

Construction

Part 1

Greg Bem

Construction, Part 1 by Greg Bem

Created in November, 2017

Columbia City, Seattle

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Construction is a day-book based on active construction of a building on Hudson Street in the Columbia City neighborhood of Seattle. The construction is occurring across the street from the apartment in which the day-book is being written. The construction started before I arrived to said apartment. The day-book may or may not conclude with the completion of the constructed building.

Among the many intentions of this book, it seeks to find balance between the personal voice of the artist and the relatively humble approach of giving up personal voice for the life that exists beyond it. This book seeks to look at the daily lives of the workers who often, and perhaps forever, remain invisible or disregarded. This book explores the nature of construction itself, as a conceptual act, and as one that might be emulated through language other than itself.

The tone of the earliest parts of this part of *Construction* was inspired by contemporary PDX poet Donald Dunbar.

The font used in this book is the peculiarly satisfying Bahnschrift Light.

Greg, November 27, 2017

Day 5: There Could Be Vultures in this Sky

This is the day the book starts writing.

This is the day the phone's plugged into the countertop.

One man in green takes something off his body.

There is a truck that contains other things.

Rain is a bold move and deserves existential code.

I look at my fingers as if the wrangling isn't age.

Antiquity, the way our skin parts ways on smooth glass.

Or the fingerprint reader, which is creepy sexy.

Good morning to you, godless beings beneath the gray.

Good morning to you, engorged memories of a failing stream
carrying images of lives through the mesh of the air.

Day 6: Mud Brown

There is the cryptocurrency of the construction
and it slinks like a yo-yo off the sheen of my shoulder.
I wax the spot everyday towards an nth degree of blind.
Nth degree of invisibility in this monoscope of gray.
The workers leading healthy lives with pulsations in pockets.
The brickwork nearby is setting bets and diseased stomachs.
We could be heroes if we start paying attention to history.
We could be weirdos too, depending on trends in youth.
I long for the banks of fog to roll over here and say hello
letting me know it is safe for me to disappear again,
letting me feel compact and correlated, a complementary coo.
This will never be the coos and wooing you've waited for,
wanted through the duration of your bending and picking.
Our lives are too equidistant within the funnel of the immediate.

Day 7: Good Cold Morning

Before they arrive there's still that scent.

It smells of electricity and damp leaves.

At one point there was even the eclipse of snow
and we were allowed to step away from our terminals.

Great tests of light pollution give grips to bedroom.

Where are the old boys in this iteration of mind?

Thinking of their driving down highways, avenues.

Thinking of their eating breakfast burritos.

Vape spewing out of their truck windows like orgasm.

The subtle incantation of a last night's beer
seen through the lax lolling of the steering wheel.

The purge of traffic is blocked from my view.

It is still a purge of traffic in oratory form.

As is the cold that sits right beyond my window.

I think of what it must be like to work in it.

What does the frost say to the lungs, friends?

Day 8: Crowd Controlled

I am chills the like of darkness
which I see in the roots of the tapping
which I hold in the roots of my teeth.
Exposure coming into the tips and poof.
The crackle and pop of the newly-wetted day.
I remember New York in the winter.
I remember the deserts in the winter.
My life has been sound and I miss you.
And you and you and you, we clone and
decompartmentalize through consolidation.
The night sky rears its rainy head.
What is happening in the mountains?
The workers are not here yet or ever.
I want to imagine the rain as their hammers.
So I do and then I feel the pits of stomach.
So I do and I feel a gentle adaptation.
It should have been beer last night always.
It's gotten me woken up into cruelty.
Or perhaps I'm just forgetting something.
Perhaps it's prime time to feel the freeze.

Day 9: Pressure Tight

Pressure's tight like whiplash dreams.

Cronenberg's dreams wrapped around my skull.

Skill check: thinking of shackles of pain

daring not to look outside too much

the gray the color of a skin I've known well

the workers the color of diamond'd light.

Peel banana and eat to turn my mind off

swallowing soon after to turn my mind around.

Hello, how are you? might be the most

or at least the most beautiful statement.

Have you thought about the books you owe?

Have you thought about the letters to editors

sitting in the inbox like composted food?

That banana, that sky, those folks

all closed eyes and the response is dead.

Responses shallow through a strong intention.

Responses of swallow through intended eloquence.

What comes out if just another feed.

The language of the streets remains competition.

But we are incompetent or something

grotesque or something akin to that.

Thinking now where did the teaching fail

and where did the learning fail?

Like the burned book of a former lover

looking in this sunlight like a muted salamander

to where did that skin of searing flame fall?

Day 10: Through Rooibos

Yesterday was before the snow hit.
Before the snow hit like a ribbon of code.
Before the snow hit like a rambling reality.
It rambles the way I get out of bed
to write to write this here poem.
Rooibos like a shot of the anti-adrenaline.
Rooibos like a quick pinch of the cheek.
Imagining a world of cheek pinchers.
Imagining robot aunts and uncles.
How perverted life will become then.
Landscape of fetishized physical actions
still strung up and away from humanity.
Snow came in last night with deadly stillness.
Reality highlighted in brief, melting white.
I slept like a baby on tranquilizers.
I slept with little to no consciousness.
And so what is this then, other than not?
The privileged performance of the recap.
The longstanding look toward dirty fingernails.
The championing of oil and chili peppers.
I watch a man walk down the road.
Who knows who knows the folks that travel?

A single construction worker stands by
on the newly-built, peppery gray foundation.

He stares and walks and stares and walks
and it is like a giant refresh each instant.

A giant refresh in this rooibos morning.

Day 11: Soggy

Is it just me or is it in the lengths we go,
sweat poring over our necks and foreheads,
itching of the wools and other fabrics,
gentle cry of our last pursed lip notification,
the racing of the hearts a dying breed,
emotional stability what you get on the outside,
fracture and fragility the essence of within,
and you're staring at me like I am a wall,
because I exist behind the glass casing,
the window also housing a fly, my neighbor,
little being across time and space of room,
we challenging ourselves and our patience,
and I am out of bananas and my body's a rag,
soaking up every inch of image again,
and my mind's cornered and feeling burned,
and my fatigue is a noticeable decision,
with rivulets based on every swoon,
every piece of purpose diamond and black,
in this space just beyond the mellow site,
cathedralesque champion of a neighborhood,
the wet holding me close, or back, demonic,
portals opening and expanding, demonic,

and were you here we could feel it all together,
different workers within a same, glossy world.

Day 12: Addendum

This is just to say the frame begins.

This is just to say we might be a bit outlandish.

The landscape of my whims and desires.

They are the repetitious cycle of the haunt.

They reach out as the lash, and lick my lips.

My, oh my, what blue tones we have reflecting
off the sipped smooth of cement, it's almost real,

almost sitting there awaiting my walking,

opening in flips of image, bits of reception,

the smoothness a subtle gesture toward becoming,

the smother a plus of jester warding fumes.

Tip, sink, and relapse into the genderless sky.

I am clawing for the lapse in this month's middle

along the slim sips of the lake puckered just beyond.

Day 13: Trickery

They come like workers from their homes.
Because they are workers and they have homes.
Or am I being presumptuous and gravely mistaken?
My body is the rejecter of the material goods.
My mind is the rejecter of the arch of concepts.
We prod and bury and prod again, don't we?
Like the cars parked in endless combinations,
we are endlessly seeking out the latest fashions.
My big toe spikes out of my sock in boredom.
My latest fetishes are aroused and extinguished
before my last orgasmic breath finally falters.
What devilry is this which calls me back?
What trickery has me peering out of the window?
If it is consistently appointing, lip-licking,
lick-lipping, constant gradient of disappointment,
then what is in it for the set of me,
my undeniably impossible sequence of self,
my arrangement of quickness of reappearance,
and where do the construction workers,
in their fullest range of absence,
fit into this thrust of challenge of presence?

Day 15: Hissing

It comes to us in the morning rasp like a hiss.
Drills feast on energy while my meditation app rings.
Faux bell connects to a distinct lack of empiricism.
This is the way the world works now, trusts now.
This is the way the blankets of knowing hug us to sleep.
My skin burns again, another instance of eczema.
The construction workers bend over in green and blue pants.
White and black helmets and brown bags and gray shirts.
It is still wet out but that was never a question.
Nor was it ever meant to be an explanation mark, but hiss.
The hiss carries the extraneous vibrations too.
What is not needed in this graying world only elevates.
There is no traffic to capture what I've become.
The leaves that were beautifully falling are chips now.
Chips and shreds and flakes scattered like confetti.
But there was and there is no party in Columbia City.
A dull matte of greens and reds are calming
and there was and there is no party in Columbia City.
My attendance was forfeited when I became tired.
And now it is enlivened as a memory of blunt truth.
I uncrink my neck and unblink my smoldering eyes.
The red screens in front of me open blue like flowers.

So this is what we're getting into again today.

The landscape of the crushed icon, buried document.

So this is what the hiss will corrupt towards blue light.

Day 17: Walls of Skeletons

In a day vision, while eating slices of bagels,
rain empty but present amidst the knowing,
language on high like the roar of engines,
the walls are up and suddenly the mass is skeletal.
Gross pock to match shuddering raisins,
dark and other, comely, arrival in my aberrance,
abscess of knowing, their yellow and gray and white helmets
still burdens and beacons, the unstoppable draw.
Now in knowing there is a seriousness to it.
Now in knowing there is an it to it as well.
What is the lean of my shrill of core?
What can be learned by being arched, upright?
The presence of the world engorged or flattening
around me like a static creep of movement.
Cars drifting by, sounds teetering open.
This is the city that puts pressure into position.

Day 18: Massive Affect

Cold steel of moan I arriving before them.
It has already tripled in capacity
through this vision of unkindly growth.
But it is growth and growth affords.
I smack my tongue against hot cereal.
Invisible crows are loudly visible.
The roar of commuters is unbearable.
A woman in purple walks her white pit-bull.
Languages of lists spool across
my bookmarking discarded and/or revoked.
Like the alerts sent to me overnight,
I glow in this morning and anticipate
the steel coolness of the laborers.
Of today's laborers matching my own labors,
Appearing like faeries to sing along.
If only these worlds existed beyond
and the vacuum of the accord was burned.
The red signage reminds me of gashes
and just beyond all the lights are off.

Day 19: Interference

Let jump the skin that tightens.

Let escalate like the skeletal calls.

A mind trapped within the heat
begs and begs beyond certainty.

What is known is what becomes traced.

There is a language to this suffering.

It begins with the timing of hammers.

Day 20: Enfantuation

Moistless in Seattle despite my tries.
The throws of being pure in the mouth.
Cleared bacteria and still retching.
A list is a poem containing worlds.
Possibilities are the abandoned facts.
I dream when I'm driving and it's dangerous.
There's a little place in Hell for them.
Specialties end up becoming the cure.
I think about the species of silence.
I could imagine a volume dial turned up.
The sound could be even louder than.
What would we do without our imaginations?
The pill bottles don't consume themselves.
The pens do not run out of ink, ever.
I cut one snip of hair off my chin today.
And then I threw the hair, my DNA, away.

Day 21: Take the Bait

My drone is emblematic of the whirl of the within.
I think of the ups and downs of the geographies
we consider the most intimate and the most open.
Like a kiss to the neck the click on the arousal
is a fulfilling and memorable series of scaffolds.
I wander only as a cloud with the world's files.
I subsist as the core of a genuinely sick reality.
Flies gather and mites meet and the swarm is on.
Everyone will fall into the pools of condensation.
No one will be able to bounce away into the night
graceful and invisible and coercive and cold.
The way the fauns step before their obliteration
twin beams crushing against the pavement's back.
It is a step above the rest of all humility.
It is wondrous and bewitching, filled with problems.
But I take the trap and set it open anyway.
In convenience I take the bait and inject it.

Day 22: Rain Stain

Within the ornery arousal of the morning,
within the lover's light of the sockless,
within the rain that drips across the skin
of the glass that keeps my course intact
and lets itself be known in hidden languages,
I wonder of my own insecure judgments.
I come up with the names of people who could.
Weigh myself down with infinite caches.
Sometimes these demeanors must be spaceless.
A cryptographic surge revisited weeks later.
Engorged upon the insinuation of wanting
the stares become messier toward rupture.
I can't but notice the tragic position.
No person walks in my vision this wet morn
and yet I can coax the clouds to scrape by,
to ease across the elevated horizons,
to give and grant poise or sturdy worship.
While darkness undoes itself, I scratch
and sift through the macabre realities.
A 21st century choice in a 21st century throat.
The air falls appropriately into place.

Day 23: Eggs and Rice

They come for you when you sleep.

The men bearing gifts for the face
of the world, of the place we call
names in black and gray text.

Imagination and coded language.

Language that becomes white with bleach
as the days set and bloom again.

I am not for or against being troubled.

The man in the yellow helmet may be
or may not. May be sexy. Or not.

Walls are built in escalation.

They look like giant letters.

They do not blow over in the wind.

No one could push hard enough.

The language on my tongue is searing.

I come from a lineage of disease.

Who came for me last night?

No one, that is the who that came.

Wet ball of nihilism crowds
and the sun pulls me through clouds.

We could have been heroes before
when I knew of what I spoke.

Day 24: Over a Steaming Cup of Earth

The woman walks down the street in a red coat.
She carries a pink bag and I am reminded of scooping.
I scoop the images out of the bag and place them.
There are entire tides' worth of sand that get scooped.
The Atlantic Ocean is calling me, and it will own me.
It will turn these wires and expose them to history.
We will be given second, third, fourth chances.
I imagine the dreaming that is required to fail.
Scooping giant risks out of the sides of cliffs.
I scroll through all the images of cliffs.
About two seconds in, the 100th image: rock wall
hanging out on the sands of the climbing gym.
There is nothing that is not nothing online.
They have already started putting up the second story.
The walls look like crackers that could crumble.
The air looks like it could do all the crumbling.
I cackle in my stomach and wonder about it all.
Impatience ruins the mood and the cliffs are gone.
Close, erase history, exit, and then take a step.
Or not: I am still sitting in the chair position.
The chair is a comfortable space allowing for failure.
Dreams in purples and golds are what I left behind.

I have been dishonest: there are some tabs open.
There is some history still bubbling like muck,
like the exposed layer of the volcanic surface.
Suddenly: a siren. Does this mean I can go home now?
Suddenly: I am home. Where has the siren gone?
Wake up, buck up, take up and the last hurrah of men.
Some mysteries are better left old and hoarse,
coming in through memory at moments like this one.
The concept of age works in multiple directions
as I think of her smile and her black dress and skin.
I don't deserve that smile or the pleasure I feel
when I listen to her play linguistic games with me.
The prose of life is here and is strangling me.
It could be that I've been given an opportunity.
It could be that the construction is all of us
reflected in equal parts pity, empathy, entropy.

