

# New Poetry from Jacquelyn Cope: “Mission 376: Patient X,” “Prolonged Exposure Therapy,” “Doxies and Rum”



THERE'S EARTH INSIDE / *image by Amalie Flynn*

## MISSION 376: PATIENT X

There's dirt in his mouth now

you

know that for sure.

There's Earth inside his bloated belly

you

know that for sure.

The worms might have eaten away his ragged skin by now  
but the metal is still there.

Splayed on the satin or cotton lining  
like sad coins of a wishing well.

His casket might be oak, or cherry wood

you hope it was something sleek  
and aesthetically pleasing

you hope the flag was soft enough  
for hands and cheeks that needed touching.

## **PROLONGED EXPOSURE THERAPY**

Ten minutes staring at  
a fountain pen stabbing,  
scribbling paper.

A rocket hit a concrete wall  
I told her.

Water spots on bifocal glasses  
blurring iris's, flickering like  
burnt out pixels on a screen.

A desk placard bolded  
with professional credentials  
hooraying the study of mental illness.

A rocket hit a concrete wall and

Tic-tacs shaking in my red purse  
snapping the container at its neck  
revealing the candied-mint nonsense  
delaying my esophagus to stretch  
in the direction of answer.

A rocket hit a C-130 fuel tank spraying  
shrapnel

Her voice dives  
down into the depths  
of her vocal cords  
pulling out  
forced tonal sympathy  
an octave of care.

*If  
you'd like, I can prescribe you Zoloft today.*

The rocket hit a concrete wall  
the metal  
a rocket  
hit  
the fuel tank  
a concrete  
w  
a  
l  
l

## **DOXIES AND RUM**

My Dachshund

watches me pour

my

third

Coke.

bowed legs sit

under

his robust

chest.

beaming

in judgment

Morgan's

leg  
swung firmly

a barrel

he winks, opens his mouth

howls a whistling screech

rum and

firmly

chocolate colored

not

but acceptance.

Captain

resting on

and

His

Eyes

a  
rocket's screech.

A  
hand over his mouth

him. I quiet

Pouring  
the rest in the empty glass

ice breaks up the

into dissolving  
themselves.

sugar, caramel, Spice,

washes away the  
dryness in my throat

and  
salt from the sinuses stuck there.

Salt that I refuse

to expel  
any  
natural way.

My Doxie jumps on  
my lap

smelling  
distinctly of corn chips

for  
no reason at all.

He rests his head  
in the crevice

of my arm

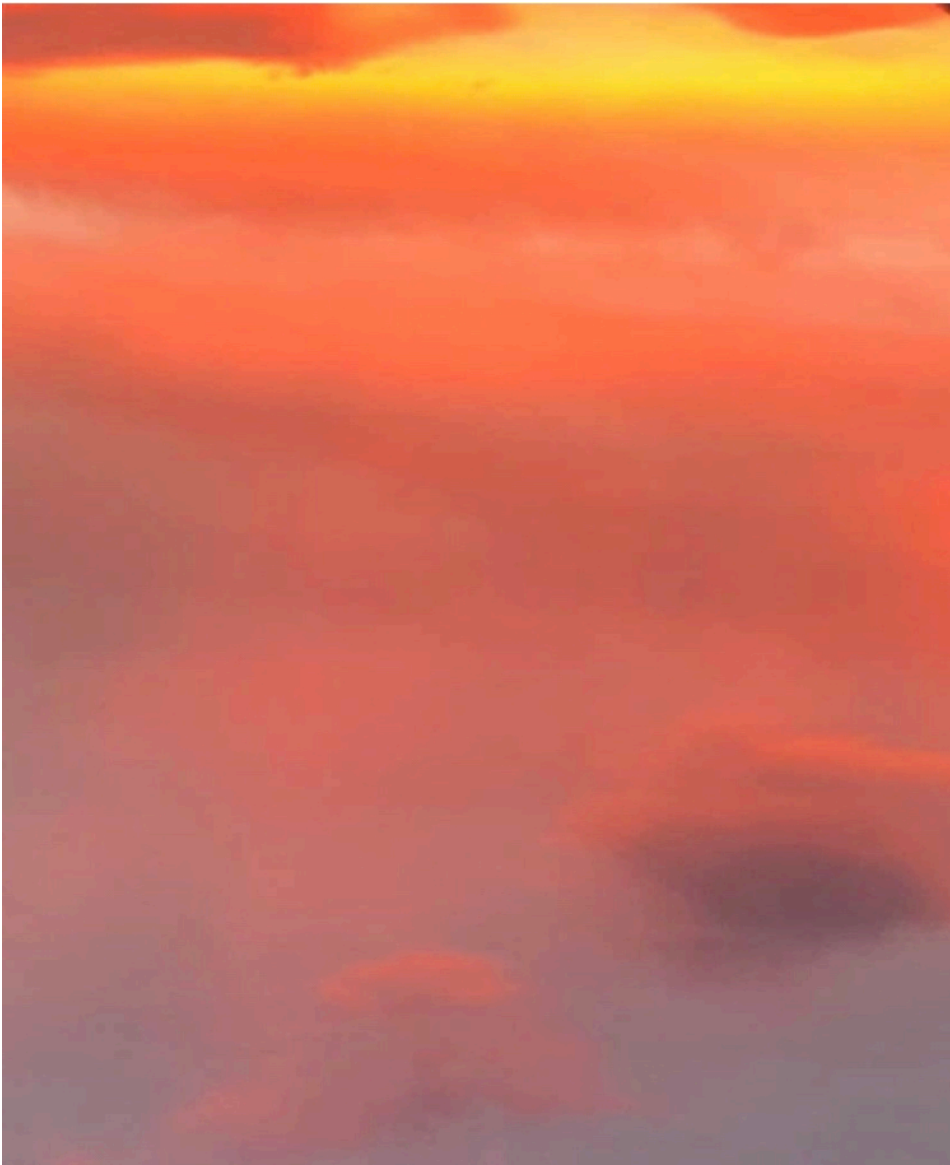
sighing deeper

than

I thought he could.

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**New Poetry from Mbizo  
Chirasha: "Casava Republics,"  
"Sad Revolutionary  
Lullabies," "Rhetorics"**



SUNSETS OF POLITICAL MASTURBATION / *image by Amalie Flynn*

**CASAVA  
REPUBLICS**

*Juba*

Child of lost sperm in sunsets of  
political masturbation

*Wagadugu*

Deadline of our  
revolutions

*Darfur*

Constipated stomach ,disease ravaged,

bloodless dozing monk.

*Nairobi*

Culture lost in the dust of Saxon lexicon  
and gutter slang

*Soweto*

Xenophobia  
Drunk and Afro-phobia sloshed.

*Marikana*

Cervical blister of the unfinished  
revolution fungi.

*Harare*

Corruption polonium deforming elders into  
political hoodlums

*Congo*

Lodge of secessionists and human  
guillotines

**SAD REVOLUTIONARY LULLABIES**

.....Sing songs of afghan circumcised,

Damascus masturbating bullets

Sing *Belafonte* Sing!

Of  
revolutions that never crawled, sing!

*Lumumba*, see whiz kids castrating  
political gods



*Nkurumah*, see them mutilating  
revolutionary goddesses

Sing *Kunta*, Sing *Kinte*

I am tired of revolutions importing  
colonial mood,

Propaganda decayed pimps frying anthems  
like *frikadels*

Tired savages roasting constitutions in  
corruption oil pans

Sing songs of freedoms that never walked,  
Sing!

## **RHETORICS**

*Mandela*, the summer sun that rose through  
rubbles of our winter

Gadafi and Sadamu making *shadufs* and  
pyramids

..... . another spring

*Obama and Osama* pulling rich political  
carrot in *Segorong*

Robin Island slept golden nightmares and  
charcoal dreams,

Soweto virgins cracking their under feet  
in the long walk to freedom

Faces carrying the burden of freedom and  
anthems.

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# New Poetry from D.A. Gray: “Mosul Reflections,” “St. Martin in the City,” “The Rearview Has Two Faces”



STOMACH OF A COUNTRY / *image by Amalie Flynn*

## **Mosul Reflections**

Ten years and the place is not the same.  
Memory of green hills in a dry land,  
cratered by what fell from the sky.  
I don't know whether to trust the image  
on the screen or the one in my mind.

One I only knew as Sayyd gave well water,  
sweet tea and mince meat on laffa.  
We were tired from the spring rains,  
three days in the stomach of the country,  
we sank into the hard wooden benches  
and we ate.

I thought of Jonah, not wanting  
to travel here, and when he did, enraged  
at an apocalypse that never came –  
how he rested under a bush then watched  
it die.

The father of the family smiled  
as I ate – both of us, with time, smiling.

*Dost thou well to be angry?*

His child in the corner never took her  
eyes off me. Her mother would glance  
over, expressionless, as if waiting  
for something that never happened.

Rain fell like mortars, knocking the edges  
from the dirt roads, craters in the middle.  
In a few minutes it would take us with it,  
descending. We'd see the fragments,  
some carved reliefs; we'd wondered  
what we'd destroyed, what we'd left  
the world – an image of broken rock  
in need of a makeshift savior.

### **St. Martin in the City**

Hunger sometimes reaches up  
grabs your cloak while you're riding.  
You can't shield your eyes,  
or go into hiding.

Every treasure you've carried home,  
is never enough.

A beggar beside the road, lifts his head;  
loose skin and sullen,  
he shivers and so do you.

\* \* \*

The day before we shipped  
I was walking with Preacher  
into the Walgreens for cold  
medicine and we saw a man  
asking for change. 'Pity it  
couldn't be him,' Preacher said,  
not waiting while I fished for coins.

Since returning the eyes  
of every refugee leap  
out of every face.

\* \* \*

The stuff of nightmares.

Suffering  
you thought you knew.

Sometimes it happens, a hand  
reaches out and causes  
you to draw back – until  
you see your fear in their eyes

both surprised how easily  
the veil between you parts.

### **The Rearview Has Two Faces**

Your memory has two faces. The thought occurs  
as you adjust your mirror in the chapel parking lot.

The eulogy's done its job, a few tears from even the most stoic, stone-faced ground pounders, the cracks in the First Sergeant's voice as he belts 'Smithson,' once, twice and again – as he waits for a response that never comes.

If you believe  
the words-

he defended the abstraction of freedom with every fiber, never showed late, said his prayers, and flossed. You remember an emails he sent. 'When I get back, there's a lineman job in Oklahoma. And the houses are cheap.' Days before he did it.

You remember  
the night

on your property, shooting empties off fence posts. 'I'm not going back,' he said. And you knew he would. Frustrating as hell but reliable. And you'd rather have sincere doubt than cocksure and careless.

The sun from the East burns the side of your face through the driver's side window. In the rearview you can see your left side turning red.

Yeah.

The night he told you, you didn't sleep, agonized over what to do about what he hadn't done yet.

And when he showed that morning, early, two full duffel bags and a goofy grin, you chided yourself for doubting.

You look one more time.

Sometimes he's there sitting in the back seat, an afterimage lingering after the flash has burned, you still trying to regain your vision.

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# Three Poems from Suzanne Rancourt



EXPLODE / *image by Amalie Flynn*

## **The Shoes That Bore Us**

It is a dream of kind slippers that coddle bunions appeased  
by hands mittened as the same kind slippers  
holding warmth as forgiveness for all the combat boots  
sogged by brackish muck of wars  
when not hoisted in the occasional stilettos of never regrets

a conundrum of cognitive dissonance stabs the dreams  
of where ever we had been, we escape to now over racked rails  
rocked goat paths and deer runs you think it's a man's world  
until  
it is not

a sidearm presses to a right hip as cupped palms to iliac  
crests  
walking boundaries and borders skirting domains of  
possibilities  
that astrological forecasts stagger out on slow printed pages  
like stammering promises spoken by the dead selling real  
estate,  
"Check Mate"  
no choice is a lie when the inevitable is an illusion, no  
freeze to suffice  
that fighting, although futile,  
is still taking a stand

### **Unhinged Again**

a stone leaves the hand that flung it-air escapes  
constricted vocal cords – a vomiting wild – enraged urgency  
and angst

kinetic makes contact – leaves bruises the color of bludgeoned  
fists pounding flesh is quiet. I can't remember if I was  
screaming

my face and shielding hands turned overripe plum purple  
sweet with sticky juice that dribbles down chins

attracts sugar bees you swat in autumn sun  
that smells of maple leaves red with change

this hammer drives the firing pin into a child's memory, my  
memory, of cap guns

explode a thousand times greater than a simple pop & puff

a chunk of lead propelled, is unhinged  
from the mansplaining – the antagonistic prod of condescending  
joust

I was stuck in a ring of double fisted doubts: leave don't  
leave

I didn't know that I was a prisoner of white picket conditions

like my mother. Was she also a prisoner? A side bar of  
recollection

a nursery rhyme my mother sang to me:

“Peter, Peter, pumpkin-eater, had a wife and couldn't keep  
her

He put her in a pumpkin shell, and there he kept her very  
well.”

I know my Mother knew when I was being beaten

there – my face laying with one ear pressed to cold linoleum

the other, an upward funnel catching my Mother's vengeful  
whisper

“get up...get up...fight”

to be marginalized – a side note or comment, placed in the  
periphery, only seen

when the reader desires or deems worthy of notice

only one of us walked from that house that day

to be silenced – a voice, a room, a home, a door closed upon  
it

a mind made up, barred entrance, not worth the time to view,  
hear, acknowledge

I'm writing this and telling you words are a privilege

voice is a human right thrown as stones – they fall from the  
wind



## **Crying Over Continents**

windfarms  
white wake of ferries  
channel crossing

a nonstop jack hammer knee  
Morse code through time zones  
pounding out instructions, the next destination

I'm not letting go like I used to. I feel heavier  
in my gathering of nuances, intimacies –  
You watch someone for hours, days  
you learn what time they take their dog for a shit  
turn on the garage light – the one just right of the workbench  
and always with their left hand  
You learn to recognize the screams of a woman  
in an upstairs back bedroom being struck  
or the subtle moans of make up sex easing across the back yard  
from windows never locked and left half open

Or maybe,  
it's the man in the downstairs apartment under yours  
that you watch shaving his son's head before forcing  
the kid to wear a chain and crucifix bigger than the kid's  
malnourished chest with ribs that break at 0200 hrs  
when Dad comes home drunk, no sex, and vile. The mother  
died mysteriously, they say, in a different town, a different  
country

Intimacy is being there as a ghost  
being fed the compromise of "I'll never do it again"

Intimacy is being there at the end  
and being held in the mantle of a dying eye

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# Poetry from Bryan Blanchard: “Pillar of Salt” and “The Mannequin”

## Pillar of Salt

Raining fire, burning steel ...  
And now I see haunted

Images of headless  
Bodies bathed in bloodstained

Sand of a mannequin  
Head with a swollen face

And lifeless eyes looking  
Back at an explosion,

A disfigured Humvee  
Staggering down the road,

A charred and gaping door,  
A torso hanging out –



Sketch by Sarah Blanchard

## **The Mannequin**

I am not a mannequin!  
I am a pillar of salt!  
I am the salt of the earth!  
My heart is heavy with sand.

*An earlier version of "Pillar of Salt" appeared in [O-Dark-Thirty](#), March 11, 2013.*