

Greg Lainsbury / VERSIONS OF THE NORTH
Scenario 4: The Problem of Everyone Else

. . . *we know our neighbor exists because he's outside.* . . .
— Italo Calvino, "*Blood, Sea*" (*t-zero*)

I. Town and Country

"It goes without saying that there can be no democracy, or even an ongoing project of a democratic society, without autonomous individuals capable of critically and imaginatively participating in this project."

— David Wallace, "In Search of a Democratic Aesthetic"

Now, all our weak, sinful, rebellious subjects,
let us gather to talk, of

doing the work: civ/n
not out of nostalgia for a supra-temporal community,
but a need "to overcome one's estrangement from which one is
most familiar"

to correct the national body

fixed/
hetero-

let us stop pulling stone knuckles from the earth
to meditate upon southern money
like rumors of rain
the geography of apocalypse: roadblocks & barricades
the trembling poplar w/silver leaf
torment of metal / scream of saws
the darkness upon the plain.

Geniuses: a dime / dozen
our inhabitants include:

elsewhere. Here an inflationary regime,
rig hands in doghouses
whole villages from Cape Breton
one who doesn't know what a suntan is
the alcoholic driver & the cat skinner
recent parolees from federal institutions
economic migrants from dying prairie towns
bars full of sad, promiscuous & angry souls.

They're often really fat & their clothes too tight.

So whatever happened to distributing people intelligently?

Must we resign ourselves, once & for all,

to that helpless, destined feeling?

Accept survival as its own reward

secrete an establishment around ourself,

assume a sidestreet vegetative excrescence

alongside our sceptical neighbors

their faces stubbled w/frost

long-johns on clothesline slanted slab-hard in wind

ragged edges of crop pleating into riverbank.

A gathering of the dispossessed & displaced

arm muscles unencumbered & armpit hair fully ventilated

taking every opportunity to antagonize

the boar half-starving from winter's sleep.

How many of us seek a country where nobody else lives?

Manifeste cannibale dada

a state of intoxication sanctions all irregularities

catastrophic emissions cover

the velvet rind of branches

w/an exuberant verdure.

Among the indoors people, facing frosted windows
populations assembled for no compelling reason
the harshness of pioneer life: immense cold, poverty, no electricity
holds no romance

living in Bad Faith
people live quietly underneath flight patterns
playing w/a rifle as if it's a woman
fucking one's subject
while overhead satellites of reporting companies locate facilities
plumes of toxic material: matter out of place
death as short-term effect of exposure.

Is there *no place* free from (this) presence?

Living together must allow for repetition
tolerance of those who come to work
planning only to stay a year or two
just long enough to put a stake together
pad a résumé.

It is all a symptom of plethora;
here we may skip stages in our *bildung*
get whatever is needed
watch wild berries swell in the pagan sun
herons feed in watery meadows.

And who could forget our summer companions, gnats & mosquitoes?

Yes, here is only an interval, even if
enlivened w/vast herds of elk & buffalo
numerous examples of the Abandoned Farmhouse genre
all available for the cost of distraction, psychological & otherwise
the old jail across the river
where industrial culture went to dream
address among

brooding pines its moodiness & other spiritual infections
contagion always a risk, its capacity for punitive retaliation
written in accord w/a canon of the self-forbidding
internalized as commodification of social agency:
to be finished would, indeed, be a relief.

But there is to be no distraction from this incessant chatter
political rumblings from the south
so we gather accessories to show how hard we work
& how we are *always* working

our willingness to endure /
this dreadful freedom

the barren reaches.

This is what happens, as the silver fangs of the mighty axe
destroy this magnificent theatre of nature
the strippers clean up & streets go unpaved
the vigilance & severity of the husband
his affirmation of self, & desire
to complete the truncated precursor is humiliating & tedious
whereas a wife's normal contribution
the equation of virtue & masochism
an unmanipulated sorrow
clashes w/his proneness to side w/beauty.

The result, a certain lack of care:
ugliness, filth, squalor, relationships
subject to sudden & / or violent ends, the job offer
from afar, the call home.

In the spring giant frost heaves & potholes erupt.

The eye's revenge:
those blue depths, moon forsaken
thick hair of poplar & spruce braided across sky
save where the birches grew
deeper, more complex formations.

Dead things were all about me and the year was dead.

II. L'escalade non anesthésée

Invoking realms of the unreal
that trance of wonder, that doth run through nature everywhere, even as we
cross the meatloaf line: observe now the decorative function of trees & animals
motors discharging in response to anxiety
graffiti tags on dirty brick walls &
buff old urban *ayahuasqueros*
mixing systems, producing fresh desires.

From the north, death, a fog comes down
to put forward the unpresentable in presentation
flaunting raw data, the many deaths
we had delivered.

“This was once a city”
proclaimeth Geo. Stanley to those assembled in the parking lot
“this plastic rose” now inscribed in our species-being
a moment in the history of capital
a dumping ground for scum
a vanguard machine, dragging humanity after it
hungry ghosts
everywhere: chaosophy & the inevitability of annoyance & risk
a focus for all problems of poetics.

Those annoying others, who also inhabit these places
take, for instance, contestant #2
a remedial semiotics student
he fits the right profile!
suckers appear on his head; he studies
the illusion of an enduring understanding &
the American bourgeoisie interlude

how, despite such an extensive array of competence building measures
some people get headache.

Jamie Reid evokes "the labor aristocracy" (big-headroom people
tend to be predators, ingesting & expelling identifications)
a grievous stream of analysis terminable & interminable
a range of vision beyond that of ordinary people

... always being found innocent for ridiculous reasons.

Drinking w/poets & thinking ab't nothing much of the time
this be the position of the late-modern poet-self, *vis-a-vis*
the brown meat & its insatiable insistence on chasing primal ecstasy.

While the common-sense discourses of the soul would indicate
such time as is better spent planning & producing
customized learning-objects for our One Big College.