

PASSPORT

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'Cuba' and 'Connecticut' appeared in *River City*, though in different versions.
'Garden of Music' appeared in *Pleiades*.

Window

Like a projector, this window shakes in time —
refutes the night, when shelter is.

Night's labyrinth: the homespun
of inner joints, tiny threads of air.

Like dark juice, when the red curtain
quiets, proceeds, but it's motionless.

A dried poppy: the light switch in the iron
jigsaw of its bars of watery, elementary music.

I will determine my condition
and my method of attachment.

My sash and frame, nourishment,
my level of repair, or if.

Complete replacement is required,
I may use sandpaper.

Wire brush, gritblasting wire
bare metal with solvent and zinc-rich prime.

I will be operational—designed
to open, close, swing freely.

Seal my joints, elastomeric.
I will be repaired, so.

Wind and light will enter, allow.
Rob my pockets of silver.

Border Crossing

A document gets a security sticker—
bright orange as the sun beats
the nation we transmit across
dotted lines into each neighbor's
enemy dirt that is always the same.

But who are you behind this window,
as a television pumps Arabic
headlines arraying desert hiphop?
Reporting to the officer
in cardamom darkness a gun-glint
shimmies like an epaulet
stuffed and enshrined with a maroon cap.

The one in charge knows the only way back
is across the steel asterisks
meant to slow the vehicles' wheels,
turning left or right, knives along the infrared map.

Petra

Camel hoofprints immesh in rose-mud
and a donkey, with his bilateral triangles
and woolly seat clomp the steps, nearly 2500
years after they were carved from sandstone
with sandy chisels carved from sand.

In the dust someone seems to yell
“Soy Califa,” but what did she mean?
Baubles bake as children dash through a cloud
to make a living, imitating the grandmas.
Through black eyelets a woman gazes
at a Pepsi bottle being brought to the ant kingdom
though a blue lizard melts onto a rock,
Corinthian as a tomb, emptied of thoracic pieces.

This is a Nabataean priest, found near
terracotta piping. His pinwheel curls,
like mine, have been consecrated by a dustbowl.

Finally, a crowstep battlement roasts
and it's time to review Assyria's pink plaster.

Imagine, it's 1839. No one's shot the Castor and Pollux
fused on the portico. Aaron wished he had such shine.
A minimalist god with no mouth—gods don't eat—
will watch us as we re-enter the ravine, dripping wet.

Cuba

The drainage ditch is fueled with poisons.
The sunset moves like an animal in a bag.

It's as if the *caballero*, with his spoon,
used a swan for a chimney.

Urchins accuse each other of infidelity
as the mint leaves float in the diplomat's glass.

A rooster's gasoline pumps the tractor
red as smoke devoured by worms.

Rain cuts the white cars, like a tiled stove:
a yardkeeper in a forgotten station sips milk.

A rag of salt flavored with bullion makes this guy
shift from one foot to the other.

"What have you earned," his wife asked him.
"I have earned a life beyond the grave."

Bauhaus Architecture

Peer out the window as the axis
splits sand-light into a cactus spore
breathing micro-winds aligning like
these suspended gardens and pergolas
feed tubes to the heated air.

I, too, am an elastic shell. . .
this exterior has a communal purpose—
stand beneath the balustrade
and the sea heaves like yellow grain
as the birthday cake turns
on oven-mitt wheels, heaving.

A ship moves with white-building precision
like a précis of light through the garden plots.
There's a lawn, longing to moan with a coal.

The coal goes into its burning self.

My Time in Hanoi

Outside the threshold, kneeling full of dust
Hanoi sprouts in the salt. Its leafy barbs
are the lingual equivalency of a *vu quang ox*
sucking a river. Honey jars & bear
gall bladders hang in a shop window.

A childless couple visits the Perfume Pagoda
to douse their wick. Where the cyclo descends
into the sea, a dragon unfurls her muscular canoe.

Hanoi trades me 11,000 dong if I do a little
monkey dance. At the moment I'm supposed
to twirl & jig-a-jug, a typhoon crashes through
the thatched wall, a seedblown bloodlamp singing:

Em oi / doi khong co em / Nhu pho / khong co nuoc leo:

O my beloved / life without you is like / pho without its broth.

Connecticut

The true person is cold and dark—
animal; it crawls under thing skin
made to deceive human beings.

Give me tomorrow to tear the torn. I don't like it
when you leave for New York—
I hope Connecticut isn't rocky.

Nothing happens while you live.
The road changes, its trees unfurl
and go, all.

There are no beginnings.
Purple days glue their mouths
to days, interminable addition.

I stare at myself, see the black dewy
motions; *foresee* the fall
ceiling where I sleep, brown as wood.

Myself, am I not down there,
icy lymph and to be, august. . .
damp as a city, in the glassy ease?

Bad biscuits and half a glass of gin
Biscuits and half a pint of gin
mighty fine and a little too thin.

Turn me back, lean with both hands.
I see beneath myself, thin and grape.
Wait for me, exist, beam.

Horrified, I exist.
The frozen grass exists, and the soft fleeing
people, all have their own shadows to share.

Wait for me. Be sudden. Devoid of dimensions,
I escape the animal, that is all.
A square choir on a mulberry tree.

Garden of Music

The black spruces wait in the orange trestles
But they cannot cease the bass leaning to the lawn.

That's the reason daddy has to drive so rough.
Each horn makes the women swoon

As if the saxophone's a steel rig
shakes the forest's meat.

The audience is a hitch for the peeling hunger
As winged apricots sit in pink wickedness.

Bright companions, the hills, reap a grove.
Someone waits, using a diamond to scoop a clam.

The sky opens its fishscales but you can't see me;
There's a turnip blocking the light to this place.

Brooklyn

The wind evens the ratio
Between “beast” and “melting man.”

Inside the man is the peninsula of snow.
Snow falls and he falls.
Falling, I hear myself say
Your *be* is not the same as my *be*.

Did you curl into a ball with the F train tunneling?
And we did not walk through the park.
Instead, a bird makes a meal of me.
And its violescent volt is its body.

Misshapen smells cool in the hail.
The window scares me.
Opening . . . my bones are made of windows.
Then the windows move—

I hear them move above me.
And they rise *through me* and most of me—
Red skin, clustering ooze, all melts.
Drowning now, my bones are carried by birds.

There is no place in this white room
Opening by hungry birds that I would feel unsafe,
Provided I am strong enough
To suggest that such birds exist.

Door

Along the edge, near the root
a cylinder rotates along the sphere
to complete its bolt,

not in the monster's neck
but flush to the corner of its mold
like a flattened world creaking

with swishing polite decorum
the rooms beyond which
we enter willfully with pull

as the brass knob unscrews
within its lineaments
the secret-revealing of door.

SEAN SINGER'S first book *Discography* won the 2001 Yale Series of Younger Poets Prize, selected by W.S. Merwin, and the Norma Farber First Book Award from the Poetry Society of America. He is also the recipient of an artists' grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council and a 2005 Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

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