



THE FLOW FOLDS

JOHN BLOOMBERG-RISSMAN

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**Dusie Kollektiv 9:
Somewhere in the Cloud and Inbetween—
A Tribute to Marthe Reed
2019**

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Thank you Dusie Kollektiv for inviting me to participate. Marthe, you are missed and will continue to be for a very long time

“THE FLOW FOLDS”

-for Marthe Reed

The flow folds and twists and knots
into the 10,000 things

oakleaves oak leaves
OAK

burnt toast

graves on a hillside

jazz piano

armatures
of limb and cloud

tall reeds tallreeds blue

red — orange — gold — green

“What little dog called?”

THUS I HAVE HEARD

blue — white — yellow

white-tails cross
the road
green’s
six orders

“Nobody can understand it”

Philip Whalen’s tulip

stone path
stone steps

Thus have I heard

I HEARD IT

YOU HEARD IT TOO

At one time the Buddha was staying in the Jeta Grove, near the city of Sravasti. With him there was a community of 1,250 venerable monks and devoted disciples. One day before dawn, the Buddha clothed himself, and along with his disciples took up his alms bowl and entered the city to beg for food door to door, as was his custom. After he had returned and eaten, he put away his bowl and cloak, bathed his feet, and then sat with his legs crossed and body upright upon the seat arranged for him. He began mindfully fixing his attention in front of himself, while many monks approached the Buddha, and showing great reverence, seated themselves around him. After a time a most venerable monk named Subhuti, who was sitting in the congregation, rose from his seat. He uncovered his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, and as he joined his palms together he respectfully bowed and then addressed the Buddha: "Most Honored One, It is truly majestic how much knowledge and wisdom your monks and disciples have been given through your most inspired teachings! It is remarkable that you look after our welfare so selflessly and so completely." "Most Honored One, I have a question to ask you. If sons and daughters of good families want to develop the highest, most fulfilled and awakened mind, if they wish to attain the Highest Perfect Wisdom, what should they do to help quiet their drifting minds and help subdue their craving thoughts?" The Buddha then replied: A dirty bird in a square time, people. Om Vajrasattva, etc. Make me firm, etc. Make me compassionate, etc. Also, make my mind virtuous in all actions, etc. Hum ha ha ha ha hoh, etc. A voice comes to one in the dark. Imagine. To one on his back in the dark. This he can tell by the pressure on his hind parts and by how the dark changes when he shuts his eyes and again when he opens them again. Only a small part of what is said can be verified. As for example when he hears, You are on your back in the dark. Then he must acknowledge the truth of what is said. But by far the greater part of what is said cannot be verified. As for example when he hears, You first saw the light on such and such a day. Sometimes the two are combined as for example, You first saw the light on such and

such a day and now you are on your back in the dark. If he is alone on his back in the dark why does the voice not say so? Why does it never say for example, You saw the light on such and such a day and now you are alone on your back in the dark? Why? Given the existence etc., of a quaquaquaqu with white beard quaquaquaqu outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown but time will tell and suffers like the divine etc. with those who for reasons unknown but time will tell are plunged in torment plunged in fire whose fire flames if that continues and who can doubt it will fire the firmament that is to say blast hell to heaven so blue still and calm so calm with a calm which even though intermittent is better than nothing but not so fast and considering that everything is new and that is what's no longer new — the lack of novelty in the endless iterations of newness. Nothing old occurs anymore, either. Rhubarb is rote; edamame has entered Standard English. There are two large supermarkets equidistant from the building in which I live, one ten blocks south, one ten blocks northwest. I am entirely familiar with the way they are laid out. Produce to the right as one enters the door, against the wall. Citrus first. Nonetheless, shocks proliferate; what returns is perpetually unfamiliar — within every story another story is hidden, autonomous and unfolding though scarcely noticed except now and then, inadvertently, when, just as with a slip of the tongue a woman exposes a bit of the turbulent life underway in her unconscious mind, a rat scurries through an open window with a doll's head in its mouth, or a man shouts a couplet from a passing bus:

o queens of urbanity, kings of the crush

let's sing of convenience, importance, and plush

The city has 101,377 names, around 9800 per square mile. Maxine Able Smith, Leo X. Lee, Charles Altieri, Maggie Fornetti, etc. The sun emits a continuous roar, but from such a distance that it doesn't seem it can possibly be addressing any of us. The city players and planners all keep a low profile and work fast. And, like Don Quixote, the literary scholar sets forth to do her work. Entering the supermarket with an empty cart pulled from the chain of carts standing ready by the door, I turn sharply to the right, past the avocados to the melons, in front of which I park

my cart out of the flow of other shoppers. I move like an unregulated chess piece across the large checkerboard pattern formed by the floor's square tiles. I tear off a plastic bag and reach over a display of parsley; I select a single head of butter lettuce from the dewy, vernal, green display. The tips of its outer, darker leaves are imperfect — they are slightly torn and rust-stained, travel-worn. But the inner leaves are a pale, delicately variegated green, tender without being limp. This is the most succulent of lettuces. I've now added a cucumber, a head of endive, and a rubber-banded bunch of scallions to the shopping cart. I'm letting myself go. Long ago, little Lyn was in the produce section of a grocery store eating raw peas from the pod; big Lyn can remember the pods, the peas, the bin, the wood floor, the handsome, genial grocer: Roy of Roy's Market whom little Lyn carefully conflated with Roy Rogers, whom interim Lyns have had little occasion to remember, and whom big Lyn recognizes to have been carefully produced and like an animated porcelain (and later plastic) doll. With private ownership of land, myth-enchanted social culture along with its myth-suffused, story-bearing spaces came to an end. I find myself watching a tall, shabbily-dressed man wheeling a grocery cart south along Seventh Street in which a fat woman in an overcoat is crouched, holding a paper bag. The rules that establish a relationship between them, and between them and me, and between me and the intrusive friendliness of the tellers at the bank I enter after noticing them, are isolated from the text, say "Sweethearts. There is a seventeenth moon deciding", and expressed visually, with orange moons like pumpkins and yellow and red moons like ice cream cones behind blue houses filled with moonlight, which is to say that historically, the primary adaptation to dust-bowlification has been abandonment; the very word 'desert' comes from the Latin desertum for 'an abandoned place,' a pink notebook emblazoned in silver with the Aztec Piedra del Sol, a souvenir from the Museo Nacional de Antropología. So yes, text messages received while out suggest some kind of astrological disruption, crises everywhere, which is to say that in the dream I won using my intelligence and not by donning the regalia of Alma Mahler, which allows me to speak out of this rare pocket of calm, sitting at my Lyon and Healy harp playing Bach's Prelude in D Minor until my fingers develop blood blisters. Which is to say that Ahmet, who had been taken into a cave with two others and killed by dynamite was discovered because the fig tree that grew from the seed in his stomach was unusual for the area. I mention all this because one fascinating

example of psychiatrists tasked with evaluating a new spatial environment for its effects on human beings comes not from architecture but from the early days of the long-mission nuclear submarine. We might say that, while Ballard himself remained on land and in the cities, the true Ballardian environment was offshore, under water, and heavily militarized, a hermetically sealed psychological experiment prowling the ocean depths. The prospect that humans might have constructed something they themselves are unable to tolerate psychologically was an explicit secondary theme of that research. In more recent work, looking back at several decades' worth of pathological behaviors observed in submarine personnel, crew members were described as hiding in ever-smaller places at the outermost periphery of a submerged vessel, curled up against the hull as if seeking solace there. I mean, "Imagine you are dead. After many years of exile you are permitted to cast a single glance earthward. You see a lamppost and an old dog lifting his leg against it. You are so moved that you cannot stop sobbing." I mean, whether or not one thinks impeachment is a good idea, who could argue with Rashida Tlaib's choice of noun when she said of Trump that the Democrats are going to "impeach the motherfucker" besides some other fascist dickweed motherfucker?

It is you, oh yeah
It is you, oh yeah

I said a pressure drop,
Oh pressure, oh yeah
Pressure's gonna drop on you
I said pressure drop
Oh pressure, oh yeah
Pressure's gonna drop on you

I said when it drops
Oh you gonna feel it
Oh that you were doin' it wrong, wrong, wrong
Now when it drops
Oh you gonna feel it
That you were doin' it wrong and how

Etc.,

in an interview about which Toots said “It’s a song about revenge, but in the form of karma: if you do bad things to innocent people, then bad things will happen to you. The title was a phrase I used to say. If someone done me wrong, rather than fight them like a warrior, I’d say: ‘The pressure’s going to drop on you.’” As Martin writes, “I think, if I’m picking you up right, I get that bitter sweet, hopeless hopefulness of tending one’s plants breath by breath ... It is a difficulty, the tension that Socrates’ understanding of death voids everything whilst Cebes would that life counted for something. And not insignificant that in the counsel Socrates then gives to Cebes he speaks of philosophy as nothing more nor less than a charm, a makeshift really, and, even more surprisingly after he’s said so much so often about the soul alone by itself, that he should all but say they should stick together so as to discuss things amongst themselves, to hold close, hold close.” One simple but effective technique is called the three breaths practice. Here’s how it works: whenever you need to, you make the conscious intention to simply feel — fully feel — the full texture of the present-moment for just three breaths. Just stay with it, with as much presence as you can bring, for three full breaths. If you can do this, you still need to think: OK, what about three more breaths? What’s amazing about the three breaths practice is how often the ego is willing to go along with it.

I have been working on my daylight hours
for 26 years now and hope to collect them
in a chapbook-length manuscript soon

Needs

paper towel

red onions

milk

juice

bread

dressing

beautiful day, I'm in you

It's a city with 36,485 actively managed street and park trees, which is to say public trees. They are unevenly distributed, abundant in the hills and more sparse in the more densely urban and industrial flatlands. The poor live on the hillsides above some cities (for example Rio de Janeiro and Mexico City) and the rich on the hillsides above some others (see Berkeley and Oakland). Fragments of street music circulate — a bicyclist's bell, a siren, a vagrant with a guitar. Her beagle straining at the leash, a woman turns a corner and disappears. This isn't a city that "never sleeps." There's no bus service between 1 and 5 am. Dewanda Horn tries the three breath thing and, for an unperceived amount of time — it might have been hours, or only a few seconds, but it does not pass in increments, it is all of a piece, in a room, the windows open — she is but is not Dewanda Horn, sitting on a bench in the plaza with friends, facing away from the sun. Suddenly there's a tall hourglass-shaped cloud spinning toward us, blindingly white but dappled with dark markings, an hourglass cloud in the blaze of a rearing appaloosa. The massive twister grabs two women — I see them suspended upside down in the air, their dresses billowing. Then it's over, and we're standing in the plaza. Beside me is a young mother, holding a child; with her is Dewanda Horn. The young mother points to a photograph of herself with three children. Political struggle seeks to open new possibilities for happiness — ordinary happiness, it's dark, very late, a man is passing slowly through the neighborhood. He pushes a grocery cart. But freedom is always qualified. Askari Nate Martin sighs in his sleep, and Maggie Fornetti feels his breath on her face before she realizes she's heard it. His breath is slightly stale; she turns over, the comment "I'm changing my olfactory orientation" crosses her mind and amuses her. Cretaceous thimbles, metal delectables, sporadic blankets, and effigies en croute? Here are some of the many useful instruments: bed, belt, blanket, book, boots, broom, bus, cash, cell phone, chair, Clingwrap, coat, coffee maker, colander, comb, computer, deodorant, desk, dishwasher, doorknob, dust pan, envelope, faucet, file folder, garbage can, glass, glasses, gravy boat, hairbrush, hair dryer, hand

lotion, jar, key, knife, mouse, mug, notebook, paper, pen, pencil, pie dish, pillow, plate, platter, postage stamp, pot, printer, radio, rake, refrigerator, roasting pan, rolling pin, shampoo, shirt, shower, sink, skillet, skirt, soap, socks, sofa, spatula, sponge, spoon, stapler, stove, sweater, table, toaster, toilet, toothbrush, towel, umbrella, underpants, waste basket, watch; who knows what's possible. Indeed, who knows what's happening, what has already happened? Allegories, on the other hand, are not made out of parts. "The stars have [...] virtue for the allegorist." Dawn is not far off. The stars are fading. Maggie Fornetti is asleep on her side, right leg straight, left leg bent and drawn close to her body, left arm across her chest, right bent and tucked close to her side. Askari Nate Martin is asleep on his back, arms folded, legs straight, toes pushing at the bedding at the end of the bed. One night, I dream thirty words. I have to pace and place the semantic arrival of the words, their "meaning units." As, for example, in minimalist painting — and, perhaps, in minimalist musical compositions as well, where the micro-modulations can become as pervasive as dust. Roy Robinson Trelaine has a raw blister on his right foot and this may be what's preventing him from moving swiftly forward again into the battle (his term), which, however, hasn't yet begun. With the pain, such as it is, comes a flicker of history. Gears mesh, systems circle. In an essay on circuits and screens, capitalism's inventiveness is acknowledged, along with the complexities of its flow. The children are wielding wooden sticks like swords. Going to lunch he passed an office-building that was being put up — just the skeleton. A beam or something fell eight or ten stories down and smacked the sidewalk alongside him. It brushed pretty close to him, but didn't touch him, though a piece of the sidewalk was chipped off and flew up and hit his cheek. It only took a piece of skin off, but he still had the scar when I saw him. He rubbed it with his finger — well, affectionately — when he told me about it. He was scared stiff of course, he said, but he was more shocked than really frightened. He felt like somebody had taken the lid off life and let him look at the works. In other words, "The teeth of the board grow hair." The plants and animals know this and now all humans know this as well. The cellular understanding of our common fate is making us ill. This disease is called Extinction Illness. No one is immune to it. There is no cure. As Ubuntu teaches, "I am because you are," which now we must rephrase as: I will not be because you will not be. As I write this to you, my heart beat is irregular. Notley, the final reader, stepped on stage, hesitant up the

stairs, stood at the lectern, said that if she did an intro, she wouldn't stop talking and would use up her slot, is the microphone working, this poem is called 'Jimi Hendrix Anecdote,' she had a bad trip and felt there was a white thread inside her that needed to be clung to or she'd be annihilated — would that be possible, she muses later in recollecting how she recollected this incident to her sons and friends on her 60th birthday — and Hendrix looked at her in the crowd and seemed to be the only one who'd understood — he performed solo and died a few months later — ultimately the poem concluding "there is no anecdote", ending with a parody of the narrative structure the anecdote assumes, the final lines "this thing that happened this is this thing that happened". That was the warmup, anyway, then a poem from *Certain Magical Acts*, revisiting her earlier "I the people" and more insistently meditating on what that collective pronoun might mean. And then — but then! — the third poem ('Malorum Sanatio' — her own Latin coinage meaning "the healing of evil"), which is from a recent Canadian chapbook, *Undo*, published by Rob McLennan's Above/Ground Press with an A5 card cover but with the pages huge and expanding out beyond that cover. She prefaced the reading of this poem by saying, 'this is going to be hard to read so I'm going to count to ten first.' Then she launched in, and it was amazing, like six voices at once. A few days later, looking back at the text of the poem, the setting seems to be a different planet — or maybe a different version of earth. The character / speaker in the poem knows they have to heal this figure:

I'm supposed to know why in order to heal you or him am I
Let's not concentrate on what it means dead guys with
Past to be unpasted pressed over with letters who can
Read them

Later the speaker asks:

... have I healed you yet I'll continue to try
On the street corner behind broken ice whatever planet

They are not sure

If it's a feeling I have to heal or if it's a disease

[...]

no one gets
Out of here unhealed battered by grief

And in the final stanza that healing reaches a climax of personal and collective healing, every syllable earned as it comes to resounding, concluding, unquiet clarion-calling rest. The desire to remember literally everything, to fall away in order to remember all words ever spoken, is utopian and impossible and enormous, it fits with alma's project of remembering, to write a history adequate, but not commensurate or complicit with, the project of human life understood in terms of its violence, exclusions and framing definitions — perhaps too, beyond them.

All of us call come here and be healed of displeasure
Healed of extreme distress of disease imbalance and fit-
Fulness healed of every mark that hasn't a source in your
Spirit healed of ruptures between substances these words
Are pure without cynical precedent or calculation
I obtain for you the blessing of others we heal and holding are
you

Falling away so you can remember all words ever spo-
ken in any language remember thoughts all thoughts
For you can in one instant be healed knowing everything
Remembering everyone and finally remembering

Lampra sumbaine

light coming into clouds above still shadowed ridge

two sparrows standing on bricks in right foreground

Compare [BD009] Mazen Kerbaj's *Walls Will Fall: The 49 Trumpets of Jericho*, a site-specific composition which premiered last May 19th. The piece guided 49 trumpeters through a large water reservoir in Berlin-Pankow, whose winding corridors are both acoustically interesting and reminiscent of the labyrinth found in early depictions of Jericho's ancient city map. Why? According to Joshua 6:1-27, Jericho's walls

collapsed under the sound of seven trumpeters, blowing their horns for seven days while circling around the city. It is the idea of music breaking walls and barriers that is central here (the participating trumpet players come from Australia, Austria, Cuba, Denmark, England, Germany, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Poland, Russia, Serbia, Somalia, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Turkey and the United States, and that's not unimportant). The performance was mainly captured by the 3D-perspective of a binaural "Kunstkopf KU-100" microphone. To purchase the digital release please visit [Bandcamp](#). Headphones are recommended for listening.

You don't even have to take the train
I'll guide you to where they are
In a big conversation.

Do you hear, do you hear it
The way a snail hears,
That snail there who teaches,
Learns from the earth's replies, learning
The snail hears and gets there,
Gets there for sure
Even the slow one gets there,
Even the slower one will
Get there, it will
Surely get there

Between the worlds,
Around zero o'clock

The galleries burned
but the strongest works, good deeds
Survived nonetheless.

Mornings he ends up
Putting on his clothes.

"Subject, predicate, object!"
He admits.

“The Cape of Blues” was very much in the same vein, involving 12 cloaked performers, one saxophonist, and Nicola herself, who directed the event. I was part of a crowd of around 50 who walked along behind or beside, as in a pageant. Each of the cloaked performers wore a section of the beautiful blue cape Nicola made where each hood represented a dead person whom Nicola admired. I recognized a few names: Yves Klein, Sidney Bechet, Marcel Broodthaers. We paraded all around Place Saint-Sulpice and then, much to my surprise, entered the Saint-Sulpice Church while a Mass was in progress. The saxophonist went silent then, but we, the blue parade, kept on truckin, snaking our way through the back of the vast church and out again the other side without any apparent interruption to the ritual in progress. On exiting the church, a blustery wind blew hard, and my mood turned heavy and sad, particularly when I focused on the hooded heads of the performers I now associated with those intense hooded figures in religious processions I had seen in Spain. The photographs show elements of a city — eerie rifts in a space overflowing with objects, commodities and information — that Nakahira encountered and captured in his everyday life, from ivy creeping across walls and manhole covers in the streets to the tire of a large truck, from a pale-bellied shark floating in the transparent darkness behind the glass of an aquarium to close-up shots of a subway station. For example, “Comfort Animal” fuses language from a passage from Isaiah in which God says, “Comfort, comfort my people,” with an article from *Cosmopolitan* titled “Here’s Absolutely Everything You Need to Know About Getting an Emotional Support Animal.” The result is a Shekhinah who samples and remixes gendered forms of diction, enabling her to speak in ways that, well, I would have loved to have heard more. And then she went on to speak of “a kind of network thinking, with the heart being the center.” “I’m trying to talk about the condition of being so connected, the way we are.” She speaks of the impact on her, several years ago, of reading *The Gift*, with its evocation of a system of circulation that could include gods, things, animals, people, words — “everything is in the same big system. I saw it around me when I read that book, I saw all these connections, all these lines between things.” In the poem, therefore, the parts of the heart become rooms, they take on an architecture, they can be parts of a city. “The heart could be a castle, for instance. You can jump from level to level very fast.” For example, after registering specific details about torture sessions — including the areas of the body to which electric

shock has been applied and the tools employed — Soto Román transcribes the partial testimony of a victim, but leaves the end of each sentence blank:

they disrobe me completely and tie me to _____.
they put a band around my head and throw water on _____.
below the band and at the level of my temples they fit me with _____.
and on my stomach another _____.
they hit me with electric current.
they interrogate me about _____.
they tell me to raise a finger to stop the _____.
this session lasts between _____.

Hela, viewers learn, previously served as the instrument of Odin's conquests, the bloody campaigns that put nine realms under the control of the all-father and his kin. In one of the film's most striking moments, Hela destroys a mural, part of which features Odin, Thor, Loki, and others sporting halos and brandishing peace treaties. The mural, it turns out, had covered an older one that portrayed Hela and Odin riding into battle, leaving only death in their wake. There's horror behind Asgard's infinite power, and Hela highlights that horror not to prevent its repetition, but to return Asgard to its glory days of expansionist empire. The unfortunate familiarity of Hela's villainy, in turn, points to her most frightening quality: how unextreme she feels. The threat of her reign is less dystopian than it is the next logical step of contemporary far-right politics (if politics is the word). The compass by which Hela seeks to govern is, plainly, imperialist self-interest — not a far cry from Trump's "(Rich White Male) America First." Luckily for Thor and Co., Hela appears to perish when Surtur, at the end of the film, fulfills the prophecy of Ragnarök and burns Asgard. But Hela, win or lose, is right about Thor and Odin. They gained their power through death and can retain it solely through death. *Ragnarok* suggests as much when Thor decides to take his newly homeless people to Earth. Thor is ostensibly enlightened, wary of repeating his father's sins. But once on Earth, Thor will, of course, ... you know. He has to: there are and might always be more movies to make and more killings to perform. Or vice versa. The gods will rebuild, and the lessons they learn will be fleeting. They will create new murders and new murals to honor them. It kept gittin'

worse and worse and wind blowin' harder and harder and it kept gittin' darker and darker. And the old house was just a-vibratin' like it was gonna blow away. And I started tryin' to see my hand. And I kept bringin' my hand up closer and closer and closer and closer and closer and I finally touched the end of my nose and I still couldn't see my hand. That's how black it was. And we burned kerosene lamps and Dad lit an old kerosene lamp, set it on the kitchen table and it was just across the room from me, about — about 14 feet. And I could just barely see that lamp flame across the room. That's how dark it was and it was six o'clock in the afternoon. It was the 14th of April, 1935. The sun was still up, but it was totally black and that was blackest, worst dust storm, sand storm we had durin' the whole time. A lot of people died. A lot of children, especially, died of dust pneumonia. They'd take little kids and cover 'em with sheets and sprinkle water on the sheets to filter the dust out. But we had to haul water. We had a team and we had water barrels. We hauled stock water and household water both. And we didn't have the water to use for that, so we just had to suffer through it. And lots of mornin's we'd get up and strain our drinkin' water like people strain milk, through a cloth, to strain the debris out of it. But then, of course, a lotta grit went through and settled to the bottom of the bucket, but you had have drinkin' water. And when you got you a little dipper of water, you drink it. You didn't take a sip and throw it away, because it was a very precious thing to us because we had to haul it ... Some people thought it was an act of God and a punishment for — and possibly in a way it kindly was, because they'd more or less what you'd say raped the land ... They abused it somethin' terrible. They raped it. They got everything out they could and —

[SOURCES: Marthe Reed, *Philip Whalen's Tulip*, at Dusie.org; *The Diamond Sutra* (tr. Alex Johnson), at [Diamond Sutra.com](http://DiamondSutra.com); JBR, *With the Noose Around My Neck* 124, at [Zeitgeist Spam](http://ZeitgeistSpam.com), johnbr.com, 11 Jan 019 (see there for further sources)]