

Daniel Bouchard / WHITE DEATH THIS EXIT

1.

Silver light posts arc over the road, white glare
beside a swift congruous river of red lights.
The moon is muffled but full. In storm,
or close to it, everyone going somewhere still.

Northbound highway is promotion and egress:
tree lines, hip roofs, glow of holiday lights
strung on houses, strung upon shrubs, candles
burn or electric candles "on" behind windows,

votives and voices, dashboard speakers.
Rational voices from national radio.
A view of office towers, advertising, the
roads that lead to steel and glass plazas.

A close storm, around Xmas, everything
will close when it strikes. Seventy
per cent of tomahawk tip oxidized
and aerated. A sort of exit. A wooden

shaft 2 1/2 feet long, stone tip
sharpened at one end. Air raided.
Sortie. Mufflers wrapped of an evening.
Poison belch into "crisp" air.

Two planes of chimney meet: west side
snow-covered the north side only wet.
To blow tomahawks: to kill or cut.
He "sunk his hatchet into his brains"

tho the victim was his kin. A terrible night
the sky and the noise seeming like the cries,
the glare of flintlock by firelight. Trigger.
As thunder. Surgically bombed.

Latin, from stem of *mittere*, to send.
Patriot, from Andover: "war means jobs."
Snowfall covers the jagged, busted glass.
Savage, cling, clung or stick

lintel amid brick piling
obsequious in lit corners, rub
panes scratched with a wet branch,
frozen-bristled, rigid in wind.

The natives nationalized livestock and corn.
Clams free for the raking. Slush streets a sleek
frozen surface, a sluice on Sunday, next day
the papers repeat: *tougher on Iraq*, tiny

frozen drift, spittle, white ragged drop, like ash.
Vaporization and dust. A black star shot
and smeared, the man's ground body,
only the head remained, eyes shut looking up.

Endicott in Connecticut
waged a brilliant terror campaign
destroying crops of Pequots.
Bush's band of grim men.

2.

Light refractory highway
moon muffled by cloud gap
hurtle its mist, blackness
of valley held under the surface,

blue twilight obscured
against the shade of those hills.
Thru it a seamless snaking of road,
brilliantly lit, surging or greased

in docility, treatment, a capable
reckoning violence, its sandstone
canvas uniform, photographs in wallet.
What makes a land promised?

Predestined spasms of nation
in their rhetoric, in their ears;
indelible units of folk
pre-packaged creed and wrap,

meta-tyranny, weaponry steep
flails with purpose against non-peoples,
strategizes consent, shoveled deep,
crumbling piles; resembles to a child

a reasonable iceberg to place
some plastic figurines
of classical cowboys and Indians;
contemporary Arabs and Marines.

A leader elected, steeped in oil, its politics,
education, a polity, wanting severe, civility,
the education president, schooled at Yale,
he said of King Philip "we cannot

reward an aggressor" and gathered allies,
potential allies, Xtian converts at Natick,
praying Arabs. This is Increase Mather
speaking: "it will not stand."

Able to kill several hundred Pequots
with only a handful of losses to
themselves. "With one blow of his
hatchet dispatched him."

3.

Victory: highly respirable;
dermal, oral, pulmonary portal.
In wounds, burns, retained in lungs,
ingested, absorbed in blood.

No one ever calls the president "asshole"
on television, on radio, in newspapers;
nor murderer, expediter, pieface,
nor bootlick, saver-of-face, executor

of that which is opportune; in terms
of scandal or flattery, enjoining the nation,
rejoining it "to heal." Why don't they
say what it is like to be bombed

by the United States for ten years?
Let it be said with the persistence
of a semen-stained dress. Ten years
without potable water, an infrastructure

destroyed, its reconstruction blocked
until you rise to kill
 your own brutal dictator?
If you agree to murder
 your own cruel ruler,
why stop there? And not quash

the pre-fab "democracy" in packing crates
awaiting installation? Jet engine scream
on tarmac. Stuck in nimbus of brick,
blew in the fired walls: today,

a view from the bridge, palisades
collapsing as they flee from the fort.
Savage, merciless, tomahawk.
This is Peter Arnett, bleeding from the head,

in the Great Cedar Swamp of Rhode Island.
The musket balls will burn for a billion years.
Just a whiff of tobacco before it ends
and they sunk a hatchet into his brains.

Shot face down in wetlands, sold
overseas, with crumpled bill of sale
in hand: sarin, soman, anthrax. Waving
flag and gun for god and justice.

4.

Gone the white fat flakes that fell
scraped apogee in afternoon's saturate
gray; fine and few the snowfall now,
the airlines failed to cease. Light

increase, surge and falter, flicker,
a filter to pitch. Winter evening of
New Hampshire. On ground the grain
in the water the bits and from the sky,

primitive in ideology, flint for flaking
fire, the flack, residual facts
esophagus tissue lined with sand.
Watch now. Something stirs.

Satellites reel graceful ellipsis.
Baby incubators Wampanoags
unplugged you can see them
from the frontier of your yard

or fence the world is so small,
able to launch or lob like a hand toy
a parcel bearing a rupturous gift.
Scorched ruins to witness from your frontier.

A swamp that is long, wide not so deep
a horde cannot traverse it carrying
trappings on their backs beside giant trees
that have died here, remain, bare boughs

hold a heaviness of osprey nests in thick clusters.
Just as Mistress Rowlandson is about to quit
for fatigue Metacomet slips up and
offers his hand. She does not refuse.

So the Wampanoags learned death, a private property.
Ferocity in warfare—in kind—outwash Pleistocene till
crumbling since the “Indian Wars” behind a Mobil.
Non-fissionable nuclear attacks clear disasters for centuries.

Walk patches half melt. For civilians,
veterans: four and a half-billion-
year half-life. Promised peace for surrender
but sold as slaves out of country.

Marketing appeal, everyone calls upon God.
Vietnam Syndrome negated, Gulf War
Syndrome created. One symptom of one
syndrome is conscience; the other syndrome

attacks the nervous system. Clouds troop
over office towers. Leaves fallen forcefully
in storm. It must be quite a storm. Sinister
light in blue bursts. A powerful thrust.