



KNOWLEDGE FOLLOWS

David Perry



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*To Teach, Inspire, and Learn*

INSURANCE EDITIONS

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Special thanks to Leah Smith for her e-mail travelogue, parts of which appear, altered to various degrees, in the pages that follow.

Thank you Gus and Larry.

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To Leah, Lisa, and Lorna

Rome fell, Paris fell—that we can see  
for ourselves: shoe trees, the original  
rack, truncheons, pestles, magazines

everywhere reflection spreads  
the rumor we were there—in the nave,  
shooting up the cemetery, cracking  
on the plain, running  
from the unpredicted ellipse . . .

as if the universe were the ultimate  
word-picture machine  
with direct feeds to the head

\*

But they rose again and stood  
forever fallen and risen,  
abstracted from the occasional  
execution. We were there,  
passing out sedatives,  
all the better for et cetera &

\*

The bells I heard were nothing  
like television in the moonlight

The promise of continual growth  
lists of suspicious activities

The weight on our eyelids

\*



... which hasn't fooled anyone since,  
though many are born every minute  
as the parks fill with picnickers  
where before there were only people

\*

*Complete* works in a sentence  
to deceive almost always as if  
*as if* itself, in positing another world—  
one, which, imagined, transcends  
the moment of our wished-for destruction,  
this ultimately unimaginable space  
and uninhabitable time, our *real*  
world—were less complex than the human brain.  
That's why we need other words  
for almost everything

\*

"Just kidding," I said, echoing  
a line from a book read on the radio.  
It seemed a cruel mystery revealed  
as a hoax was at the bottom of a plot  
to conduct experiments with the stuff  
of life. *Never*, you say, and I think  
you are right: no way. Old windows warp  
the night sky. We wrap ourselves up  
in the same movie again  
and again become carriers  
ensuring the colonization of the stars

\*

There's still the weather, more of it,  
in fact, than originally anticipated.  
The sun crowns the world  
with thick twitching light

\*

... but no mystery after all, as the story  
turned out to be a neat trick  
we played on ourselves (we were the story). Nothing actually  
happened that had weight or volume

This was all before, of course.  
The earth had one language  
and few words—human slips,  
white lies—obliterating mystery

\*

There were those, of course, who did not want to know

The mental disorder of going along with things as they are

Domesticity pictured as a city of elastic domes  
perceptible only in a state of collective dream  
as alveoli are to the atmosphere

\*

The black volcanic rock, home to little if any plant life, seems to sense I like  
the clouds and that between them—rock and clouds—I find myself most  
easily. We, like many of them, have come from the sky after a long layover.  
A few blind spots have been saved, I think, and hope I am in one of them.  
The tour buses stop well short of the entrance to the preserve and many  
never find the red cinder path. It's a legend in itself, as is the magic of the  
few surviving originals. It's not uncommon to see one of the "carpenters"

laboring while someone else wanders about picking up leaves. Pleasing to the eye.... I'd begun to develop earlier, but it became overwhelming with all the new people. I learned to eat dirt, knock chips off the rock for charms and understand the volcano, whereas others would simply creep up close to the mouth, marveling (or pretending to), sure they could get away. One funny practice among the "Pangeans" is the sometimes humorous act of "name-changing." Here we live with Uni, Lili, Omajon, Mamae, Lee, Manis, Boaz and Torsti. This touches on the power I desire. I wander about, spending half my time trying to sell my coconut-frond mongini baskets, and the other half getting lost in all the excitement.

\*

Out in the country, the rough shape of a head  
like a zero, recognized then forgotten,  
descended from a sleep-over, blurry  
like countless others numbered among the stars

\*

... as if children were understood  
though neither heard nor seen. *Eureka!*

Who's to argue with not only  
communication but understanding?

Our lifelong self-experiment with perspective  
finds itself up against the wall

\*

Going by the inverse of "nothing new," the old  
king's middle finger finally found its thumb,  
snapping over the ancient ruins in the rain

God of everything not our fault

Days were consumed  
while the weather truly entered, made clear  
by blood debris and scraps of fog in the bedroom

\*

The finger says "I'm coming for you"  
so out you go (by *you* I mean *me*)  
Blue dowels hold yellow space in place

\*

Moments not as we knew them but dreamed  
gave a sense of time with nowhere to go

Turn me around I'll float there  
smiling at the edge of the world

Boca de Cielo withdrew to the volcanic chain  
above the lagoon's many mouths  
the faded head said  
don't sleep for a minute more  
or dreams will flood the day

but it was just a trickle by the time it reached the sea

a green flare

Calling on the masses  
to deeply dig caves,  
extensively store rice . . .  
A molelike competition  
to build the network:  
strategic mountains



riddled like gruyère.  
Elaborate paved hats  
with gas-proof hatches  
and 10-inch-thick  
radiation-proof steel doors  
locked shut

\*

The little tune stayed with me, but as I'd only heard it twice before and hadn't heard it again for years, it was a shock to realize how I'd completely changed the music, the lyrics—everything—and now had at least two tunes. Although I shared my feelings with no one, I felt guilty that I'd relied on a kind of psychic adverb, a weak and irresponsible intensifier that easily turned back upon itself to open more doubt in my mind. Was it "Star Dust" or not?

\*

Underground proved an odd yet effective place  
to put our gods. The water tasted funny

\*

Lamps arranged by height  
goosenecks curved in space and soft light  
the desk in the woods  
barely visible in the daytime fuzz  
of pollen or come autumn copper dust  
each step releasing a scent like desiccated coconut

The effect, at any rate, was clean; this none may doubt

The rip in space grew to include your point of view  
peering out from within  
with welling eyes  
the endless division of one

\*

Crescent wrench in the shoebox on the bench with the galvanized  
four-inch nails

Cellar stairs, opaque windows and limestone walls  
Wherever there's a drain clogged  
with leach-slime and rust flakes from decades of damp stone  
I'll be there

\*

The return of Everyman  
from the fractured skull of thought

\*

Notice something? Ways include: let any perceived pattern guide awareness  
of mind, body, what have you. Slow reduction by rhythm—the quaking  
aspen in modulated breeze, breath of dog, sunlight on brick wall. After a  
time, dilate to encompass larger rhythms: classic movements of sun and  
moon, truckers hauling syringes, tires, ingots, nozzles: nature's bounty.  
Next, embrace beauty, lines of the figure that follows

\*

Round of mice

\*

The nuclear bomb.  
Does that bother you?  
I just want you to think big

\*

I awoke under a kitchen table in Mexico City. The only thing I heard was Pepe's breakfast call: "Mexican market rescue mission!" Why a bright green baby parrot would say that is a long story. The short of it is that in my sleep I managed to roll over one night on top of my banjo and best friend.

\*

Topside the water towers  
corroded into accidental beauty

That which forms first  
and leaves last holds days

and shapes motion  
as open secrets

\*

If we didn't think we knew better  
we'd be gods to them  
capricious cruel ignorant wise  
everything human magnified

It's punctuation  
the set inflection of the world  
marks points pauses

Maybe the new kids will use their imaginations  
to fix it up  
without complicating currents  
air here, ocean there  
motions not quite gone through

\*

Six young grackles, iridescent oily backs  
on the unreckonable anniversary  
of the sun

"What?" the birds call  
That's what

\*

I was living with my sister  
There was a zombie in the closet  
A teenager telling us we'd go to hell

My mom called about David  
His sinus valves exploded  
Doctors said it looked like he wasn't going to make it

Later we went shopping for a showerhead at K-Mart

\*

I'll float silently above then fall  
Like owls

\*

Now I am in Chetamal (not Campeche like I thought) on the border. I woke this morning to rounds of rain, studied my bunk, the pink walls. I made a plan: I would drag myself to Uni and the bus station, then to Belize, live on fried plantains and ice cream. In the zócalo at night they set up trampolines for the kids to jump on.

I took a combi out of town to a cenote the locals said was bottomless

\*



My language should be of words  
I've been listening  
and I like to talk  
to attract the head  
of my intended

\*

An open plot  
along the lakeshore  
a clearing bought  
by certain interests  
a living thing  
made entirely of us

\*

A fire rushes the walls, explodes and quickly melts the soccer ball factory.  
Smoke blots out the stars. A quick act, and then another, though hidden in  
the open like missing keys. Many ways to go back—none leading away from  
the past, however, so you find yourself a seat. The man next to you?  
Tojolabal. You wind through highland forests with children swinging from  
the rim of the Pan American Highway. You learn to say "Always a pleasure"  
again.

\*

News of unhappy Maximilian

\*

I've hit on nothing I'd call new  
yet the novel condenses around the fact  
it's the neighborhood  
where people worship out in the open

you might see anything  
a fist fight between churches  
streets full of feral dogs  
a big blood bank

This squares the proof  
The rain and its cloud  
shear off the deep green mountaintop

The best expression of the subjunctive  
is the hankering  
the desperate look  
inhuman for a moment

(thoroughly natural)

\*

The assertion is that I lied. Very well. If a lie is to be taken as anything but  
the truth, I must die.

\*

Rifle reports echo long after the target's hit.  
One repeated "mechanical error." That's what  
the sergeant said, and he'd been studying  
behavioral psychology. He did everything from the heart  
and picked a special moment to explain

The earth curved from the low rise  
the sun redder and thicker  
as moths flooded the autumn stadium

\*

Here I am, on—and in—the mother lake. I've been meditating, drooling in the sweet night like a fruit bat. I'm in a small village. I have to walk down a dirt path past family huts, chicken coops, stray dogs, corn fields, mud puddles and avocados, just to arrive at my wet leather quarters, a leaky tipi with bugs. At night I roll in the sand and by morning I'm covered with it. When it pours, as it does daily, I hurry inside to light candles and imagine that I'm on a desert island where terrible '80s music isn't blaring from all the village boom boxes.

\*

The thorn's bright wood taste  
Sap slowly foams from the porous core

One way to be conscious

\*

They're down from the shantytown  
at the city's edge  
recent arrivals  
spreading through the valley

convulsed in reflected heat  
and the oiled air of exhaust pipes

\*

We can't walk among the buildings without thinking  
who and why?

There is magic and magic  
and books made of bark  
folded up like fire screens

They called the city Big Water  
and the kingdom Bone

\*

The hardest part you've ever had  
came clear in the forest

visions of rapid shadows  
moss and mud

sit and watch and listen  
to the ticking in the underbrush

\*

Can they really shoot beams of energy  
from their fingers?  
I've tried hard to catch them at it  
for weeks now, but nothing

\*

Christmas, the Monkeys, the Helicopter, the Television, the Thatched Hut,  
the Spanking, Pants on Backwards, the Snake, the Dishes, the Ranger, the  
Hand Grenade, the Lizard, the Movie, the Turkeys

\*

Mark comes to us from N2N Security Solutions  
previous to that he was an Interrogator-Linguist  
(Mandarin & Thai)  
and a Psychological Operations Specialist

\*



It rained on me  
in an old house

It taught me to talk to myself  
in the mirror

At one point I felt the moon  
move me around the room

\*

Go before I forget,  
forgetting is before  
I know

It means work, hold on

A huge cube  
of carved skulls  
for example

For hours I felt like a bug

\*

I returned to my room  
after trying and rejecting  
used frames to replace broken ones  
I napped to test my 7 peso Chinese alarm clock

Later at Templo Mayor  
I made myself up in unexpected conversation

No mention of war  
if there was one, yet

\*

The city is sinking  
Perhaps the air will thicken enough to build on

\*

Bathing is restricted

\*

The ochre moth on the stucco casts  
its blue-black shadow

Once the wheel rolls through  
It's all over

\*

To compose my features one morning for an unpleasant interview. Try to hide the deep nature of my fooling. Two bees on a thorn, turnips scattered across the flagstone patio. Fat old grubby white cat. I'm afraid if I go to someone they will offer me a pill or suggest I accept what I cannot change. The crack of dawn is head-on, seeping, returning to our neighborhoods so many dead barbarians. By sticking my head out, nodding off in summer sun. The sun is solid, too.

\*

Lightning after the tornado  
passes, a flash  
that flushes the brain  
Always test for glaucoma  
You don't want to lose your eyes

\*

The colder planets

No fear in revision, the backwards loss of walk  
but the waking mind can't just wander all day

The confusion of the places it's been  
double vision at the tip of the nose

Last month's jeans stand in the corner

\*

The rank proliferation of "examples." You are,  
for example, "your own person"—and, perhaps, no more

I knock my head where I last  
passed smoothly, thoughtlessly, through

\*

I sat in my room and smoked a crappy joint. The sun had gone down and the water trucks were making the rounds before the evening beer. The feel of tendrils—I thought I knew it, a psychic manifestation. Finally, my friends come back from their trips to the lakes and the coasts. All week it was the rain that made me tick.

\*

The drift revealed what looked like a hole  
in the sea but was actually a spot  
where something had dropped  
deep into the cold below

\*

It was his perfect understanding of the letter that led to the bad luck; though he spoke well enough to argue with the officers, he didn't know a thing about local history. The mud-town rimmed round by sore-thumb checkpoints cut from the jungle. The evolved Wehrmacht-style Kevlar helmets covered with taut cloth the color of wet sand, like Brueghel. A long way from Marienplatz, yet location never changes. Check your wallet for the Polaroid—I mean passport. In old Palenque, suspicion is logical, given the history of these encounters. His Spanish-English dictionary said: "cock pit."

\*

Modifying verbs to make small talk  
walking barefoot on slick rocks  
in the shallows and shadows

\*

Down like rivers or planes  
impossible to say

as in crime novels  
positions are reversible

until the end. We have it here that  
it's an *honor* to have your heart cut out

\*

The walk took me into a neighborhood unknown to most visitors. Everywhere children, dirty and skinny; half-feathered chickens dragged around by strings tied to their necks; puppies that can't stand up. Every home dark. Dirt floor, one room, sometimes a stove, one bed for seven or eight, sometimes a light, sometimes a door. Everyone sick. Corn tea: ground remnants—more dirt than corn—infused with hot water and mixed with plenty of sugar.

\*



Living on the sun and open air  
words show through:

dengue fever  
Asian brown cloud

cold rhubarb  
raw squash pasta

\*

The art of the Dodge Dart, pared down heavy steel, a sobriety that provoked  
dad to paint it canary yellow, perhaps as compensation for not having  
joined the circus.

\*

The basilisk tracks led to the Department of Anthropology  
The professor's mouth formed a stone O  
He stood in treated grass, the flute effects of afternoon wind  
pitched angle and forced right  
so beautifully unlike life

He's still alive inside  
soft and hot in the sun

\*

Last night I dreamt of New Year's Eve in the islands. Then I went back to  
town, looking for someone like me. Instead I found L and was ignored. I  
picked up a kitten and put it my pocket. I headed toward the square in a dust  
cloud—I knew it was the square from the stele with the inscription from the  
revolution. "Wrong square," I realized. The revolution never made it this far.

\*

Light globes through rain and streaked lenses  
bristle all the more  
sirens roll long and high on the rim roads

\*

Amusement (or amazement) at the three volcanoes floating in a glass dome.  
The still waters of the highland lake, a crater itself. Drunk slurring,  
justifying the theft, finding and returning the bauble—yours, under the  
cellar stairs, on top of the exhaust fan housing by the fuse box.

\*

Beginning with a conch  
for looking & listening, avoided  
the trap of final options  
ended up with the flu

\*

The power cord's red & yellow diamonds  
Dust burns as the furnace comes on

\*

Watch for special police, cameras, the no-finger bum. Strange to see these  
elsewhere, off the set, flickering in eyes of passersby. You can easily drive  
from here to rips in the earth. Off season, the cataracts tumble brown and  
froth like chocolate milk, but they run bright blue when the tourists arrive.

\*

The humor of the nonhuman world—jokes that penetrate the blood-brain  
barrier, adding up to a laughing fit—looking too long into the surf zone or  
kaleidoscopes colors and shapes your eyes

\*

Happening now, in advance of twilight  
the world might right itself  
but for only a moment

\*

She drank from a gourd of water wrung from Maximon's filthy robes and  
got sick for three days before catching the bus back from Atitlan.

\*

Music though no one appears  
to be playing

Caught a deep breath  
an involuntary squeak

A fire<sup>1</sup>fight broke out in the crossroads

\*

People he told the truth to  
didn't trust him  
brained by a frying pan  
& "just woke up there"

Without a tale to tell to death  
or nail to hang his hat on—  
thus we honor Amerigo

Merry-go-round to the right  
of the roadside shrine—  
the saint of dead bugs

Later, sitting collected in study  
one among many little clay animals  
I've got a history and a notebook

Coffee on the table  
the old whistling chess master  
calls "¡a la derecha!" on his way out

\*

I've moved on to a previous diary

Cicadas eat, mate, relax

Today was a very good day!

Slanted—the perfect pants

A moment in the present stoppered in the head

Tempted to peek, thinking to cheat

I read over "our future" & the modern bomb

Or firecrackers as points of comparison—?

\*

Movie in an airplane. Something to distract from the prolonged violent  
motion. We feel our way through the plot, unable to hear the dialogue, and  
will deplane with bad breath. A pyramid appears 15,000 feet above the  
Caribbean, white suns in droplets, suspense at the sight of the ruins, slow  
dissolves to sighs

\*



The fear of being obvious  
is one story—the honest response  
to your constant question

I can't give you anything  
but this coconut donut

The will to dodge  
and hide like prescient children

Tell the press  
our smiles will never be fixed  
despite the models rolling off the line

Walls, windows, door and a ceiling—  
blood everywhere—to live  
in one's head, so to speak

\*

A year ago my breaks were even  
now they're odd. I, too, am haunted  
by the deaths of so many

A solid block of prose  
The tickle hits the throat

\*

*Stoned* in the sense that  
"there is a great difference  
of opinion as to whether  
cooking in oil is  
or is not healthful."

\*

To speak  
with one thing wanting  
all the time  
negatives stacked  
in boxes in the attic  
of the metaphorical mind—  
body equals problem

\*

I have to be somewhere  
but I'm glad to watch for now

Down on all fours  
I don't know what life is

\*

All this happened  
we saw it

It's been a little while with a lot in between

I was touched and now I'm gone  
mindlessly hacking at the cane grass with a machete

People go apeshit over the girl with the banjo

**TYPE**

Filosofia, designed by Zuzana Licko in 1996. This face is a more geometric interpretation of the classic Bodoni typeface that incorporates such features as the slightly bulging round serif endings reflecting its origins in letterpress technology.

Interstate, designed by Tobias Frere-Jones in 1993–94. Considered one of the most legible typefaces, this sans serif is based on the signage alphabets of the United States Federal Highway Administration.

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