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Four Poems

By Colin Dodds

The Labyrinth in the Third Millennium

Look at the world and consider its plans for you.
Lost is the best you could hope to be.

The middle of a darkened wood
Is all you should expect of good.

Everyone says *help me*.
But you aren't supposed to take it literally.

The nightmare's purpose
Is to hide the actual nightmare.

You have to surrender and surrender
To get to the real war.

The New York Ouroboros

The day taints,
from the forced march of the morning
to the sun-wrecked afternoon.

The sun makes its low circle,
lights the office windows
in our hour of usefulness.

Our Lady of Windows
watches the streets fill
with her statue-blank eyes.

Even the men who sleep in doorways,
the leaky ghosts with shredded bowels
mad from the sound of it all,
are half healed by her, and thank her profusely
for the hand that hits them, for everything.

On the subway concourse,
businessmen and cleaning ladies
exchange rosary beads at rush hour,
hailing Mary over and over again
like an enormous wheel wobbling.

An unconsciousness
stronger than my own
runs through all of it.

The New York Ouroboros
is a subway, with a face on either end.
And they stare each other down

for longer than I can watch.

The skyline regulates heaven.
Night is dark and forty stories high.

Up too late, the city
translates me back to myself
with something missing
and something inscrutable inserted.

What goes on
is more than science and history.
What goes on
waits for poetry to grow up and become worthy.

Within Immense Luck

High water in rich lands
fried chicken and vagina on my hands.
On the good side of chaos,
lucky are the souls who play us.

I can buy it on the way to work,
having slept in the shoeshine chair.
There's coffee for a perk
and later, I bathe in beer.

I see the lights of the airplane that flies,
the lights of the bridges and the lights of the stars
from the windows of buses and the windows of bars,
and among infinite dirt and infinite skies,
conclude I am the luckiest pile of atoms so far.

So high that we suspect a peak,
the pressure is uncertain
the direction is uncertain.
The whole universe is flirting.
And there is breath enough to speak.

The Forests Turn to Information

The forest is
turning to information.

I pass through its odd metamorphosis,
on train rides down the short, familiar routes
from New York to Boston, Philadelphia to Washington,
New Jersey to Connecticut.

Life is hard, the people in the cafe car say.
You play by the rules and still you lose.
They admire how they fit into the horrible world,
sip beers past the quarries and backs of factories.

The conductor claims a passenger took his seat,
and threatens to beat him in the station.
The engineer hands down the verdict.
The passenger must move. But the conductor will be fired.
No one wins. It's the peace that keeps.

A train ride is practice for when you die,
for when you turn entirely to information.
This time, you loop east, toward the ocean,
out of the city, through Queens,
where the husks of cars sit in piles
like cicada skins in the fulcrum of summer.

Back at the house,
the wind tugs at the garbage on the barbed wire.
It is *close-the-damn-door* cold.
The answering machine mumbles odd threats.
The empire persists.

Colin Dodds grew up in Massachusetts and completed his education in New York City. He's the author of several novels, including [The Last Bad Job](#), which the late Norman Mailer touted as showing "something that very few writers have; a species of inner talent that owes very little to other people." Dodds' screenplay, *Refreshment – A Tragedy*, was named a semi-finalist in 2010 American Zoetrope Contest. His poetry has appeared in more than seventy publications, and has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, with his wife Samantha.

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