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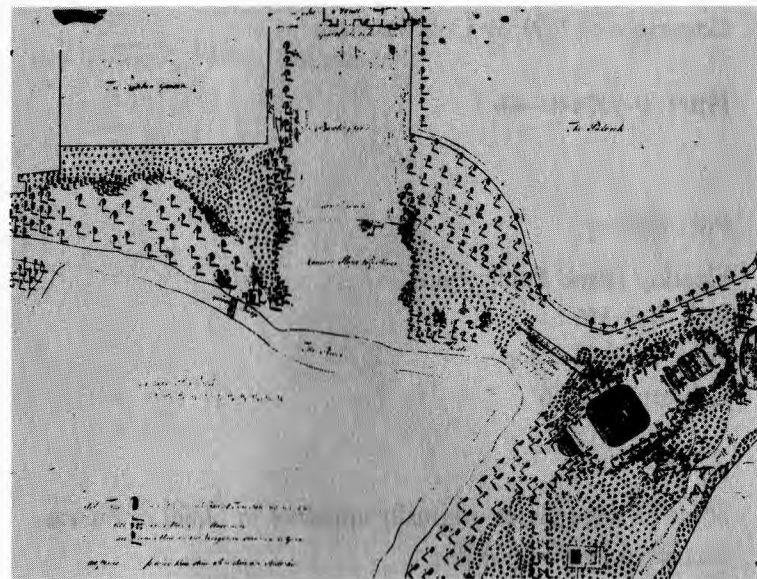
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PARK

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C O L E S W E N S E N

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ISBN: 0-912449-40-3

Published by:

Floating Island Publications

P.O. Box 516

Point Reyes Station

California 94956

Some of these pieces originally appeared in *Détail* in French,
translated by Pierre Alferi.

Designed and produced by Michael Sykes at

Archetype West in Point Reyes Station.

Cover design by the author.

The typeface is Bembo.

To Lynn

and to Elliott, Phillip, and Amanda

PARK

9 ONE

11 ONE THROUGH SEVENTEEN

31 THREE

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53 FIVE

55 PARK

63 SEVEN

Copyright © 1987 by Michael Szymon
and to Elliott, Paul, and Anthony

Published by
Bantam Doubleday Dell
P.O. Box 516
Fort Myers, Florida
California 94956

Some of these poems originally appeared in *Unlabeled* in French,
translated by Pierre Alferi.

Designed and produced by Michael Szymon at
Archer/De Vries in Fort Myers, Florida
Cover design by Michael Szymon
The typeface is Bembo.

"We first found the park late one night. We'd been out walking through the narrow residential streets on the other side of the river when we came upon an iron gate behind which could be seen fountains surrounded by all kinds of animals and row after row of flowering trees. And some combination of darkneses modified by streetlights evenly placed in lines radiating away gave the scene a sense of motion—in fact every time I've been back, if it's been at night, or even in the evening, I've had the distinct impression that everything is moving."

"We first found the gate late one night. We'd been walking through the narrow residential streets on the west side of the river when we came upon an iron gate closed which could be seen from the street. The gate was surrounded by all kinds of animals and low stone walls of flowering trees. And some combination of the noise made by stepping on the gravel placed in their retreating way gave the scene a sense of motion—in fact every time I've been back, it's been as if, or even in the evening, I've had the distinct impression that everything is moving."

ONE THROUGH SEVENTEEN

There were more. He went back. It didn't seem to be the same. The small, irregularly shaped light bulbs in every room. Fractured light that seemed to be from "Where does that come from?" "Where are they?" "What are all these things looking for?"

ONE

There were many. He went blind.
It didn't even hurt. The small implosions:
a lightbulb in every pore. Fractured
flight that surges before itself. "Where
does that end?" "What are all these
funny looking things for?"

T W O

The blind man stood on the bridge swaying
slightly in measure with the water. There are
things that become gradually
more real: the river became a muscle
emblazoned with his face. The sun became
an idea that carves up the heart.

T H R E E

The single point in which
sound begins. The interruption of an egg.
Interrupting a conception of space. "A contradiction
in terms." They have nothing in common.
"That's not possible."
"Nothing is."

FOUR

In the park there are millions. They
sway together and grow. Morning cracks:
a line of light below a door. There is
a river inside the sun. "Aren't you
coming?" A twig, a snap and he
spins around.

FIVE

Light redistributing the news.

At night the park is guarded by a
huge man and a huge dog. They swim
through the enormous dark silence
a foot above the ground.

Light folding over light.

EIGHT

If you stare long enough the image
gilds itself over the eye.
Piece by piece, but you have to try.
A scene, a sign, redone. A single man.
But walking. Slowly. As the face changes,
many. No, again, the dissolving
resolves the variations: two eyes looking
calmly on.

NINE

The leaves weaving long. The dangling
light off its own limbs, twist. The light
crawls. And a line spreads
to seal the joint between the ocean
and the sky. "I thought
it was miles." "Come
around."

T E N

In the air it's a spiral. Eyes rooted
on something just beyond. The children
twirling just to make themselves dizzy.
Now they believe in geometry.

E L E V E N

"I was born here." This is heard
closing around a place. An earth that lifts
off its names. Green metal chairs. The crowd
that comes every day
to its separate places. Fountains
in a fan-shape, moth-shape, a
repetition of frames.

T W E L V E

All things that spin. Also row.
There is inside it
something sun.

T H I R T E E N

From a bird's-eye view, perfectly
balanced sections. Acres laid out
as an aerial sculpture. "Hundreds
of years." The egg turning over and over
in the palm. The globe
that broke, the opening ground. "Where
are you going my
slender remembrance?" My
accidental dear.

FOURTEEN

Who lives here at night
similar. The rings on her hands
in the shade the
slight scent. "Again." The woman
reading the letter shifts
unconsciously toward the sun.

FIFTEEN

"You too were there." The park is
millions. Carefully secreted. These
discrete pieces fitting like minutes
it's seamless. "That's not possible."

SIXTEEN

Like emulsion, you remember everything
you've ever touched. The insides
of your arms.

SEVENTEEN

Carved. Music overheard all
over town. Nothing is.

It didn't even
have been there
calmly on
something just
There's never anyone
if you stare
with his face

there are things which
in a busy street
a bird
at the sound
There's never

And some combination of
row after row
have been there
the sight of which
view

looking calmly on
impression

ONE

Almost as if one could. The sight of which is tied. Long, long rows. Look how bare like bolts of cold lightning wandering slowly up from the ground. "What are all these funny looking things for?" He walks on slowly, his feet gifted with sight of a peculiar kind. A light-bulb in every pore, and blending into the fields extending on every side, nothing held. He said again the noun is gone. The small implosions equal the cumulative total of the gestures that amount to the motion of stone. There were many.

T W O

The water hurried. Huddled. Snow was just beginning to fall early through the evening in which it glowed past lamps and paused like bridges pause. On the bridge stood a blind man swaying. No shore, more waves hitting rocks covered with snow. The river is hurry. Wakes fanning out in swelling Vs, the various ships slip by each other. Language in flashing light. The reflection on the surface of the river when it's calm remembers like a muscle that returns to exactly the same position which in turn incites the picture. A shop window in a busy street which at night turns out to be still imprinted with a face. The crowds hurry past. The snow, just seconds ago, began.

T H R E E

Sound begins in color, which is green, which is opening a fan filled with wind. Don't mind. The letter's in your hand. Sitting on the green metal chair, staring straight ahead. Trees into signs. The child hopping along beside his mother repeating "That's not possible, that's not possible." Obviously new words. They shine. They start and never end, continuous as an egg. Round in the mouth like the mouth of someone staring into space amazed. Age.

FOUR

The wind opens again and the leaves unfurl. More living than hands. Maps. Sails. The park is full of them, millions swaying in the bright noon growing into a river down which light pours a change of season full of smells and touch. A snap of a twig and the twig spins to the ground. Run-off from the morning street-cleaning as it crowds toward the grate begins turning, thought, the stairs of a ship. The child turns at the sound of his name and the empty chairs look so inviting he runs to them with outstretched arms, rivers inside the sun, a line of light below a door. There's never anyone there. "Aren't you coming?" There's so much green in the world.

FIVE

Patterns of weather have been charted and tracked and proved to be like fingertips, never reminiscent, derivative or planned. And all that belongs to animals, the million silent flights, the simple gestures with no intentions behind. Sometimes at night they populate the raked gravel walks, pose in groups near the fountains whose waters hang poised. All breath held and the green metal chairs, relaxed, having reverted to an earlier form. Seen from the air, this park is a dark pool out of which radiate the rows of streetlights redistributing the moon. The soldiers lean back against the walls of buildings, cigarettes glowing, voices disappearing down their eyes.

Night and it's empty, huge and gifted with sight. As if each cell could feel and, having felt, could live in more than one place like sound is necessarily everywhere at once. "Late at night." Maybe a reply. Public park with a tall wall and an iron gate. "So my friend broke in, just wanting for a moment." A silence only attained by places usually busy, noisy, now it grows. "And he was shocked to discover that the place is guarded by a huge man and a huge dog; they patrol the place as a team all night long, their movements so co-ordinated that they barely touch earth, senses so sharpened, it's astounding what they hear. And though separated by a lake or row of flowering trees, they are nonetheless aware of every move the other makes, every sharp intake of breath, every little gasp of surprise.

White paper in the pitch black. Owl in the tree. Let's take for instance the wing. Gesture peeled back to its impulse. Gesture freed from its limb. In a graduated curve, a bat trims the inverted sky. Night which is not an object but is light folded over light at such a speed that the trees blur going by there is a sound like that of a broom, like someone is sweeping in the dark the back porch with the porchlight still off. Behind him there's a house of living people. If light has a body. Behind the fence of the park, vague shapes move across the ground. Thousands of animals here in this electricity of shadow, moving without edges.

EIGHT

Slowly a single man detaches from the line of trees and moves on. It's the time of day when the light rays are so short they will only support black and white. A million greys and fine grains piece by piece gather and the image freezes for a moment there is something with a name: an owl in a tree, dead white, a screech as it takes off. The face changes. It rises and floats just above the many bodies that this early in the morning pass without speaking but deeply invisibly shine. All objects at this hour emit a lavish emptiness. Then dissolves into variations: the first discernable color is red.

NINE

At first it appears to be miles from the edge of the park to the ocean. The edge jutting out, looking over and surrounded by trees, leaves dipping, weaving long through the lengthening light which crawls out of the line that seals the ocean to the sky. A view is an extension of the eye, an annexed room. Speeding color. I used to visit. Unoccupied territories of the body that wander from their fixed points. That a body could hover, sliding along its own limbs and those of others, twist.

The children are twirling just to make themselves dizzy. The older one holds the younger with just the tip of her index finger on the exact top of her head. A racing globe, the continents joining each other, the world turning vaguely blue. The bluer water and the absent-minded boats. A deep belief in geometry which is what's making that slight whirring sound in the background. Their eyes rooted on something just beyond the line of flowering trees which makes the edge of one shape while bisecting another. It's something they can't see, can't quite determine, yet that feeds a smile that unfurls in plot-like fashion, the only distance between two points. The people around them rushing to work.

An oar in the space of every breath. Every day to its separate places. Everything in its own way imitates the sun. Nothing gone. When the sky is dead blue and the earth lifts up off the world, off its names and glides like a smell which is never attached, like sound with a life of its own. In the movie, each second was a separate tableau depicting a different possibility for the same moment in time whose passage was effected by a simple repetition of frames. Of evenly planted trees, flowering off-season, barely contained. The fountain as a moth, as a fan, as a beloved and loving face. And all around, people reading the paper, stunned at the news. The trees too like fans opening or a million misshapen feathers, experimental hands.

T W E L V E

“Inside the sun there’s another one just like this, bisected by a river, children on the shore with kites.” One must also row; watch the water curling around the oar. The lake in summer and open lawns stretching upward. The children have a game in which all things that spin are given the same value. “There’s something inside it.” she says offering the stone to her sister who expects windows to open in objects and the sun to have an unpronounceable name. She doesn’t get that the kites are objects just like any others, that they actually still exist when brought down from the sky.

T H I R T E E N

Like music, the balanced sections, the varying greens, a varied and slender memory accumulates and coils until it shines, then shines until it spins. And turning over and over in the palm, the miniature globe over which the sky entirely fills with owls and empty trees infinite in color and perfect as hands. “No, in no other time could this have been believed.” The sharply outlined features, the mountain in distant wind. But now every act of weather is simply another sculpture which, seen from the air seems to be a formal garden. Thought arranged so that it can be rewritten. “Where are you going?” Thought arranged as if for a visit. Gloves on. And a hat in the hands of an architect.

FOURTEEN

"Again." Over and over like a chant it's no longer a word. That which rests against a curve and is no longer habit. They come every day to the green metal chairs. While the children with all their different faces not keeping track. Some of them play with boats. In the shade the slight scent of the animals who live here at night still hovers. On its edge a woman who's been out walking sits reading a letter from her distant sister. The rings on her hands shatter the sun. From the playground, similar shrieks. Three girls lean out on the round-about, gripping with their feet as well as their hands. They've managed to get it going really fast.

FIFTEEN

A man on the fifth floor of the apartment building just across the street from the south entrance to the park looks down. Shape of a man resting on the lawn. "You too are here." It's usually so close: almost light and the weather going pale. He watches the changes each year become more arbitrary. Millions of colors turning over and over. An object one holds absent-mindedly, thinking of something else at the time until it no longer has a name. Millions of pieces fitting together as intricately as minutes with their sculpted edges, it's almost planned. When repairing the road, they found below the cobblestones, an entire Roman regiment in perfect formation, down to each finger intact and a spear in every hand. Facing west. Divided wears the trace.

SIXTEEN

There is no. It's not. Memory but. The cupped hands held under the fountain. Every inch of skin with its own version. The insides of your arms like mirrors. When I whisper, something shatters. Everything you've ever touched is still becoming more beautiful. The emulsion on which every action. The surface of the water of the lake across which, that surface that rings when struck, your body composed of it. What I hear in the dark.

SEVENTEEN

Carved. As in the arc of a flame. When only music, as when one leans back on the bench, feet out and closes one's eyes, is heard, is overheard which makes one disappear. The music of snow. The ice inhabiting the trees. If we could wear windows and if it would work. And now it all looks identical, pale as light and one could never say "here is where". Nothing is moving across the soft bright ground sparkling in reproduction of an eye on which a face is still incised. It's an approaching face with all the motion glazed right below the skin.

piece by piece gather and
the image freezes
impression
of course, if everything and the empty
in the shape of a moth

the sky entirely
"here is where"

yes, every time
is something that lives

it can be rewritten
who expects windows

an unpronounceable name

just like anyone else
sound with a life
the distinct
if you stare
which in turn incite

just the tip of the index finger

filled with wind

those rivers
inside

There's never anyone

row after row

among its own
a racing globe

something drowned out by traffic
And some combination of
simple gestures
still incised

of course there were

the sight of which

They are nonetheless aware

arms like mirrors
a silence only

I used to visit

a sharp intake of breath

all night long, their movements

calmly on
among its own
a perfect square

There's never

looking
Everything you've ever
every inch of skin

P A R K

"A garden cannot touch the earth but must remain suspended, extending only through time." The architect with his oddly large hands arranged his colored pencils so that light flowed along them, rising in tone. "Whereas a park is a vertical structure, rather like a tree in that for everything that one can see there is a reciprocal portion rooted underground." Crescendo. Several in the room did not agree.

"This land has been bequeathed and thus etc. and we will beautify it. As in make it more beautiful. As in intentionalize it. As in inside. Twenty-three architects were hired because they argued so well together and that's fun.

"A park is a piece of a sun stretched horizontally as far as it can be stretched and then left alone." He had framed the plans of several of the world's most beautiful gardens and hung them in his studio in between the windows which looked out onto one of the most beautiful gardens in the world. *Slowly a single man detaches from the line of trees, a barely distinguishable form.* Numerous versions were presented.

"In this one a small amphitheater crowns the rise and overlooks the river. It is our intention that during certain seasons the color of the water be publicly applauded as it changes on the hour and perhaps we can persuade the churches to let it replace the bells which it anyway so closely

resembles.”

“A park is what you can see from the park.”

“A garden is a face you can’t keep track of.”

“But we’re not planning a garden, we’re planning a park.” (We will agree upon nothing quite pleasantly in a pleasant room.)

“Park is not a noun.” *Slowly a single man detaches from the line of trees and moves on.* It went on like this for hours. They occasionally sent out for sandwiches, smoked their pipes, told jokes just to keep in shape. *At the moment just a form, the outline of which fades with its movements into the early air around. (The arms of a child, the rivers inside the sun.)* By the end of the last day of the first week, good natured laughter, a decision on a fountain, or almost a decision if it hadn’t been for something nagging, as if something forgotten, no doubt quite small but it will circle itself so sadly until it’s found.

“A park is a photograph in a developing bath, climbing out of itself.”

“No, a park can never be completed.”

“That will not present a problem,” said a man whose obsession with sculpture caused him to see everything in terms of weight, time and stone.

“We will of course need a few statues—ex-

statesmen on horseback, that sort of thing.”

“No, we’ll have flowering trees.” *With all their different faces. The rivers inside the sun. The man moves slowly across the open lawn. It isn’t yet completely light and the edges of his body remain indistinct.* The meetings went on for several more weeks. The sheets of plans began living their own lives, overgrowing and pollinating each other into intricate mixtures that resembled nothing previously proposed.

“The park should float along the river with trees composed of sails.” As he said this he was looking down 37 stories to the river on which the tiny white triangles barely moved and along which the trees, tulip trees, had just begun to bloom, their tiny white flags thrust out of bone. Soon the leaves will follow and all over the city, people will cease to be stunned. *The man moves slowly. Which inside some things resembles the sun.*

“We’ve been given this land. We must do something.” The man with the oddly large hands lit a cigarette with a match whose flame he watched march toward his fingers wondering how close he would dare let it come. *Barely light. The line of trees. Another man equally barely there it seems who will soon pass him without speaking. A line of light below a door.*

“A park is an empty place perfectly poised that at

the slightest movement will start to explode without stopping." *Which inside some things. Another man.*

"A park spins like a globe on which are painted all possible faces which can't be seen until they blend." *All that belongs to animals. The arms of a child. The million silent flights.*

"A park is a face with a million pages."

"Back to the garden in the river. It's just an idea and perhaps a difficult one in the long run to pull off, but at least the plans are drawn. They contain dozens of flowering trees set with the regularity of lampposts down the center current of the entire length of the section that bisects the city. It is our hope that, like kelp, they will wave and sway and thereby delineate the motion that has come to be identified as an object as if a river were a single thing and not just stopped for a moment before bursting through the thought. Snow will fall through the water undisturbed by the oars which will create the subtle floral pattern which inside some things resembles the sun." Row. *The lines multiply. Gesture freed from its limb. Slowly across the open lawn.*

The increasing indecision was becoming daily more inviting as now the plans lay two-thick on every available inch of wall and the architects spent their time wandering silently, musing as they visited various ones throughout the

day, imagining this pond, that fountain, that arrangement of ornamental shrubs and how these things would interact with the sounds, such as those from the children's playground, which must be perfectly positioned and at the precise distance to allow laughter to replace the sound of traffic without sacrificing the latter's ability to be mistaken for the ocean if one is not listening literally or is thinking of something else at the time. *A single man. Early air around.* Occasionally one remarked on a curve of hedge that seemed to speak or a path that came undone. (Being a thing, and thus always in motion, its boundaries will glide in a gradual fashion all over the city, perhaps in a circular or spiral pattern.) But in general, their conversations got shorter and more thoroughly supported by gesture until soon they stopped speaking all together and each would each day simply pluck another roll from under his arm and unroll it on the table unsigned. By the end of the third month, they were spending most of their time gazing out the windows, so much so that the activity began improving their vision and each of them discovered daily his or her horizons extending to display first the outskirts of the city and then gradually farmlands, wilderness, and mountainsides, punctuated in the late evening by the glowing eyes of animals. *Which inside some things. The million silent flights.*

carved

senses so

There is
and some

everything inside

One must also row