CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE FORESEEABLE GOD

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of Master of Art
in English

By

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Abstract

The Foreseeable God

By Arthur Kayzakian

Master of Art in English

The nature of my loyalty to anything has always been dichotomous: virtuous and burdensome. As this collection will demonstrate, the speaker navigates through a discussion with the self to find inner peace. The poems represent a reincarnation of the self, as it is transformed into the supernatural being through a journey of prayers. This process of recreation is manifested through speakers of the lyric poem: “The speaker is a device for making the invisible visible” (Brogan 726). In this way, a poetry of spirituality has opened my perception to the outside world and therefore healed the inner world. I turn my perception inward and feel the world from my senses; reveal parts of my personal to the physical world in the form of the lyric.
The Perception of Stairway

I’d like to believe in the stardust gate:

a seraph greets you in your coming.

      White smoke
     gold shine
the harp mouth.

You know the songs of the heart when the harp stops.

You want to follow the truth, a change to nirvana.

A fresh way to see nebula:

the openings between any world.

Is this ubiquity ambitious?

Can you see inside the void:

the created, the loved

cities above the walk?

You can fly inside yourself

      when there is nothing left to embody.
Beyond Us

Leaning down on its roots, the stem of a wounded tree.

Seven coated lumberjacks surround, chop at the bark

for homes, shelter, paper, money. Bowing by the neck, how the larch

screams beneath the blades. What will the neighbors say?

A landscape stretched with forest. Branches spread out as open arms,

on each a family of leaves. Trees understand why we carve

their bearded skin, oldest living things on earth,

their certain pride in being the true artisans

of the casket. And here we are—flesh and bones is all we’ll ever be.

By the end, let us know as much

as wood.
It is the cavity where the purple obscures the blue.

You can see inside the void:

the ruled, the disintegrated

cities beneath the tide.

If the shark could speak,
it would slide words

between the sharp bones
of pointed teeth,

its open mouth of hunger.

Everything you ever knew will become discovery.

Said my last attempt at love.

Were it not for the spinning fans
that warble a tremulous sound,

the sea would sleep tonight

cradling the wonders of forgotten ships,

tossed wedding rings from fingers

that venture and slip into serenity.
I’ve seen men bent
down on one knee
tears dripping to the tile.

Why can’t I knock a few back?

Because God said so.

Tonight the moon is high
drifting in the summer air
floating in a silver cloak.

Looking down on us,
too far away to feel,
too distant to shine
a needle of light—
the needle in the arm

for the men that cry.

All night the stories
of Styrofoam cups
and dry mouth
chapped lips of coffee
and shortcake cream.

All night the emptiness
of a real charge sends
electricity to my body
because the pseudonym
of intoxication is only
the moon for me.

Tonight we clap hands
in celebration of another
newborn has-been
or never-was,
broken spirited
light winged
wishing he could fly
to the moon.

Why can’t I knock a few back?
Because God said so.

We let heads roll here, 
turn on ourselves.

The defeat of trading stories 
with labor jackets and rough hands 
and union garb and misled 
creases, worn out faces 
spread into each other’s 
crooked smiles.

+ 

All night the clouds shift 
into one another hiding 
the face of the sky.

Tonight the moon doesn’t 
want to be here, it has 
oceans to move.

All night we tide ourselves 
in the pride of a parched thirst, 
licking our lips, rubbing 
tightly our promises 
into each other.

I will soar this way.

And now a speech from the birthday boy.

Here’s how it went down:

One morning I woke up 
salt-throat and empty 
inside the stomach.

Mother hates me. 
Father hates her. 
I look deep through 
the cinder for left-over 
love, no luck.
Just ash.

The good night brought high winds.
Santa Ana raging fire blowing
over the canyons just above our house.

I was seventeen then.

The flame of wild hair
so orange it’s red
so near its draft picked
up by the whiff of trucks
with sirens flying
into the side of the night
and the mountain above our home.

I turn to face the glow as all heaven is burning.
The Black Aftermath

You scrape the bottom of yourself and drag your feet to grandpa.

Keep the bending tulips that tickle your knees and the lowering body that kneels before the rock.

Keep everything.
Keep the love
the shiny dishes
the washing
the crying
the tablecloth
the leaving.

Tonight there is no room for sorrow.

   Slender branches pressed against
   the window pane.

   The hallow wind pushing his name in to the house.

Imagine if the guests could feel it.
This is your place for loss.
The Day Love Was Put to Trial

Today was the beating
of the judge's mallet,
slamming down on his wooden
desk. Don't blame him.
It's all he knows.

Wearing black, serving
justice for need of order.
Love, listening in, patiently.
*It has failed us*, cries prosecution.

Perhaps love reaches a wrinkle.
Time has no concern here.
The dead walk the earth
wearing watches.

Perhaps love is a floating ghost,
haunting the physical world,
how it plays with imagination.

There is no sense in thinking
about it--the feeling explains
its abstraction.

Says Love, *Did you know you think
too much?* Maybe truth is made of lies.

It's all in the conviction, how you push
your vote through the doorway

where light can find answer for you.
Double Headed: a Metaphor of Grief

-After Anne Carson

1

Listening to the Stress behind Me

Some say pain in the body is a question.

I say it’s an answer with hooks.

Attached, digging into muscles,
feeding on vibrancy.

The knot in the back tied with the stress.

What is the nature of a relationship?

All the darkness around it festers what it is not.

Dear reader I offer you a symbol

that does not seep too deeply into a wound;

in my scarred tissue lies a heavy

metonymic shift of scattered thoughts

congested, desire’s traffic jam.

I’m loyal to nothing but this pain’s conclusion.

I would break some rule had I known the limits,
perhaps the press is a calling—

is a sign, really?

I wonder who her thoughts rub against when I am absent,

hiding in her absence, a floating shadow she calls home after the day is done?

The tautness is always pulsing, a vital organ.

The greenness of it all boils inside me.
Reading Anne Carson lying in bed, back flat against the mattress.

I don’t want to think about her; was it Carson that said the green hiss of jealousy can eat to a heart’s core.

The gliding, smiling, sliding, the sideways gerund done in a boyfriend’s absence.

This is real pain—the allegoric torn muscle that never heals.

What is jealousy anyway?

There are no words to fully describe a feeling; there are only attempts to sound meanings of the tearing inside.

2

**Metonymies of a Grinning Bite**

I never asked gravity to tow me towards her.

It pulled me into her smile
along the edges of her teeth.

On the bench of the university quad, we sat side by side not uttering a word while comfort filled me.

I’m in deep now, as serious as fangs.

Let me contemplate.

*There she sits with a slanted awareness—*
*a knowing of her soul. She showers beneath*
*the deep solemn of rest, breathing and ready*
*to take the world in as it comes in rustic or angelic forms.*

That’s not true enough.

Poetry should work
like worn down wisdom teeth over years of gnawing.
Actually, there’s no pain if there’s room for growth.

She is as she was as she always will be— hurt, kind, strong, weak who knows.

What makes a person so special that we want to enter them?

We are full of reasons to be hurt and the aching comes in different shapes, piercing muscles, each hook pulling us towards the pain some sharper than others.
Nostalgia

The Camaro soars
down the gravel, dented
metal bending with the road;
twisting itself to an empty tank.

The black of cracked leather seats,
the mashed dash-board
the glint of its sun-beaten paint job
where color was young once.

And what about those leather seats
that arch upward, rising like a spine
with poise? Guilty for all the bliss
of housing roundness to its lap.

If the cushion's maw had a say,
there would be much to mouth
after the leaving of diaphoresis.
Imagine the headrest tilting back

after years of fermenting
the sweaty skin of summer bodies.
Think of the radio knob,
how so many hands have turned

it to feel melody’s pulse;
there is something hesitant—
nothing can replace the past,
nothing can remove the gift
of perfume drifting in a Camaro.
Cleaning Up the Future

Time works the kitchen
in his white apron.

Pots and pans of history:

memory’s dirty work.

Just the way you like it; your terrified past scrubbing away on its hands,

the blue you see when daddy drinks,
your red spill over the kitchen tile.

Is it light that does the moving, the taking back?

Rapid melting
in dour return,

the bury of bones.

There is a need to sanitize,
    to rub the unsoiled flavors from dishes
and forks and knives and glass
    all used for dinners while sitting across
from father.
Metronome

On a walk through Wilshire Boulevard, I see a man asking for change. I wonder where he resides inside this body. Crouched as a temple on the curb, while smooth skyscrapers stretch their necks, raise a nose to the sky, too high to notice the tearing of his clothes. Gargoyle monuments, building pets, stare at his plea, nothing to give him, but grey and blank countenance. He thanks the walking for their hurried pry into their pockets. The man listens, sound has a home found in his Dixie. He finds rhythm in the dropping of quarters. A silver lashing of wild. Chaffing melody against itself, no rule--a miracle. I imagine it is the kind of tempo that he has followed his entire life. A jingle that has entranced him to an uncontrollable blind. Music has its way with memory.

I imagine my father as the opposite of sound. Soothing his prudent hands across the electronic piano. Note is meter, he tells me. Practicing on his keyboard he always seems so technical. A home, careful payment, control. Mathematically calculating each note, no risk, never letting music take him away. It helps him to confide in certainty because the unknown is a frightening walk. A path least manifest, but dreamt often. Vibrant chimes coiled beneath his ironed suit.
Chest Plate

I wonder what the smell of nothing is.
The smell of autopsy.
I wonder if the cold incision apologizes
before cutting toward the empty space.
When my grandfather died, he took
with him the wrinkles, the frowns.
Someone replaced him with a smile.
A careful artifact, an icon. I touched
the platter, where his heart used to be.

They did a great job on his body.

I wonder what the smell of creation is.
The smell of never done.
I wonder if his black suit felt obliged
to rest with him underneath our walking.
Is he even there? They made it seem.
I thanked the priest for his sending away.
That is all, to thank, say sorry. I heard
someone say his hands are cold. I wonder
if those were his hands.

I know what the smell of melancholy is.
The smell of salt water.
I wonder if he was given a face
so we can relish the past.
Circles

The thing about creating circles—
they never really go anywhere.
History, a calculation of the unknown,
rounds itself to make sense, but of what?
There are reasons for prying into time,
dusting the ancient tusk to find answers
an anthropologist would like you to believe.
Progression and history are brothers,
their bloodlines stream through the ancient forest of us.

*  

What is the nature of our holding on?
Five minutes ago was five years ago
for memory, that tricky magician, so crafty
with calloused hands to file our stories:
The first time my father bought me ice cream,
the morning walks to Holland Park School on Kensington St.
These are what historians surmise as memory, and
the more we know the less we forget.
And yet, the breath of goodbye
is waiting in my father’s mouth
when he kisses my cheek.
I could spin myself dizzy from pain
until walking a straight line
is the only thing I can recall.

*  

I like ice cream because it tastes pure,
a coldness sharp as innocence.
No matter how it numbs my tongue,
I can never escape the recollection
of my father when he smiles;  
he knows I love the swirl of vanilla.  
I despise pain, I don’t want to miss  
him when time takes him away,  
when he becomes only a part of the past  
historians study—  
as if to say a linear order is what the  
world needs.  

*  
Tell me, does it matter if a circle always  
runs back to the point it came from?  
It makes a three-ring circus out of the straight line.  
As it should. Who wants to know  
time never turns around? Comes back for us.  
Who doesn’t fear a father dying?  
Experts tell us that we must dig  
for what is buried. To know the bones  
before us is to answer the meaning of now.  
Answers: a hope of transcendence via relics.  
History has never been straight with me.  
Will never be.
Bourbon Boys

Tonight there is no room for God.
The priests are staying home.

Dark drinking heaves the chasm,
opening the pores for the invisible
ladder. Let the cousin of light find
us begging for the idea of pain.

Put your hands together one more time,
see the clouds roll out of the sky.

The chance to hear a mystery, a faint
sound hiding in the silence of fate.

The crackling of melting ice that
swims in bitter water, the preists
take time into their own tonight.

Tonight there is no hallucination
of His coming, only the desolate
stretch of sacramental serenity. Something
to look forward to in the morning.

We will gather to the wooden benches
inside the home of colored windows.

We will listen to the preachers return
from the brownness of the couch, watching
them slide the word. A sleight of hand
across the bibles they preach with a hint
of hope stinging in their breath.
Portals

Your jaw jittering like it’s carrying voltage.

The fist
    that shapes
    the hole

because the Dodgers lost.

How much craze lives inside your skin?

Your patience bending when you bellow:

the open mouth in your wall where a door used to be
the haunting drape that now covers the screaming cavity.

We sit quietly most of the time

television blaring
silence cutting

I admire the moment of letting go; you push the logical order of the world recklessly over the edge.

The second before you lose control—a dimension
where your skeleton runs wild.

The space of current; to know there is room to be free.
Sidewalks

The sidewalk sleeps beneath an empty bench. Light posts lick the street.

We wait for her, like the shadow waits for me. Endlessly, stretching

underneath her walk. Some things are meant to fall like tall husbands

weeping on her leather wings. Broken down with hungry hands within the walls of long hallways. Her eyes seasoned with perception, she cradles the world.

Bended, we edge slowly to her warmth. She confides in the vulnerable.

Nestled in her electric crevice, the city crawls inside her when she sleeps.
Addiction

One foot after the other to the phone.  
My doppelganger is calling.

Stay away from the water walker.  
He is deepest where the dark bargains.

Striding the avenues of my veins, 
traces of his footsteps map my arms.

Scratch the absence of an itch.  
A tenebrous space for the victim.

There used to be a nothing for the empty.  
Do not fall for the water walker.

He is steep in all his lightness, strolling 
beneath my surface. There is always 
a need. Reaching inside myself, 
I give him everything. To be one again.

To march in the numb. Heavy silence 
in the saunter. I move through the streets 
of me. Dragging my feet into the blind. 
Into his call, into the black.

The endless stretch welcomes my surrender.
Suiting the Inevitable

To butterfly doubt.
   To believe in:

Purple Robe
Gold Cross
Black Bench

The Good Book

Who gets in the way of God’s hands?
Don’t you realize he works incredible hours?

I’d like a feel of reason; to wear age like a dress coat.

You can keep the Quartz with the big hand and small tick and I’ll just sit here letting it pass and God will love us both for our linger.

Go ahead and make these calls.

Yell and chant.

Love. Lick the light.

Dress up for God, uniform his power.
Why will it matter to die, anyway?

The praise
above
a deathbed—

tuxedos
ceremonies
ovations.

You worked hard and sharp your whole life yet
time wants the edge to hear you.

One side of the clock is ticking by the second; the other side is listening to the flesh.

Death’s end.

A way to diagram the beating heart.
A way to look inside, see the world.

You want these sorts of things for people:

vacations
   physicals
      barbiturates.

There is only so much we can bear before the primordial cloak confines us:

the smell of nothing,

the way a blinking neon electrifies its breath.

A desert closes down a red motel

and you with your limp body on the carpet
next to your holiday medication of room two.

Cigarettes sprawled across the ground.

There is no sound for miles, the stretched dune
congratulates you goodnight.
The stillness is oblivious to the city
where people live.

You want them to know they are alive.
Before I can even look
the earth outside the window
becomes heavy.

The sky breathes on my face,
the wind whispers an emptiness
of you.

The landscape stretches a frown,
unresolved and desolate.
Grounds of your memory

thwart one another-
just the way your arms
cradled my body.

You were strong back
when I was crying.

The world seemed lighter
when you were young.
The sun met grass
at the end of each horizon until

somehow the scabrous land
was soft next to the rough
labor of your sensitive palms.

And I find myself whispering,
"I love you, Grandpa"
even though now,

before I can even look,
the earth outside the window
becomes heavy.
Time

Energy was always here.
Before we gave it hands
to tender us along our path
to death. Before it showed us
grateful for a limited stay
and a back to lie down on beds.

It was always then.
Before we named the past

as to desperately let it live
in our now. Because we fear

the ever happening, the invisible
movement that ripens beneath

our flesh. Energy was always here.
Before we measured its arms

that reach and touch our children.
The ones that play in golden
dust boxes, the ones that grow
to be stern in the face, strong chins

that never let tears pass them. The
ones that are brief in word—

brief in the world.
The Sherriff’s Cub

The Sherriff’s club says Not Now.
The strike says otherwise.
Water gleams, golden, faces hide.
Silence hides in the stir, wind
in the breath. They let that beat
happen. Old man rocks his chair
back, he likes the dust. Something
funny happens, fear pulls away
from visibility. Just
like the body, lying still.
Never sleeps
and wakes with ease in quiet
stretches of desolate land,
the kind of lands where some
boys grow grassroots, and
others grow to become law.
And what grows between
them is the distance.
Books: The Backbone Kind

Light beam, that hoodlum,
    biting through the blinds.

The yellow ray switchblades you.

Let it cut through everything, might as well.

You can’t read in the dark.

The air is always in dispute when the crooked slant’s fighting for a chance to stretch.

That’s what Emily would say.

God’s laser down on us in speculation, what were we to become?

Writers
Readers
Teachers
Professors

I pine over arousal or the siren of it; I see you keep the secrets at the edge, on the sides of time.

The way you sweep through words as if you wrote them
as if there were no breath other than yours.

Imagery is very important to the pamphlet with a spine.

You like to feel what enters your mind; you love to hold what lets you in.

A tangible world in the palm of your hand, hard cover.

When I open a book, I like to see the kaleidoscope inside the paragraphs.

Is color just another way to see sound?

Perhaps the absence hears you, Lord knows.

It is said the holy word is printed for the sake of salvation, this much we know of history,
that what gets put on paper gets forgotten.

A community of dust breathing of shelf life, and books like light are open and strong and
unconditional and taken for granted.
The Night She Brought Home the Belladonnas

my wife told me to go fuck myself.
I detested the closed petals, the hidden corollas
folded like a carapace, not letting
the light beam in, the lilies not quite as ripe—
off white, premature, just a plant, unopened to the world.
I could feel them hissing in their embryos,
with what eyes will they take me in
when they blossom?
She said “the friend” gave them to her.
What concerns me is not the gift.
She put them down on the table in the den,
right next to the divorce papers.
My signature remains unsigned.

* 
There is a space in my heart where I walk down a spiral staircase
to play chess with my ego.
Ego sits across from me waiting for my move.
I push the bishop diagonally on his queen.
He checkmates me silently.
What does losing do? What will loss make of us?
Perhaps it is natural to have lost.
It is a terrifying realization: defeat is not the same as loss.
My wife, our love, in the waters
of someone else’s Belladonnas.

* 

She used to smile more; her face would open to me.
Her arms cuffed in mine, we’d let the night dream us.
She likes to yell now, the kind of pitch that encloses me.
A chime that cloaks my presence, I too fold in.
I vase myself in the broken glass of what was once between us.
I block out the world and enter into that oblivion. And time doesn’t matter.
How does the mind know what to do with pain?
I look at my wife and she is red in the face,
subatomic particles of saliva flying out of her mouth.
She points towards the divorce papers, screaming,
her words pulled back by her tongue before they whip out of her.
I imagine the Belladonnas sprouting open
outgrowing our world.
And still I see the face of my wife inside that hard shell
The Moment I Realized

1

I am deep tonight
wearing my flesh
my heart is out
buried into the curling back
of a woman
pressed between the want and
her fermented spell
why must jealousy eat attention
and men are only men
when we are alone
the deep night rolls
into the open
into the frightening
vulnerability
my heart is out tonight
my heart is here
where you and he
touch the part of me that
doesn’t want to die
that doesn’t exactly
want to live

2

music helixes you
you want to close the place
where folding happens
boils in the possibilities
because illusion has its way with you
the heavy talons the green eyes
and yearning of you
the brass of laughter
the monster it takes to bathe
with you and the others who lick you
so we come close to the broken
so we can become freedom

3

it hurts and it’s difficult to see
it’s hard to find the perfection of pain
in what you would need—
the retroflex of rubbing
touch
has never felt so real
a kind of fruit
tell me
at what moment of manhood
do I let go
of possession
The Exoskeleton of Love

When the world’s flesh melts,
when the bone of the road
sticks out of the ground like
broken hope reaching for the sky.

When the silk of the cloud
strings along slowly,
the pace of honey.
We can only be patient

and swim in the sea
of emptiness around us.
When I know that all I
have is the sky, the road

the world to hold my back
when I turn mine on yours.
The Invisible Idea of You

I am thankful for the cake between us,
gently slicing the solid white
is all I will ever know of sweetness.
Isn’t it dangerous to feel what you cannot see?
Your presence is merely physical:
there is an invisible you
before there is you.

I fell for the force-field that mysteriously
glows around you. I sit with family
that love to forget their first charm.
The one that got away.
But I am grateful to know
that I love what I cannot see.
Truth is the Light Eye

Let us dust beneath
the surface—
    where gravity pulls.

I know all that falls
will land in chasm,

    inside the mouth
    of nebula.

I’ve forgotten how to spare myself.

Strip me of thought, let my bones
    live in your fleeting
placidity.

Let my shame turn back,
    so I can see within my eye.

Let my feet sink
    in the path
    when gravity pulls.

The ground knows us better
    than we know our own steps.
where are you then if you are not upstairs
the thumping of your white cane
the tempo of your foot steps
the spectacles of your home

the drapes hanging
    the hands together
    the knees grounded

there is quietude    again we leave you messages

you want us to believe in the ubiquitous
you want us to know there is nothing more than distance between us

I wait for the hand from the sky—
    that reaching arm I have been promised

where are you then if you are not upstairs

crazy, my prying into your magic
crazy to say your invisible self is everywhere

*  
for want of fairy tale:

the man that helped you rise to the you in your mind
the glide of a metal man on a brown horse who cradles you
your flesh melts until there is

no reason to believe in the story

any longer: you are the story, the ache of earth on your face
the way a valley creeks around your cheek bones when you smile

and ground swallows an age of time

rising towards the staircase of the mind
you want to be closer to the hand of thinking

you keep your little secret, such is nonsense

such is phantasm

the metal man rusted

here writes the boy wearing the soul of something powerful:

a storyteller of a man who wishes he could save the woman
the story turns on itself
like the roads of a smile
the words move in a direction all their own

the way a saxophone chimes the wild heart in some abstract world where everyone dances

I’ll say it again: *Baby you electrify my jazz*

someone with long strands of hair that sands the world
but no planet prepares you for the search for completeness

the angles

the missed directions

hope

which is all we have

our imperfection
so well-spoken but secretly disbarred

*

the only ones free

are the dead

between worlds flowing through the membrane

while we labor the skin the flesh the bone
of our limited stay
for the heart that pounds the want of freedom

the want to be alive

I come to you with news from the other world:
that purple glint in the sky is not just a numinous beam
you stare into while smoking

yes I envy the dead but I don’t want to die

that’s the problem

letting go
has always been

a cut in my palm a tiny hole

an opening that could gash through the perils of being

a deep little wound an opportunity for the world to rip me back into nothing

sometimes when I look in the mirror
I ask the flesh to introduce me to myself

maybe I should ask the wounds
the scars that are full of wisdom
like a temple full of prayer

but the dead are something more—
the portions of stories
I have not read yet

their blue tongues speaking of a new way to the world

your better self will come home one day I am still waiting for mine
to tell me the truth of things

a quiet murmur a late afternoon an absurd reason to be crazy

or just a reason to listen to the force of the body

*
when we return to what brought us here
to the place before beauty
before hideousness

to this place
I wonder how much more we will know
when there is no reason
to be conscious
listen
we belong to the sun

and the trees and the smiling road
that twists its way up the canyon
when the earth has something to say to you

the world will tell you about color

the hue of perfection
the mixture of mistake
and accident

how to unfold your clothes
how to love how to need
how to look as you feel

when we return to pre earth

we’ll take with us the broken that grounds our perception
we’ll take with us the mirror that makes a self in the self
so you can see a separated you

a soul cut from the earth and thrown into a body searching endlessly for perfection

for beauty

to become: an awareness of itself
the mirror opens a forbidden world
a sudden reflection
a fear in the unbeautiful

a magic bewitched

these are the spells:

a crease in your haunting face
a crack in the structure of your cheekbone
a slender dent in the moon of your jaw

what kind of beauty will it take to love yourself

where the mirror has no power over reflection

where the mirror is sent
to the space of no memory no recognition before birth

where you can tell it

you can have your beauty back

   *

let’s turn the light on
    so the shadow will follow us

the silhouette
    is our translation

an outer body
a soul eclipse

a sun and moon circulating the magnificent black like lovers in the midst of a waltz

the way a temple stills the listener

something invisible is tuning this frequency:

the moment where everything matters
the nothing where answers happen

where do we go now
that all is broken and re-formed

let’s turn the light on
let’s have a look inside