

**Peripheral Daydream:**  
*A Sequence Following Bei Dao's **Daydream***

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## Peripheral Daydream

*Following Bei Dao's Daydream* (Trans. Klein & Eshleman)

1.

Rust covers a layer of leaves  
Your face beneath a calendar page  
rubs your shadows into plaster  
a palimpsest of rough drafts  
transition to an inorganic record  
There's always more away to be than here  
Stonefruit hollow at the core  
I climb my own Adam's apple

another's, an invisible orbit  
dew coats a line of tanks  
a neck, broken on the frame  
birds behind each hour  
pendulum, an organ  
the clockface, an alluvial deposit  
draws relentlessly on  
collects each night into one liquid room

2.

A ghost knitted into your sheet music  
subsists on vapor and ash  
gap-toothed to facilitate reversal

bring a knife to a bowl of fruit  
--no heart's left to have  
no poison to grow a tree into  
go solar lacks flare  
a rock garden in a greenhouse  
an underwater scene, out from under

the weather, no way  
to scrub the kids out of the fixtures  
rain's forecast  
to be broadcast from elsewhere  
I'll suck in these allergens  
collapse  
and try to reiterate myself  
These I  
that I are

3.

Nothing but pages  
in a sonambulist anthology  
a clock's loose arms  
go slack when the alarm sounds

time to cheer up  
there's no scenery to be inhibited by  
we're all here  
all where  
the road curves  
into a museum set-piece  
amber encased-  
a silkworm cacaphony

getting up must be awkward  
beside me  
times call for a pre-funerary revival--  
all this motion gets us nowhere

4.

There's always more away to be than here  
to split not out but open  
at sea for a minute  
almost too easy  
lit up

a portable set without reception  
static tuned in like foil  
to see yourself hold the door ajar  
forecast as malediction  
all sputter and stop  
enter through the wrong opening

like the right words on foreign pages  
staying always ahead  
a digit in the footer  
--25e  
I'm in the middle  
you're at the window; you're in the aisle

5.

The face is what follows after the fact  
worn down by friction rather than care  
no less whole for shaving some off  
a timeshare in nowhere  
stay awhile and this too will be beachfront  
I can't say it'll all wring out but  
there's more skin beneath the skin so slough  
enough to hang around by  
you can chum the rafters for whatever's biting  
electricity's a cheat when the line goes dead  
so goes another old chestnut, I guess  
give my regards to the buffet line

It's loudest right now  
as the vehicle clears the embankment  
the rapids rush to meet it  
of all the people you could have been, you're you

6.

A new round of commons  
open in on themselves  
a book, a list, a catalogue  
of misplaced items

people who gather there unfamiliar  
in half-lived families

so spread the lattice wider  
sunlight ships to the factory for enrichment  
crossroads all end the same way  
conversations come to a point

Your urges urge me to mine  
only to bury the waste in a hollowed-out mountain  
seven, maybe, or eleven  
a close shave, past due  
we conduct a raid on the bug emporium  
incepticide

7.

Some memories are clearer than others  
gravity's rarely this capriciously  
absent  
I wasn't there where I was  
of a certain age  
but I left from that place shortly after  
traded in livestock  
on the floor of the exchange  
I'm not writing this so I can read it

today  
the print's bars are wider than usual  
now there's a face to replace it  
the gas is on but the pilot's out  
don't look at me like that  
eternity's too long to spend lighting a match  
in this manufactured darkness



8.

Did the calendar overflow its banks  
abscond with the still-smouldering embers?  
a fixed point and a secondhand satellite  
an infirmary thoroughbred half-unwound  
Drive a point through the breast of a pit-quarry  
quicksilver from cinnabar  
second-seat in a black widow orchestra  
newborns parachute in  
set the ground ablaze wherever they land

Did the calendar overflow its banks  
and divert precious resources to urban centers?  
Pull your pants up  
this is a diorama in a family museum  
where you find yourself  
stuffed and mounted  
hardly seen by hoards of schoolkids  
still your DNA can be extracted  
let's hope something like you may live again

9.

surrender to the next viable date  
and turn out about as reliable--  
I'm down to nothing but these vocal chords  
and we're all to be dented in  
and installed – an ICU VIP  
the woods are all sick with it  
all this free time and open space  
rockgut leeches into the groundwater

orations crowd each other out  
move straight into a circular argument  
parthenogenesis – and why not?  
If it is a will it might as well go on living  
vibrate without a sound  
three sides of the same coin  
and not a dime to stand on  
one by one the sounds of us go quiet

10.

It's hard to get a grip on respiration  
and needlepoint's no better  
so let's tie up the ironworks  
and let the furnaces cool in a vacuum  
light can't or won't escape  
all in the quiver point to intended targets

everyone in the cemetery has seen this cartoon  
horror's eventually monotonous  
the antecedents  
because you left their mouths open  
are stored in the cathouse Oh you topiary reliquary

your calendar's not officially sanctioned  
one fruit hangs from one branch  
dead birds surround the rootball  
and fly to branches when shadows get to be too much  
nothing proves terribly exceptional

11.

What dwindles stirs the loins, but the other direction  
a *dénouement* that shrinks the limbs into the trunk  
and chokes the wind as it leaves the leaves

sucks moisture from your cheek  
a fish takes a plunge into desert sand  
I'm bottom trawling another glorious sunset  
passion leaves me grammarless  
I self-immolate but forget to say what for

my gut is hardly an effective fuel  
salt in a glass but what I drink  
returns me to where I started – a kind of turn  
you fall away from – be

tangled in the canopy  
two streamers of the same marine layer  
burn off together  
yellow diamonds say nothing inside

12.

A ghost of just your outer garments  
locates its own habit at  
a diagram showing how the organ malfunctions  
releases its hold  
on another exquisitely dry meal  
peaks lose their places in migration  
scribbles disappear faster than their authors  
even the edges of things revise themselves  
my shadow's autobiography differs from mine  
just as the ritual face you wear wears away  
and the bloom depends  
on how you mourn all untrue connections  
If this was really your face  
why would you want to watch?  
Precipice, when your tenuous form meets itself  
its pattern of flight will give it away

13.

Read by the light of self-illuminating insects  
they fight their own battles  
tip toward an equator that shifts beneath them  
armies start above ground before heading below  
into caves made by exposed roots, the same sun  
around, the same exoskeleton encrusts it

no doubt searching for water  
means the skins get worn a little looser  
and shots fired just wander, having lost the way

we fade in stasis, cranium on a dimmer switch  
wax the satellite until it gleams  
and still there are bugs to chase from the bushes  
that drone like cicadas  
we've left a long, subterranean dream  
so sing until the song hollows us out and nests there

something untoward bypasses the route  
we take to return to to the livery  
The soldier fly spills its guts on the page

14.

No ship will return to this spit  
white expanse stays white  
even as it's spackled with germs that eat it through

so what's underneath shines out, this and that  
a honeycomb in a coffeecup  
peaks that rise no higher than a bedroom window

it's still hard to breathe here  
the composites arrange to choke us out  
all surface, and surface before that

I need a lever small enough to move dust  
rocks reel and spin  
ballet looks no better in nightmare

words must stop before full impression's felt  
the cave wall's no menagerie  
fish snake into the darkest sockets  
and turn them on

15.

mouthfuls of stars sink to the bottom  
even as levees strain to hold the lip of this cup  
I'm steeping in, you

see, I heal over irregularly  
stuck in the muck of your footprints  
I'm transported, grain by grain  
a mess of tissue  
compressed into something that can cut

a little extra space within a larger space  
somehow, we're still in this together  
wrapped like spring rolls  
we stuff ourselves into every maw  
that insists on carrying a tune to turn to

there's always more away to be than here  
levees will eventually give  
lodge bits of bone under my skin



16.

All my possessions are at the end of the track  
and thin doesn't always mean *sinemy*

clever trick for a bird of prey  
but it's no good equating hunger with the hunt

ancestors studied their own tongues  
and used their bones to draw conclusions

on we go, we go on  
stay together through the next set of rapids

It's stupid to fight with only one  
season

so look for me in your caterpillar tread  
a culture of moping

spigot in the cinnabar spilling  
one more thing to wake up from

poor cartographer...as if there is any other kind

17.

Time flies while we gather moss  
but dawn's still just around the corner  
the wind here has teeth like a comb  
and winds itself up without moving  
on-again, off-again, a two-note crescendo  
on the roof with no fiddle again  
chew a nut until the calm returns  
as you age, your passages restrict

Seen space between bars for what it is, now  
have you? Pages are assigned  
without speaking a word  
but what you hear fans out  
until it swamps the calendar for good  
rend to own  
the map is not the legend  
the legend is a place you can't get back to  
the body impaled on the astrolabe  
finds a hollow place and fails to fill it

18.

torn-up sidewalk working a taxed dollar  
inertia's path-  
os, though others claim it,  
it freezes at room temperature

a rumor some attribution  
a plumb some fuse  
cracker my cracker  
goodnight breathe tight

languish draped in many forms  
clears a path through the checkout aisle  
some stay folded while others open  
two mirrors clash in the night

gravity has its way even here  
bowling me over and over  
a color called '*cigarette ash*'  
evangelism's impetus, yet again

19.

The world reverses itself  
so now there's somewhere to go  
and another's mouth to inhabit  
like a model home, it is echoey  
slanting every which way

Is that enough time for a tree to take?  
Can a cave generate its own weather?  
Why brood underground-  
unless you have a shortcut there  
two times, overlapsed.

Just a little of you cut away  
distorting as it melts  
obsidian heartburn  
dressage in threadbare attire  
ahead of a coronal mass ejection

No need to panic  
these frames can be stitched together  
Any one thing's equal to any other

20.

Shared between shepherd and sheep  
an unsubstantiated ruminant  
heats up until it sheds its tether  
so I'm constellated--  
I can better see the stars this way  
confined on only four sides  
the weight of what I'm not hearing  
is what holds us all in common  
the ungainly and the ungulate  
the predators with all their protestations  
the vacuum is unpopulated  
as far as vision will allow  
though the river may yet return to bed  
and I may read the signals  
as I do my empty books  
wise bumpkins  
you bring your own lines to the banks

21.

All closed beneath their lids  
tucked in shade  
the vegetables nonetheless listen

first shot to cross the line  
now you're *here*

and we have to eat without leaving a mark  
or guess which cup contains the poison  
--all these words sanitize the stench

but I'm still impressed how you got it up there  
and how undistorted we remain below

*Sheep* just shows how little you know sheep  
crypsis in field or pulpit  
stand tall, incognito

take some photos to show you almost found it  
even though the coup was flown

A new trick to replace stigmata  
shadows just track movement  
your job is to collect the pieces

22.

brash in refusal--  
the mute takes to the loudspeaker  
thinks the ending is pat  
just a bodycount  
and theatrical effects using ropes and cats  
revamp the graticule  
it means other than how it sounds

winter licks the streetlamps  
up and down the block, one and the same  
a surprise for the mail carrier  
duck inside the shipping container, now  
it's early for a home  
germ-free and unhealthy  
Doc, under "Cause" write "be--"

You were right, the ending *is* pat  
If this is my hoard, than what does that make me?

23.

The façade is more than just a clockface

even as I finish what I'm about to think  
it melts on impact  
oh mourners out on Halloween  
please spare me the group hug  
is this to be a pagan holiday  
or just a poor excuse for a bonfire?

Move, be it to march or dirge  
knucklebone drumstick  
direct my gaze  
your face is familiar  
do you want to trade?  
this bird folded into a sheet of paper  
awaits your answer...  
Some things don't change

There's always more away to be than here



Author's Note:

These poems draw their inspiration from Bei Dao's sequence, *Daydream*, translated by Lucas Klein and Clayton Eshleman. The method of creating my sequence follows a form I deem "peripheral poetry." The poems were constructed by my writing a new line of poetry that responds to, or plays off of, each line of Bei Dao's poems. My poems are not intended to be translations or reworkings of the original poems, but rather something like ripples or echoes that exist, somewhat tenuously, at the edges of these other poems. They are, in one sense, a form of reading.

