

**PETER CULLEY /** Pages from “The Children’s  
Encyclopedia”

for Michael Szarpowski & Bruce Conkle

**Cascadia Border Patrol**

I’d like to stop kicking,  
but every time I do  
something spectacular happens

that people will pay to see—  
it’s not like it’s even down to me,  
& running my fingers counting

bribes along envelope tops  
hurts me as much  
as these January pellets

raining from my wrinkle-pickers  
must hurt you, but  
Centralia’s where the Inland Empire

meets the Real Empire &  
you’ve entered our domain  
on an ark of infinite sustain—

orchards hazy with  
ciderblink down to  
Dorn’s sound, lowering chopper

heat differential maps  
of backpackers loaded  
versus ornithologists

lightened by self-hypnosis,  
though in real life  
if surveillance gets

that close it's probably what's  
*in* your thermos  
they're after.

## Cranberry Firehall

Stinks to be in the engine  
of always conspirin' & pokin'  
where it *ain't* exactly required—

rattlin' around like a tooth  
in a paint can achin' for inspection,  
but like the firehall's multi-function

a ramp into space  
is no longer an option,  
no fire escape in the sky—

they're mixin' the gravity with somethin'  
or somethin'—but it's still a good thing  
the lids this big, you turn it right down

step out onto the 'scape  
for a couple of cupped Cameos & voila!  
when you return everything

is exactly the same  
except it's ready now,  
wreathed in glistening steam!

## Entiamorphic Chambermaid

A stack of "Argosy"  
in an orgone box,  
but no bacon  
in the midden—  
individually a dry maple leaf  
in good nick seems  
worth about a quarter  
but I'll get rid of it  
for a dime and put the change  
in a Crown Royal bag,  
and in the spring  
a parcel of mulch  
will arrive by courier;  
less an operating system  
than Rick Wakeman  
vs. Dr. Who at Joddrel Bank,  
more something slipped into,  
all warm & well-rehearsed,  
all long exhalations uncoiling  
like Gilray speech balloons,  
though the unfamiliar tread  
tenderizes ankles on the icy slopes.

## The Wire

Then the tree if not time  
at least Art Blakey—  
hard bop with a touch  
of the parade ground,  
in a good way—  
the orderly handling by  
many bird species  
crowded up amongst  
the short-term food  
emergency—giving way  
on the good branches,  
keeping beefs short etc.—  
then everybody gets their  
designated seconds of  
bark digging unmolested  
maybe some eavestrough  
spider web, but stepping up  
clean and bright  
in bandstand order with  
a solo worked up ahead of time  
so that routine becomes display  
and spring can start to operate.

## The Dawn In Britain

Fax addresses  
other fax in fax

“titivates with plumes  
of voodoo jargon”

aka “speaks in tongues”  
the mellow ameliorants

of Mormon d’esprit,  
lodge-blue, cop white,

pink snow, halfhard hotdog  
bun cigar-angled

the raven’s new year  
accessory of choice

they get them “from the farm”  
whatever that means—

we’ve seen the rendering truck  
stagger under towers years past

bundled like newspapers  
now that presumptive hogs

are rarely present—  
the old neighborhood herd

thinned to unemployability—  
dogs, cats & fish—

hence other people playing cards,  
golf, the film on baby foxes

in both official languages  
with the sound turned off,

it's all to calm you down,  
with at Xmas halfraw turkey

thawing by the "fire"  
to sink your teeth into

while a song we all know  
encourages wordless grunting

suffused with emotion &  
the heavy wine of childhood.

## Punishment Parkway

I suppose the scenic route  
is out of the question—  
too much time

by lay-bys earlier  
running our elbows  
along the bunched steel

of braille mountains  
worn through at the ocean  
& where the /2/ passed through

amenable space you stand  
at the edge of  
the whole thing a ribbon

of iron control extending  
even to the lichen's fluffy edge  
so that to stray

is to fall into  
the literal orchestra pit  
after a Big Drop—

the vast  
arbutus forest preserved  
on either side of it

certainly terra incognita



before they put the highway through—  
but Northfield was a labyrinth

out of Floyd Crosby's Poe  
anyway so excuse me  
if I never found it but

the immaculate moss meadows  
argue that no one much  
else did either—

there's a lot  
of places dirt bikers  
it turns out won't go—

but this civil terrarium though tidy  
was roamed by giant tapirs once,  
by badgers big as bears,

undisturbed by pneumatics  
or the shrieking steam of the factory whistle—  
must now endure

the lapidary condescension  
of highway patronage, the cement lobby's  
largesse, the planner's *passion*,

the grim and anxious trucks  
from which the tongues of mammals  
taste the pre-Cambrian air.

## Crazy Rhythm

To speed up  
or slow down at will  
like that  
like Anita no matter  
the lyric's "arcs"  
or who you're playing with  
or in what vehicle careering  
depends on the services  
over decades  
of a drummer—  
Roy Haynes & Sassy  
would be another  
example—capable of lowering  
six whirring brushes  
onto a linseed-darkened  
dream sideboard  
while defending a perogy  
supper from a platoon  
of gibbons—imagine  
having such a pedal to press!  
messing with the band  
would just be the start—  
to feel the tin-pan-alley world  
snapping like a green twig  
but how tough after  
negotiating now that speech  
is king again the cabless dawn.

## Ikea Deserta

Leave sleep to those  
in charge of sleep,  
the bus he knows the way;  
the pussycat anarchists won't  
blow up the viaduct tonight—  
you can rely on me.

\*

On mattresses masters bestir cosily  
by thread counts unmolested  
noisily, easily, easily, noisily—  
but otherwise untested.

\*

Planet it up for the business  
of orbiting dirty snowball courses  
what tirebiters flicked at cops,  
nothing is as still as this sentence  
which I began a million days ago  
lifting myself onto the bamboo hula  
while laces dragged the Barents Sea,  
to wake folded in the folds of Forfar  
in full dark stars coiling  
mystic pools of social housing  
& ghosts in full monologue  
& all of it melting  
not into green icing  
but holes which are then patched over  
with similar stuff  
taken from elsewhere.