

JOE PAN
Log*OS

This garden thrush.
& this one. & that one
over there. Mates, matte-
mediated & collaged, but
round-bodied, ovarian
as vowels & perfectly
winged, each strikes
the pose *passé juvenile*
delinquent on driftwood in
a gallery's open aviary.
Dear Catastrophe Waitress
pipes in as the artist
with chevrons buzzed into
his scalp is treed by art
hounds chatty as
sportscasters, erudite as
olives with their one red
point. The artist, it seems,
has mismanaged
imperfection, each of his
objects accumulating
zeros. But what of these
thrushes? So hollow
without us, each a vessel
for this person I inhabit
briefly, discretely, as I
peruse & genuflect, each
red second sabotaging the
previous, scavenging &
salvaging, trained socially
to chirp no open
grievances against art
or artist & goodly as any
obeisant deacon. It seems the
birds are teaching me
how to watch them. Even
as the critic's ear bends
sail toward another
conversation, hooks a
theory from an adjacent
squabble & adopts it for his

own, I cannot help but be
thankful for these centuries
of contradiction in service
of the new
as the garden thrushes,
almost human now,
collect the dust
of our captivity.

This garden thrush
ginning bees
from the hibiscus
articulates a relationship
between memory & desire.
Or doesn't. Best to watch.
Bird returns from bush
unrepentant, un-alone,
wings fraught
with a terrifying living
music & proceeds to seed
from itself the subject
of its desire in a violent
yet quotidian dance.
What does it remember,
having fed its hunger?
Does it regard instinct as
a necessary madness,
like the woodpecker who
one day wakes
to drive its perfect beak
into a palm tree?
Desire need not be
satisfied, never taste
its unsuspecting
hunger-to-action-
casualty. It lives
in opportunity, however
illusory, driving us wild
& flitting about the fetish
symbols of what absorbs
us. It reinvigorates one's →

faith in the pure instant,
free of before- & after-
math. Like memory,
it usurps one's willingness
to participate, arriving
unannounced with swift
appetite to explode the
immediacy of a moment.
We cherish this agent,
reject self-authorship
& are emptied of time's form.
Desire (umbilicus) unites
us to thrush / thrush to bee /
& bee to flower, whose own
leaf dismisses its bond
with the calyx
for the intractable,
quick love of gravity.

This garden thrush
is a lark, an experiment
in materialism, an attempt
to determine how-when-
why the mind bends
to the ephemeral.
Imagine this bird
exploded
so far & fast the migration
of its atoms became both
an anachronistic wave
& eventual pointillism—
light from a dying star.

(Finely layered in space-
time, measurable in
theory, being somewhere
between the fleeting
neutrinos of Seurat—
recognizable only when
they strike at something
larger & the polarizing

Ben-Day dots
of Lichtenstein, haunting
immense vacuity, charging
the in-between.)

Where then lies its song?

Some other poet has been
here. I have recordings—
song, poem, memory—
“Split the Lark & you'll find
the Music / Bulb after Bulb
in Silver rolled.” Murdered &
dissected for its music, the
bird, with study, disappears,
its particles expanding.
It can be viewed no longer
irrelative of everything else,
is itself reconstituted as a
collective probability,
or the self-fulfilling
replications of a viewer-
cum-creator. Matter as
energy, both testament
& dream, the either-or
of immemorial & we its
beautiful, irreverent song.

This garden thrush, grub
fat, notices me watching,
notices me not

Wine cork popping—
some breeze lilts a dandelion—
garden thrush at noon

Brooklyn lamp—
garden thrush under a cyclist's tire
still twitters, still sings

Drunk off its own heartbeat,
stroking clavicle of moon—
garden thrush bewitched

This garden thrush is
the infinite syllable
held, some possibly
bequeathed sentiment,
or the essential call,
the prolonged naming.
Dear Unified & Infinite
Interim: you are a god's
stalled instruction,
finger at the lip, the first
thought or final wish?
Saint Vacuum
of Interminable Silence &
Forgetting, you are
Reason's longest winter,
false prophet of hope
that words can outlive us
listeners. With Time
peering back unblinking as
Hirst's tanked tiger shark,
I feel moved to repeat you,
syllable—use you, as you've
moved me to examine
my own singsong &
surreptitious love for
sounds sexing themselves
into poetry. It takes but one
more sound, a pairing, for
meaning to happen:
another thrush—plush
as a rush of barbiturates,
crux of the coroner's
kingdom, unhinged as
religion, itinerant as wind,
bitch of the slinky
dominatrix unleashing
a Sister's forgiving

permission—the second
utterance giving way to
a season, a song for one's
self, a pleasurable aperture
of private performance
sans raison d'être.
O wrong, wrong-
headed, long-winded
whisperers, music can be
meaning enough.
O long, song-laden words,
you are reason enough
for reason's artful
obliteration.

This garden thrush
walks into a bar with a
cat on a leash
& a flamingo in drag.
The bartender asks him
what's the deal with
the entourage.
The garden thrush says,
“My grandmother died
and willed me this old
lamp & when I go
to clean it, out pops this
genie, who says he'll
grant me three wishes.
So I asked for a bird
with long legs
& a subservient pussy.”
The garden thrush
loses it, squawking
at his own joke.
The bartender goes back
to wiping mugs
with a rag. The garden
thrush asks the bartender
what the problem is &
the bartender says,

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“Jesus, T. This shit,
day in day out?
Where’d you get these two?”
T looks over his shoulder.
“Met ‘em at a party. What’s
your fucking problem?”
“Go home to your kids, T,”
says the bartender.
“Not before I get a drink,”
T replies. “We really
gonna do this?” asks
the bartender. The garden
thrush stares at him
a moment before putting
on his hat. “Some kind
of brother,” he says.
“It ain’t no pleasure in life,”
says the bartender.
“Fuck you,” says the garden
thrush. “It ain’t nothin’
but pleasure.”

“Is that guy really your
brother?” asks the flamingo
once they’re back outside.
“We served together,” says
the garden thrush. The cat
is already down the block.
“Served? Served like how?”
asks the flamingo, “Like at
a Burger King? Like in
a war? You ain’t been to no
war.” The garden thrush
leans against the wall,
points. “When you tuck
that between your legs,
you reckon that makes you
more of a woman or less
of a man?” The flamingo
has heard enough, takes
flight, an asterisk tagged

to the moon. The garden
thrush opens his flask,
wishes he had back all that
money spent on shrimp
cocktails. The pleasure is
all mine, he thinks, but I
have no right to pleasure.
A sacrifice here & there &
you’re left with nothing to
sacrifice. & a man with
nothing to sacrifice is no
man at all.

This garden thrush
is garnering burrs
as it escalates
through the brush,
is garnering bits
as it unfurls
across my computer
screen, digitized &
greedy in its becoming,
claiming, pixel by pixel,
the birthright
of its origins
in varying coded colors.
The old world snaps.
The new physical
arrives in diminished
consciousness, fed
by a taste
for the next graphic
element it will inherit.
Narcissus at the water’s
edge sees his truer,
eternal self—pliable,
reducible,
downloadable
& made anew.
The movie star
is made of extras.

→

JOE PAN

The morning star
has stolen every North.
What zodiac
could possibly contain
what it is itself
contained within?
What inner life will
we consider precious
when we decode
the thrush's song
and replace it with
our own?