stick has disappeared  
and was it ever even  
in your hand and this  
has all gotten a little  
too abstract for your liking.

## The Secret Rules

Yes I convinced Adam Walker  
to jump into Longview Lake  
naked at midnight off the old dock

the thing not much more than a myth  
itself the discovery of which depended  
on a set of word of mouth directions

passed amongst the other bad kids:  
park your car at the baseball diamond  
walk at a certain angle through the field

at a specific time of a summer's night  
toward the tree bent West  
climb along the humid water's edge until

the trees thin to reveal the old slats  
and nails barely risen from the surface  
hidden and ripe for teenagerly behavior.

I was sleeping with Tim but  
I also wanted to be sleeping with Adam.  
This was nothing against Tim

it's just that I wanted every beautiful  
body that cocked its head a certain way  
and this was a time of practice.

Through a combo of bad teen movies  
and pheromonal instinct I knew  
the action to take in this situation

was to steal his trunks from the dock.  
I dangled them over his head  
like a fishing line until he bobbed up

and pulled them and I into the water.  
I waited two years to break  
his innocent little stoner heart

like a teacup for vague reasons  
related to college and type of books  
enjoyed and amount of drugs consumed.

Oh Matthew Adam Walker I never really saw you  
for all the water that surrounded us  
even as later during a fishing trip

gone very real-life  
he pulled my swimless form from  
the greedy currents of the river

swollen from a sudden summer rain.  
Not a word about the almost-happened  
for the whole three hours we stumbled

through the woods to find a rumored  
bridge over this river so different  
from the calm lake where I first

touched his body underwater.  
When the trees finally parted  
and we crossed with our legs and arms

cut up and our feet bruised —  
our shoes sacrificed to the hungry river.  
I did not hold his hand.

## Retrograde Dance Party Explosion

We prove the wooden floors by dancing.  
We dance as if we are leaking math.  
A step unsure halts our revelation

of space between and beneath our feet.  
We watch concrete projected upon,  
a silent film—black and white.

A doorknob becomes our hand revolving  
angles of light through a hinge in the wall.  
The ceiling gives or never was.

Our bodies hope to hold themselves  
whole awhile half as well  
as the fixed skin of stars we rotate below.

A Man Is Shot in a Drive-By Across the Street

I think more these days  
of his friend walking just  
right next to him  
who lived  
and howled through the slow  
understanding of the terrible  
reality pressed upon them  
and his howl said

*If I don't make this sound  
I will explode  
from the absence of him.*

And the howl moved toward me  
across the street like a milkweed seed.

## Then My Mother Dies

My mother's really  
dead this time. Also  
ten thousand monarchs  
crashed today in a  
research transport plane.  
Crisp wingéd with dust  
they litter the tips  
of the Sierra  
Madres. Everyone  
thought it suicide.  
When is the next time  
those mountains will have  
so much press coverage.

## Imprecision of the Inner Life

A salamander's eyes  
unfold into lotuses

which sprout seeds  
and petals together.

With one eye it sees the past.  
With one eye it sees only

the other eye.

If curled up  
its whole body

could fit inside  
a walnut shell

It drops into the woman's  
nugatory mouth.

Now when I eat  
I see children.

I touched the first star

compared to which  
the sun is ugly.

I slept for 20 years but  
now I'm awake and ready.

Never mind that  
I don't have eyes yet.

Dear Mikey (I.)

The houses take on detail here.  
God this town is as glossy clean  
as Rockwell's ass.

When will you come tear  
down these red doors  
off these white French Colonials.

You know I hate punctuation  
so just shut up about it.

This heat inspires  
destruction within me.

Dear Lewis (I.)

Don't take her words  
personally.

She is just a woman  
with her own agenda  
and you know that way  
you can talk in your own head  
and judge the idiots around you  
and exist and perceive  
and opine and if you sit  
all day and do nothing  
nothing has gotten done  
anywhere by anyone  
and if you forget about someone  
they remain unchanging until  
you see them again  
and then they are just the same  
and it's all like your own movie  
all about you?

Well she has that same thing  
going on expect  
you aren't very important  
in her version.

Dear Mikey (II.)

In your epistolary  
cookbook in verse  
in the index

I will be between  
Reblochon cheese  
and rhubarb pie.

Dear Phil (I.)

Remember the time  
you fell asleep with BBQ ribs  
in your hands.

The Adam of the Rust Belt.  
You woke up with an Eve.  
There were many back then.

Ha ha we had good times  
as platonic roommates  
with paper doors  
between our sex lives.

How like a sitcom we were.  
Did you see in the news  
that the earth has cracked  
and one hundred years  
of generational dirt  
once just quaking beneath us  
now comes spilling out.

It's sin of course  
but we didn't believe  
and now we'll pay.

Dear Mikey (III.)

Predicting popular food trends  
may seem sly to you  
but what of the agricultural  
economic collapse  
in our nation's heartland.

What of the U-bomb in Kansas  
last summer.

How many  
food based hobbies do you  
need anyway.

You already have the food bank  
the freegan restaurant  
the soup line  
the community garden.

How many ways  
can you give  
stale leftovers  
to humiliated single mothers.

Dear Phil (II.)

Remember when your mom  
held the phone up to her prayer  
so it could touch you  
over the wire on its way to god's ear.

Dear Mikey (IV.)

You only knew first  
what hunger kept  
from me in youth.

*Hunger says there is not  
enough milk in the breast of the world  
for you* and lord  
is this feeling hard to shake.

The government —  
the big dad of our world —  
waited for us to die.  
*Hurry it along* he said  
with paper forms denying  
us dental coverage.

Oh dad.  
Oh mother of eternal poverty.  
forgive me my greed  
of your resources.

Oh Mikey of infinite hip and kitsch  
dismiss my pity  
as equivocation.

I am a different kind  
of hungry now.  
My mouth is ready to work.

Dear Lewis (II.)

Remember that time that poor  
sweet undergrad followed you  
like a puppy to your front porch  
and stuck around for the whole  
party until it was just the two  
of you and you told her to  
do stuff to it or go home.

## Our Melancholy Fates

In school  
I learn  
Meriwether.  
Not a man  
but a branch  
of the government.  
His long arms gather  
every nascent citizen.  
In school  
I learn water  
outweighs land.  
In dreams  
the ocean  
is only a womb.  
In school  
I learn  
Meriwether  
is a mule  
and a needle  
bearing Washington  
to latent borders  
injecting Washington  
into sick dirt.  
He draws  
like Darwin  
strange creatures  
shaped like men.  
His friends  
call him Liar.  
Every continent  
is only an island.  
He got lost  
and so did I.  
We wanted to know  
Where is the water.

Arcadium

I lost all my blood  
all at once in the bathroom  
of a bar on the northside.

Maybe it was raptured away  
or maybe simply sublimated.

I thought No one has ever  
felt as bad as I do right now  
being without blood.

I was wrong.  
These are the selfish thoughts  
of a helpless woman on the floor.

## Another Temporal Explosion

With my hands I'm pushing away  
the clichéd fog effect  
of a memory scene  
to reveal a crosswording human  
in a booth in a diner  
who smokes and smokes  
because it is still cool  
to do so back then.  
I am 16. In 10 years  
we will be best friends.  
I will already have many problems  
but luckily they only manifest themselves  
in drug use and reckless sex.  
It is 3am on a Tuesday.  
I am getting closer to the past moment  
I am trying to affect now.  
Each waiter is a woman and a man here.  
That's why we come to this dump.  
I am safe from passive judgment of my actions.  
On Halloween the furies gather  
for ¢99 coffee decked  
in thousand dollar hirsute glory.  
I wonder if it is just skin underneath  
like every other of god's blessed  
and vertebrate creatures.  
But that was not the right moment.  
I am looking for Greg  
in the booth where Burroughs  
wrote chapters out of order.  
My innocence scurries with the bugs  
and rats through the grease and ash.  
If I find you my temporal-fluid friend  
I need you to please take me away right now.  
Change the trajectory of my catapult.  
Propel me toward all things  
neutral and dull.  
I'm not going to make it 10 years.  
I'm not going to make it through  
the next hour and a half here in the present  
moment I am remembering from  
in our kitchen in Kentucky  
this place of future hell.

## How to Avoid Second Person Point of View

Drink some coffee  
until your body's habits  
wrap themselves around it  
until you can't sleep or shit  
or bear speaking to your lover  
or move your own blood  
around your husk without it.  
Drink until you surpass  
the need for food  
at a few of the appointed  
human mealtimes.  
Congratulations  
you have elevated your needs.  
You are practically  
a post-human coffee robot.  
Constantly mock your friends  
who don't drink coffee  
like their ignorance  
of their own hidden desire for it  
is a personal flaw  
only mockery can cure.  
Yes your heart will beat  
irregular-like but its a heart  
it can take care of itself.  
Try to write a love poem  
like you're 14 or something  
when caffeine  
was the most exciting drug  
you'd done so far.  
Go all post modern and reference  
the same poem you are  
currently in the process of writing.  
Realize your love poem  
turned into a boring complaint  
about your bummer life.  
Drink coffee 2% milk no sugar  
because your mom drank it  
2% milk no sugar.  
Avoid saying things like  
*I need coffee* and *Don't talk*  
*to me until I've had my coffee*  
because your mom did.  
Instead say things like  
*Coffee sounds good right now*

or *Do you want to stop  
at Starbucks first?*  
This shows everyone  
obviously you are not addicted  
obviously.  
Breathe for 90 minutes.  
Then breathe  
for another 90 minutes.  
Repeat if pleasurable enough.  
Realize there's no other out there.  
You are talking to yourself.  
*Hey self—Can we stop at Starbucks first?*  
Replace coffee  
with any human-made liquid  
or goo or flake.  
Replace all the you's  
with I's or he/she/it's or they's.  
That line is where the title comes from.  
Wait until you feel  
very northward moving.  
Avoid maps  
or at least maps on fire.  
Be greedy and brave.  
Say your name out loud to yourself.

Dear Lewis (III.)

Went to Dee's  
new book release.  
You know how these things go.  
If you'd have been here  
we would have sat on the porch  
all night drinking liquor  
found hidden in the back  
of a cabinet smoking  
and quietly mocking these creeps  
as they flaunt their literary  
dongs at each other.  
But I was inside drinking box wine  
getting too chatty because of  
the pain killers I had donned  
in preparation for having to  
Do Conversation.  
Dee backed me into the kitchen  
to bitch to me about how he just  
found out my student I had brought  
whom he'd been hitting on all night  
had no interest in anything related to  
the male parts of his or anyone else's  
corporal being and how could someone  
lead him on like that by listening  
and nodding to all his stories  
and smiling at all his jokes  
as he made a fool of himself  
by deigning to talk to a grad student  
without the return of at least  
a blowjob on the fire escape.  
As a last resort I supposed  
he turned his attention  
to what he called my *pointy tits*  
and moved closer to smash  
his pelvis against my thigh.  
All my chemically inspired wit  
left me tiny and naked  
alone with a stranger  
in an empty kitchen in a bad  
part of town I had not planned  
a ride home from in a situation  
he could believably claim I  
had set up and intended all along.  
I ran to the living room red faced

and broke the neck off  
three beers in a row trying to pry  
the stupid caps off and said  
I can't believe this is happening  
out loud to no one and then  
felt stupid for talking out loud.  
I had glass in my fingers  
and foam all around my shoes  
and here in my lowest state  
a blessing occurred in that  
no one noticed me  
and I saw I was in a sea  
of distracted lonely humans  
all trying to fuck each other  
oblivious to the unfuckable.  
Lewis—I'm trying to work up to  
telling you the worst part  
which was that I began  
to wonder if I had lingered  
too long on the crotch of  
a man I despised and I did  
I did think of the fire escape  
as a real option for how my night  
could turn out and I was afraid  
and did I want to be afraid and did I  
want all those windows of all  
the surrounding buildings peering  
down on us prone and vulnerable.

Dear Gregory (I.)

In my epistolary novel in verse  
you will live above a bar  
and go downstairs to watch Jaws III  
and then Jaws: the Revenge.

You journal about  
complicated life things and then  
eat so  
many  
fried pickles.

Some recipes you predict for the future:  
clear sushi  
meat made of shit  
meat made of shit made of meat made of shit.

You have a blood lust for pizza.  
A pizza lust.  
I bet you just knew  
I was going to say that.

You say what the dick  
instead of what the hell.

It's feminist in a bratty way  
which I am into.

You want to get  
accidentally pregnant.

You pretend to like  
the way I joke  
about wanting to get  
accidentally pregnant.

Dear Gregory (II.)

Charity is procrastination  
Leave those children  
all melting from their  
thousand mortal shocks.

Dear Gregory (III.)

The fossil you will be rises  
to the edge of my lust for you.

Split me like a sausage casing.  
Then lap up my guts.  
It will be good enough.

Perseids Fall

A word is said  
with a flip of my finger

or a twitch of a stupid lip.  
The sallow smoke

from my husband's cigarette  
curls up and

up the rails  
of the fire escape.

And when the god  
of carnal pleasure

(or whoever decides  
these things) passes me by

duck-duck-goose style  
I ask am I deserving

and know I am not.  
I am / may be the bad guy.

To end the terrible  
night the god

of insignificant things  
strikes a match

against the sky.  
I stand looking Northeast

at sixty degrees.  
I wait for another meteor.

A lid is revealed over us  
by its failure to contain.

## My Lack

The mornings when my mouth is a stranger  
and he is stranger still asleep beside me

I let the water run as I brush my teeth  
I let the porch light burn  
I let the AC down two degrees

and wrap myself in blankets to waste  
and then  
to waste again.

Mikey (V.)

I loaf hard in your wake.  
Months in and not a single  
letter word sentence of my MS.

Meanwhile you started  
a summer astronaut camp  
for homeless kids.

I bet at night they come to your cabin  
and listen to you recite  
poetry from memory

the campfire reflecting  
in your saucy eyes.

All the pits and pocks of trauma  
on their little brains even out.

You have filled outer space  
with a generation of sad orphans  
whispering *Howl*.  
I'm quite proud of you.

They will never know  
you started the space camp  
ironically.

Think how far  
they would fall  
if they found out.

## Table of Contents

I know  
I am a bag of chemicals.  
The problem is  
the knowing of that fact  
comes from a bag of chemicals  
and the doubting of it  
as well.  
The choosing which I'm doing  
at any given moment  
does not.  
Choosing is just not even an option.  
My brain is hard  
and throbbing  
and basically super phallic.  
My brain is erect  
for chemicals.  
And I give it what it wants  
because it is I  
and my hands sag in doubt.  
I'm sorry  
I meant to say  
my brain is A wreck FROM chemicals.  
They are the nicest gifts  
I give to myself.  
If I mix my slush just right  
with a giant wooden spoon  
the bubbles will pop  
in a rhythmic way  
that sounds like a human voice saying  
Keep me in the brain.  
Do not empty me onto the sidewalk.

## A Bird Cant

Although linguists have argued that certain patterns of language organization are the exclusive province of humans -perhaps the only uniquely human component of language - researchers from the University of Chicago and the University of California San Diego have discovered the same capacity to recognize such patterns and distinguish between them in *Sturnus vulgaris*, the common European starling.

— John Easton “‘Uniquely human’ component of language found in gregarious birds” (2006 University of Chicago Press Release)

I'll have a starling shall be taught to speak  
Nothing but 'Mortimer,' and give it him  
To keep his anger still in motion.

—*King Henry IV* (1.3.233-5)

All birds  
come down  
eventually  
fall groundward  
heavy into  
the jabberment  
of a Coleridgian  
landscape.  
Men know  
an opposite pain  
which quells  
those who rarely  
sang but  
tonight the  
under-voiced  
wail  
exclaim and yell  
“Zed!”

## Transitivity

Always on airplanes  
after initial ascent  
I feel a slight  
tipping forward  
and pulling down—  
not as turbulence  
but as the way  
when sleeping next to one  
larger than you  
the gentle gravity  
of their body  
tugs on your groggy form  
with almost enough force  
to bridge the ocean  
of bed sheets between you.  
And halfway through  
there's always a moment—  
I'm fine I'm fine  
I'm fine and then  
not really a switch but more  
like a quick slide into  
the prickling knowledge  
I will die  
and flight is a cruel  
necessity my culture  
has pressed upon me  
as unfair and unavoidable  
as falling in love  
and then leaving  
that one behind.  
Near the end  
some passengers flip faster  
through their magazines  
but some of us reach up  
in a hush  
almost as one  
to click off our tiny lights  
and lock ourselves  
to the window to wait  
for the glitter of terra firma  
to pull itself—  
hazy and painful and slow—  
apart from the dark  
indifferent cradle that holds us.

## Modernist Insects

It happened  
on a stoop  
in Lexington.

I was reading about  
or perhaps listening  
to Alice B. Toklas  
which is really just  
reading about  
or perhaps listening  
to Gertrude Stein  
when a big fly  
died in my coffee  
yes I very nearly  
drank it.

It swam for a bit  
then it did not swim  
anymore. I fished it out  
with my pencil  
but then could not  
shake it  
off my pencil.

*I cannot take notes*  
*now* I thought  
but the real concern  
yes as I sat on the flaking  
and obdurate stoop  
the real worry  
concerning me  
was whether or not  
to finish the coffee  
or dump it  
on the grass  
like a dilettante  
from a shallow holler  
with a mouche  
on my cheekbone  
prone to exaggeration.

Two trains kiss lightly

with their whistles

long distance.

In my front yard a hundred

thousand billion trains

hide in the snow.

Oozing is onomatopoeiatic

when done from a once

speeding train now inert.

Two trains miss slightly

with their pistons.

Burr and Hamilton embrace.

One train has PTSD

One train refuses to give

the other a cigarette.

One train is unhitched.

One train refuses to sing.

One train says Jesus Jesus.

One train has a burning heart.

Two trains coalesce each other.

## Gregory's Monologue

A man goes in for surgery.  
His family gathers close.  
Ghosts come by to watch even.  
A doctor cuts out his heart  
and holds it up to the light—  
see the hole straight through  
the thing like a telescope.

The man says Please give that back.  
Everything flows toward my immovable shore.  
I see now these ghosts all around us.  
They're making a sewing motion with their hands.  
I feel the slick weight of my heart's absence.  
I feel I'm already a cavity.

## The Fountain Across the Street is a Spectrometer for My Mood

The 8am shrieking  
of children rises to my  
third-storey  
bedroom window.  
Every morning  
a new crew of kids  
of all ages from all  
neighborhoods  
all waiting for  
their parents to  
pay fines or lose  
trials and leave them  
forever maybe.  
In the summer  
morning misty air  
they—sickly innocent  
and cherubic—  
position the jets  
squarely under their bums.  
They smile with surprise.  
A public reenactment  
of the fall of man.  
On the courthouse  
lawn no less.  
Then sometimes  
they play this game  
spontaneously invented  
by each new group.  
They all rush  
to the main center spout  
to try to keep it  
from shooting up.  
To do so they all  
have to hug and hug  
and look in each others  
faces and laugh and laugh  
and this fountain becomes  
the one democratic place  
in this divided city.

It Don't Mean a Thing if it Don't Mean a Thing

Even after 700 hours of Ken Burns  
I still can't chuck betwixt  
a Louis Strongarm te-tum

and a Bix Spiderbite oblongata.  
Tho I so want to dance—  
to waggle my back

from this granite mountain  
I've protrudedoutta for millennia.  
I'd do a quick hopdog in a complicated song.

Two Fools at the Philharmonic

The conductor dances as if  
yanking every note  
from the pockets of the players.

The pianist seizes at the keys  
mashing them like a two-year-old.

And the old man behind  
me unwraps a cough drop  
for an hour and a half.

Murder occurs to me  
to the tune of Ravel's *Bolero*.  
The slow crescendo deafens.

Our Nonverbal Conversation Translated into the Syntax of Fodor's Language of Thought Hypothesis

I pretend of the empty glass it is full  
while Gregory at a time concurrent to now

suspends truth conditionality of desire  
for a loft apartment in the art district

across the street from our table  
a place containing glass kitchens

for which passersby (suspending a jealousy feeling)  
will interpret of me and him

if we're sculpting or creating a sandwich.  
Suspicion pretends of him he is ambitious

for the reason that a glass kitchen is empty  
and causes a suspension of all interiors

into their thinning borders with the street  
and the others that I objectify my pleasure onto.

Robin LaMer Rahija Unlimited by Time and Space

She is a child until she dies.  
Then she is another kind of child.

Movements collect like mute  
brains in jars.

Wernicke says  
    There are no bad words  
    and if there is a soul  
    it hides in your voice box.

So away from Vinosgrad she tries  
but never really shakes the walls off.

She should be pleased but prefers not to be.  
The cartography of her pocket burns.

Broca says  
    I would rather be  
    a transformed ape  
    than a degenerate son of Adam.

Every night is the longest night.  
Every scratch by a need  
or nail grows body length.

Every line define by dollars  
or phalanges elongates toward

the infinity point of no return  
when every pointy cliché will inoculate.

Alive in the First House

I bring inside our groceries.  
We occupy the forgetful garden.

Tiny flies kiss and rekiss us  
on the stairs up to the kitchen.

Friend I say every body winged or not  
is as beautiful as yours winged or not.

Friend carry up this bruised fruit.  
It suffers for you.

Once in harvest. Once in market.  
Once amongst your sharp salacious teeth.

Friend I say purr  
into the next hand outstretched.

I lose myself brashing  
the orchard surrounding this house.

He is the unfanged creature in the garden.  
I am the swamp that swallowed all others.

Our coy and fallow namelessness  
is the grace of our generation.

## VITA

Robin LaMer Rahija was born in Kansas City, Missouri. She received her BA and MA from the University of Missouri Kansas City, and her MFA from the University of Kentucky. She is the founder editor of Rabbit Catastrophe Press and Workhorse Literary Collective. Her work has appeared in *PANK*, *Magma*, *Sonora Review*, *The Tusculum Review*, *Gritty Silk*, and *Gargoyle*.

ROBIN LAMER RAHIJA