BOUND TOWARD THEM ARE THE COURSE

by

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ABSTRACT

The poems in Bound Toward Them Are the Course deal with the issue of lyric obscurity, the transmission and failed reception of messages. Toward this end, the desire of the lyric to convey despite its veiled nature, the poems’ methods of translation serve as an attempt at self-correction, location through triangulation.

The lyric is also a circuit which, at a certain point, closes. Once it has taken in what it needs, the poem becomes its own referent, feeds on its own vibration, a repositional energy. It takes its constitutive elements, rearranges them, forgetting itself (and its transmission) as it continually stumbles forward into new modes.

Words themselves attempt a similar repositioning:

STUMBLE/SEM BLANCE/ASSEMBLE
TRANS(-FER, -LATE, -MISSION)/MISSING/MISSIVE

The word is a node, a garbled radio reciting both itself (what it appears to be) and its desires (what it wishes to be). In this, the receiver of the missive is implicated equally in its construction. But desire misnomers—the speaking apparatus (the throat/tin-can-on-string/walkie-talkie/beam/buoy/etc.) lacks the agency of “I” or “you” yet somehow partakes; the word, “GUN/MAN,” despite its conflation, is fact—is, in fact, thought.

And thought is simultaneity—both movement and non-movement. The poem field in which the message moves and doesn’t is decayed and blooming, the same flower. The transmitter, broken but still powered, is awash with static. And since one can’t be spoken to one listens, overhears, in as many voices as he can muster.
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I. NODE’S STORY
The bone in my shoulder
is a half-faced twin—

what was a muttering two heads,
the scalps divide and rustle.

There’s such tissue relative
in the catalog of lesser:

morning throws violence
into all the tree-birds.

Smoke and war cries from the forest.
The gunman, meanwhile,

speaks seductively
through his walkie-talkie.
One way and again tow
-ard the paddock, his rifle

he gives way—this way
to the hot hot sun, holy

ventilator, inviolate airway.
Is this are we an island says

she, an island or a chain of such—
ribs of fish tickling under there.

No man or whoa,
the assignation most descried.
Daytime deals an ideal stone
to push and put the shine on

my exigent shoreman. He has
two faces, scapulaic,

buttered stones. They fiddle
his crotch buttons

for passage under the exploded
firmament. They say

I must own me a blue suit,
they who own the savor

of an undressed body
lightly stretched and going, going.

I am sired by such
a bleating organ,

and with that voice return.
Rub me up sidewise, the she of them says,  
sidle me to this galloping chair.

With a wild infragrance  
the she of them jangles her hair.

She’s faced into given up thinking,  
turned to the apricot summer

thus wet plops of birth  
her betesticled moon.

Wah! from that chiloplast  
stuffed back inside, that river

who makes a dribbilius noise.
Beam alights across the field,  
the mindful bolt action folding yarrow

at a transfer point. Just as hidden  
air riddles the gunman’s scalp

and offers cover, moons open  
bushes push forth darling

dead petals—I have a blade  
swathing, being led affront

the bullet which will open me.  
I say nothing clearly

but to hold my own hand,  
wet another finger to the path.
Extirpation thusly scads
of little gentlemen—ordinary

cherishing, they stand where the
manikin stood

to gawp, strutted to the water
for a closer gander.

What sun, its light defined
as messages refract,

the letter folded, clipped tongue
rest atop the river’s swallow.
I mumbly gain admittance.
My slatted lip, as born, is sheafed

and bound, so I’m the voice
like wood that spans the river.

I give off motes of verbage, dress them
in their little suits, converse them uniformly

in the sockets of my antiquity.
Putty over all the boiled curvature,
a mask spread over the field

solving which is nothing his blind—
the gunman visible

in daylight follows her, calls
instructions, garbles them

toward fullness and thresher.
Sun smolders past
twice in its cavity (verse would see

eye of leviathan
swallowed again

with the same sea bird). Another
lesser mouth?...valve
cross the bright occipital,
lets forth its fishlets,

little lost light.
Their mouth wound opens up proud,
speaks blurbles and teeth

from both sides. And there is space
for words, those collar-pooled

or swallowed back to the bastion
appetite. The transmitter

which beeps often
of its own account, a tooth

on its shattered isthmus.
I begin to think
of failure as levitation—

attach the device to my palm,
it whirs, the recording

in a voice I recognize.
This is a door ideally

you walk through. This
is a sun arriving

slowly as the measure
of its spawn. The she of them

recites what should be
entry’d, the catalog

of their wraparound mouth
air blurring at its junction.

I am weighted still
with my heavy boots

and cannot be dealt.
Node, sun-denatured wobble,

the only name I’ve heard
that half given. I’m sure

of the sky it heralds
a croup of transitive signals—

just as light and its word
subsume the cheek leading
round on its twin,

the buoy blinks a dark crossing.
The gunman’s stomach bores to 
unbuild sight in a body, realm

for such a gentleman’s 
digestion. The buoy bleeps,

it enters its last squall (too late 
to recognize

a pattern—each wave 
an ease it doesn’t help

to stare) aplomb as is the she’s face 
constantly revolving,

but the sea aside just as likely 
stoops toward some final marina.

Her hairline so shiny I’ve seen 
the vivisection, radio

in the break of her 
kind caucus.
I’m tuned to the flay
of your hands, dear

Node, their dainty entropy.

Your head’s thought
tongue it tails through

unresonant orbits.
Turn quick to almost see her.
II. SEQUENCE OF STUMBLING CONVERGENCES
The walkie-talkie in his shoulder

seductively speaks—meanwhile,

a half-faced gunman
twins in the forest.

What were cries from a muttering

war, two smoked heads and

scalps divide into all the tree-birds.
Tell him rustle morning’s tissue,
throw such violence to

the catalog of daytime’s

lesser stones—grind together in her hand,

demand a little savor. Deal the shoreman

bedecked, his excellence owns me—

they say they fiddle under scapular

firmities, they say I must pass on

stone butter, shiny crotch buttons,

two explosions.

Push on, my putty

my oh my.
To return as a voice, body’s
collider—organ undressed and
stretching, such as I am.

My blinked and bleating sire,
again go lightly by.

Sidle up to she who makes a dribble
of thinking, that river stuffed back
in its berth—Wah! utters thusly
her trolloping jangle. Infragrant
the apricot moon turns aside
of them summer’s split
lip. The she of them
wide wet in her chair. Me, says she,
drop me.
The beam garbles toward
dead, a transfer curved forth
	solving the field.
I am born mumbly of a lesser mouth.

An antique span of verbage slatted over

the same river’s swallow. So I’m

the verse of wood, shattered

bastion. Another roman

uniform, transmitter, collar-pooled provision

I admit. Another valve or socket.

Leviathan blurbles twice

in its appetite, speaks

to draw back its fishlets, sea birds, another

beeping sun. There is still space for words,

sheafed teeth and lips, little light motes

smoldering both sides of the mouth.

Occipital jaw, its isthmus is proud brightness.
In daylight the field is blind.

Yarrow fingers the opened swath

mask a thresher’s scalp

blade spread visible. Nothing clearly folds

the hiding bush underfoot,

noting the gunman’s instruction

darling wet. To hold onto

a hand, being led, the mindful gun

bore me riddled.
Folded an island gives way.

This manikin paddock stands the island

holy extirpated

stuttering vents. Of fish assigned

their messages tow

-age this way rifled and again

tickling in his clips.
Under there the tonguing gan—

little cherished are we scads of woe,

gentle prawns defined in shallows.

To the water standing, to what sun

refract the closest light descried.

One day he stood atop the ward,

sunny ribs in the river.
The gunman heralds his own iconographic arrival,

his hands in flay unbuild the realm.

Just as sky’s likely sight denatures the mouth with air-blurring signals.

His weighty boots aside each lip, he studies the junction.

Spawns other gentlemanly bodies into it.

The buoy stoops in its sad orbit.
Dear Node, I begin
to recognize the device

the word walks through

its caucus pattern, her’s

a failure of naming.

Dainty headthought,

the she the sea and buoy’s

wobble, each wave set out in voice

recorded to its crouping suns.

Node, you almost see her crossing

but too late the she of them

is transitive tongue.

And so your cheek adjusts its tuning,

recites one final white hair, the catalog

fully entry’d.
III. CATALOG ADDENDUM: TRANSMISSIONS
THE SHOREMAN TO THE SHE OF THEM

Why speak to you of transitive moons? Of hair that utters from another cheek? These are not my name, no more than yours is Dainty. I can talk trafficking, and verse to dribble by by—
THE BUOY TO THE GUNMAN

:........................

:ALL DAY SQUALL AND BILGE-TRAP……FISHLET ACCRETION/

:........................

:PLEASE FORGIVE…THOUGHT
:VALVE OBSTRUC……..

:....ADVISE.......:

:ADVISE………

:THE SEA AND I SHARE ICONS/

:BUILD-UP WAVE CAUCUS/

:WORDS SWALLOWED DOWN
:OUR WATERY MOUTHS/

:EXPECT A GLAD COLLISION/

:ADVISE………

:........................
I set aside my building
  to speak into the dead
  machine should it be
done. What we were:

  one resonant head,
  Our jaw a smoldered
  transmitter. Our teeth
  in reading sheafs.

  The same uniform we wore.
  You’ll be borne back
  up her river’s signal
  should I will it.
THE SHOREMAN TO THE GUNMAN

The she of them’s undressed
in my berth, await for transit.
As relay I’m assigned this recitation
carried over your airway, sir,
and though she lacks
required pages I’m just and
given to deal. She’s bent upon
the junction but I’ll keep it from
her as I can—
THE SHOREMAN TO THE SHE OF THEM (II)

The message beams no matter
cross the windy carry back.
An opening the ground parts
and his smooth cheek planted
previous blooms speaking
as hair slowly from a follicle
rowed neatly.
THE BUOY TO THE GUNMAN (II)

:FEEL THE GOOD AIR
:CREASE THEIR SKULL W/

:YOUR BETTER BULLET/

:TALK TO ME AND THROUGH ME
:SPURTING ONTO SHORE

:I'VE WADED SURELY REVEL-
:ATING PATHS FOR YOU

:I AM DUTIFUL
:STILL IN THE IMAGE
:YOU PRECEDE/

THE SHE OF THEM TO NODE

Innate our sentence is the space
    of breath  my hand you grasp
toward the strain to hold me steady
    stagnant if only calling down
to fieldbone  the type of body
    word removes.
THE SHOREMAN TO THE GUNMAN (II)

Light has left the water, your rationed throat.
Deposit in their mouth a blackened pip
fineried sun possessed of a word.
IV. ONE ACT
CHARACTERS:

MESSAGE
NODE
THE GUNMAN
THE SHOREMAN
THE SHE OF THEM
THE BUOY

THE PLACE:

An evening-lit field beside a wide, but very calm, river. Trampled grass and erratic shoe marks around a smoldering fire pit betray a recent scuffle—one large branch is broken from a nearby tree, and MESSAGE walks slowly back and forth from the river’s edge with it, wielding it playfully, first in the manner of a broadsword, then, as its monologue continues, as a walking stick.

MESSAGE: Message cross my legs in midst of the blade field.
Lay in wait say it no former state
entirely possible something could happen here
because of me—

[It stops, bends to pick up a torn and bloodied scrap of cloth—too dark to study it carefully, MESSAGE looks to the moon, which without prompting splits amoebically in two. The moons, identical to the parent except for the occasional errant pockmark, begin to drift apart. Due to the subsequent diffusion of available light, MESSAGE squints and returns to the fire, stirring the coals in an attempt to liven it.]

Better, better…Message would enter
the innate sentence, but that it would sicken
any type of body.
If worth issued forth with head wrapped
in semenic forecast, one skull seeming
bilateral creased,
if that summer before, thinking no summer except the ideal haystack,

if the ground birthed up a waistcoated manikin and I its shiny monocle,

if, if and only. That this image would have something to say. To call down into that cool ravine, to see what was wind carried back, what could quiet my reverberate need—

[MESSAGE is interrupted by the sound of a vessel crossing the river—it looks up to see a craft of indeterminate composition run aground on the sandy bank. It is at once a raft lashed together of great tubular logs, a sailboat, a steam paddler, a trawler. THE SHOREMAN hops to the ground, offers a hand to THE SHE OF THEM, who refuses it and clambers down of her own accord. THE SHOREMAN sees MESSAGE by the fire and goes to it.]

SHOREMAN: Ah yes... as you see, good sir, my charge is safely carried— should I leave her in your care? I would surely be advised to carry on with business if business carried on, but I’m afraid my audience ends in dribble among rocks.

MESSAGE: —for the blood of precedent, blood between the pages. Message says there’s space enough for such, apparatuses will hold beams stay strong and nothing be removed but the word removes indeed the word as Node’s burnt senses dictate. Rebut I am afraid
that final shock of cold clear water hides among the rocks,  
surely carried off somewhere no boat can find.

SHOREMAN: Good, good, I see—then you  
will be entrusted.

[THE SHOREMAN gestures toward the spot where THE SHE OF THEM had been standing. SHE is not there.]

Odd. My manifest accounts  
for only one appearance, this is  
surely it. I’ve waded, waded,  
countful measure’s seeped  
my bones, oh surely he would see her.

[THE SHOREMAN wanders back toward his vessel, arms outstretched and seesawing,  
feeling the air for a newly invisible woman.]

MESSAGE: No matter a clop or gallop or similar pace,  
all motion keeps me here. And as no action  
holds me steady so as children born and died  
in one spaced breath, I lean back into water  
and feel it not take me.

[THE SHOREMAN has waded out some ways into the river, calling to THE SHE OF THEM, every now again inspecting cupped palms of water, and thus distracted doesn’t notice as SHE steps from the tallish grass to stand beside MESSAGE and the fire.]

SHE: I’ve such to say and no conveyance  
mustered keeps me  
quiet—as yet no apparatus I’m another  
talking foil
present which repeats occurs now
the first everytime.

I strain against my bulk
another face hung longside mine
swallows for me

and never makes acquaintance.

I talk to you and through you
reveal the opening bloodied surface
feel the mark on me
tensing dodge a bullet licks behind my ear—

[At this point SHE hears the first gunshot call out in the distance—though scarcely audible, certain effects in the immediate surrounding may be observed with a careful eye. The river lightly pushes back from its banks as from a heavy meal, grass around MESSAGE strains flat in supplication toward the sound, the moons dim further.]

SHE: Hear! and be proud at this
baleful Earth
He who pulled its scalp of trees

the openings lead down
to a shelter built for us.

MESSAGE: On the lipped preponderance of objects, one mouth
clogged and brought the green world to bear

that sleight abruption. And bodies which pour forth
dressed grasping hands know a good long while

is all one has to speak with, hair to climb down
into the cave by now outmoded

and draw the old pump back up.
Still dutiful stagnant the water can transport

row of smooth cheeks standardly villainous
stripped logs fall before his path he makes return.

SHE: You record me incorrectly
  in everything that happens
today will happen in his sight

  he looks down from the tree
his blind has set his sight black sun smoking hillock
cataphracted the horizon blinks

promise fed from his ration sack
  suckled beans and thusly apprehended.

[THE SHOREMAN returns dripping to the fire carrying a small metal bulb; THE BUOY he found is counting quietly to itself, an unrecognizable pattern. As THE SHOREMAN draws near to MESSAGE, a light-emitting diode extends on a telescopic pole from THE BUOY’s apex; upon receipt of the signal, the whir and click in retrieval of a memory.]

BUOY: ................

:MATRICULATION/REGISTRY NODE
:NOT FOUND/

:DEPICTED FORMERLY
:AS INORGANIC STRUCTURE FUSED

:W/ SEAL MEAT PROPULSORY
:FLIPPERED I AM/

:SWIM THE COURSE AND FIND
:ONE I’M MEANT TO DOCK/

:WHERE IS THAT BOY/

:OCEAN FOLDED OVER AT
:A CREASE POINT TO POINT

:AND PASS THROUGH LIKE A SHOOTIST/
SHOREMAN: Poor faulty vessel, signify awash.
Once abandoned certainty
the fact thinks. That one to
the other could be gone
not arisen in speech
trickled crevice lost but not so
never having been.

[THE SHOREMAN moves to set THE BUOY into a notched stone pedestal near the fire.
As he releases it, the antenna retracts and THE BUOY resumes its murmured counting—
the pattern, though, has changed; certain numbers are omitted, shortening its phrases.]

SHE: Light has left the water
   a portent beam issues
from his hollow finger His a great column
dark inconclusion
I must speak toward, attention to the
   meritorious fact
he traipses through a boneyard
   of his design for me.

MESSAGE: Possessor and possessed he is of a word
socketed into the wound.

The path toward us raises up in welts the yarrow
hackles every root tremble with a sip

from his bootprint and his tracker beeping
slowly being fixed. Yonder death retracts

into his punctured head, Message keep me
on this downward slope to stoppered water,

first theme of cataloging fixed position
lathered seed collecting in a hollow

bore, what I say less pip less throatful
blight predicts.
SHE:  I stood my heel blooming thoughtless
   at a starting place
in fieldrot the birds had eaten
   trees grown knocked down
in one kick still standing
   when I looked again.

SHOREMAN: Yes, the scene is chroma
silvered nothing moves,
and stillness wastes the mention
he is in every fragment
my equal, your astray.

   You must stand your mark,
   spurn gowl you tender licked
   guise of one whose name’s
   festooned about if you’d
   only turn your head

   you’d see it.

   [THE BUOY interrupts, emitting a short, high-pitched chord, rocks to fro on its stone. At
THE SHE OF THEM’s touch it continues its transmission.]

BUOY:  :THIS MISSIVE IS A
   :LIVING VAULT/

   :FIELD STRUNG WITH WIRE/

   :BUSHES OPEN TO RECORD
   :NOISE CANCEL TEST

   :ACQUAINT WITH TWANGY
   :CAUGHT BIRD/

SHOREMAN: The worn tongue surged
   a bobbing bottle most lonely
grew confused untethered to its finding course,

real horizon sensed behind the lip, the channel of a face to find its other reconnoiter.

[Another gunshot, closer this time. THE SHOREMAN’s vessel slips off the beach and is carried off downriver. THE SHOREMAN only turns his head slightly, watching as it disappears, though his discomfited stance makes apparent his desire to pursue. The pit flares and begins subtly to draw all characters and other objects closer toward it—sand piles into tumuli, wisps of driftbark roll into the fire and, singed, draft up into the cool night. One shred, still glowing, lands on THE SHE OF THEM’s shoulder. THE SHOREMAN flicks it away.]


SHE: To set out place upon a plinth for the loved one sallies turning in one spot bound toward you are the course
to cancel us binary sun
two of anything must tug

at odds depend on
empty space to swivel round
and round.

To set out on a confluence
of face and bone
the stone forehead of the field

we might meet upon
flooded with the river’s static
full dark letting down

from trees to walk between
and hide us.

[All characters look toward the distant treeline as THE GUNMAN steps out and onto the field. Raising one hand in greeting he proceeds toward them slowly, hitching the strap slung around his shoulder. His clothing and skin reflect no light, transmit no image, so one is left with only the faint apperception of motion, a nothing drawing near. Fireflies bend from their courses to follow him, wink out one by one at his attention. Clumps of grass at either side of his path pull loose and plaster his legs—the figure swells in this accretion of matter. The air thins. THE SHOREMAN winces at a sudden pain in his foot, sits down to shake out his boot. The fire goes out.]

SHOREMAN: Delivered myself a body forged
in leviathan’s black belly
the ardored orbit quickened
toward a center,

where we stand
singly press together as water
strained against a gasket
we will be expelled.

[With the butt of his hand THE SHOREMAN repeatedly strikes the sole of his boot.]
Basin is the place to form
a pond, a sink or abscess
unrelieved in growth

though little birds
lapping at the shore—

[With a final knock the bullet tumbles from his boot like a tooth dislodged, landing amid the stones of the darkened fire pit. THE SHOREMAN plucks it up and hesitantly stands. After a moment he begins his walk toward THE GUNMAN, who smiles at him, parted lips revealing a bright speaker grate, thrum of overtracked voices.]

they lick at my name
bring me up dressed and
steaming omen
of my salvage. I carried

my word’s loot for it maintain
the stumblance of our happening.

[Upon nearing THE GUNMAN, THE SHOREMAN reaches out to touch the stock of his rifle, as though the rite were familiar. He disappears.]

SHE: For now I haste upon an image
junction crossed his holsters wet
and keening.

Mouths remain attendant
to this service my waystation
suppered bred to its leanest
tooth that overlap
which ruckus quietly
his tongue loose us

remnant meal
from the crevice
to swallow us back.

[THE SHE OF THEM picks up THE BUOY and tucks it under her arm. Meeting THE GUNMAN’s eye, SHE stands still. His voice grows louder, insistent, and as the last moon falls toward his jaw he walks to her.]

MESSAGE: First Message was the only sound displacing. 
The world gratified in purloin.

What next, call it substitution—
all those back of my head turn
to talk. Lay down planks to cross anon 
insisting something happen here,

put voice to substance 
vouchsafe the grass-tangled schooner

sloed in its relation to the field. 
This worthy charge tripped on

another earth-cleaned bone, scraped its hull 
on the risen skull

likened mind diverging 
fell open like a riddle the field falls open.