

MIDWINTER CONSTELLATION

written on December 22, 2018

Stephanie Anderson

Hanna Andrews

Julia Bloch

Susan Briante

Lee Ann Brown

Laynie Browne

Shanna Compton

Mel Coyle

Marisa Crawford

Vanessa Jimenez Gabb

Arielle Greenberg

Jenny Gropp

Stefania Heim

MC Hyland

erica kaufman

Becca Klaver

Caolan Madden

Pattie McCarthy

Monica McClure

Jenn Marie Nunes

Danielle Pafunda

Maryam Ivette Parhizkar

Khadijah Queen

Linda Russo

Katie Jean Shinkle

Evie Shockley

Sara Jane Stoner

Dawn Sueoka

Bronwen Tate

Catherine Wagner

Elisabeth Workman

Mia You

MIDWINTER CONSTELLATION



Black Lawrence Press



Black Lawrence Press

www.blacklawrence.com

Executive Editor: Diane Goettel

Book and cover design: Shanna Compton

Copyright © 2022 Becca Klaver

ISBN: 978-1-62557-030-7

All rights reserved. Except for brief quotations in critical articles or reviews, no part of this book may be reproduced in any manner without prior written permission from the publisher: editors@blacklawrencepress.com

Published 2022 by Black Lawrence Press.

Printed in the United States.

in their lives
penguins set one day aside to catch balloons

so don't forget to send them some

—BERNADETTE MAYER

on *Midwinter Constellation*

November 2021

CONTENTS

9	Acknowledgments
11	Dreams
35	Morning
61	Noontime
83	Afternoon
107	Evening
127	Night
147	Afterword
153	Notes & Permissions

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

PORTIONS OF THIS BOOK were written on the ancestral homelands of the Nimíipuu (the Nez Perce Tribe) and the Pelúuc (Palouse) Band of Indians; in Cheyenne, Arapaho and Ute Territory; on the land of the Wahpekute, of the Očhéthi Šakówiŋ Seven Council Fires; in Mohican and Haudenosaunee Territory; on the land of the Penobscot Nation, part of the Wabanaki Confederacy; on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish Peoples, the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Tribe; on Lenapehoking, the unceded territory of the Lenape; on the illegally occupied land of the Native Hawaiian people; on the land of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde; on the land of the Cayuga and Seneca Nations; on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territory of the Musqueam people; on the lands of the Munsee Lenape and Canarsie; on the occupied homeland of the Wampanoag and Narragansett peoples; in Kaskaskia Territory; on the traditional lands of the Shawnee and Myaamia peoples; and on the unceded lands of the Eastern Shoshone, Kickapoo, Iowa, Sauk and Meskwaki, Tohono O'odum, and Pasqui Yaqui peoples.

We acknowledge the presence of native people since time immemorial in these places we are privileged to call home; we honor ongoing tribal ties to these lands; and we are grateful for the sharing of traditional ecological knowledge.

DREAMS

If I could train my dreams it might be
only to be able to remember them.
If dreams might be the impressions left
from yesterday mine would be of lions,
3000 years old, shot with arrows
along a cold expanse of stone, or
the favorite pub of Marx and Engels,
wrapped around with Christmas lights.
Or a golden helmet buried inside a boat
turned into a hill, some trees, the wonder
at who might look at a hill and see it undone,
dug and sifted away, like my daughter
now wiggling out of her blankets,
waking to yet another day
in an unfamiliar city.



Prelude to Dream:

We can trace the I Love You words written in your book
With translucent paper, shake the snowglobe containing
Only snow in front of the white and red candle at I:I Iam
On Midwinter Day's eve nearing the Long Night Moon

Seconds ticking down out of this world yet time can stand
Still in a Zone late at night the longest night of the century
Yet morning comes early and bright with the city fog dripping
 Over the veiled buildings

 White string lights suspended in a neighbor's
Window one street over—I will probably never know them

Another bank of windows in front of that—drapes drawn
Diaphanous moon where are you? Full up there maybe I
Can see you—Yes! Straight over head—the clouds pass

 In front of you O moon interrupted or praised by
loony laughter from someone walking down 22nd Street

People are wet but not too cold tonight—soon it will be
 “Punishing” again as it does get that way up North but
Today is temperate—actually *too* warm—
 I've been inside
All day except to go to the roof
 and I called Bernadette around 8:15pm
To wish her Happy Solstice and when I told her I had been
Cleaning cleaning so that someday I could finally write a poem
And she says she does not clean anymore—it just makes things more cluttered
 Which I now believe is true

 I've got to quietly move the papers
And boxes I dumped in order to make myself sort and not wake my snoring
 Husband and get to sleep so I can wake up and get on the bus
To go read all of *Midwinter Day* aloud with others in person and
 on the ether waves

I start to get the late night stillness effect and begin to see
All of these strange things which began to surface from my cleaning
Like an advent calendar with its original
Red envelope which need only be opened 3 more days till Xmas

What presents I do buy I usually lose and then find later
And eventually get them to their rightful owners
Why is it that I have so many objects swirling around me?
The Letter M on a monogram in a catalogue—
Was it chosen because it's in the middle of the alphabet?
or because it stands for monogram? I love all the Letters!
I've got a branding iron from my great-grandfather's ranch
That says "V.D." for Van Dunlop— how's that for branding?

I wonder who of the other poets writing this poem are AWAKE
Like me and it's already Dawn in Amsterdam!

One more time to go see the moon
She's moved further over
Can't see her from my window
And now to Dream

+

Only image

•

Only action I can hold onto
Is the necessity of pulling root vegetables
Up from ground and storing for winter

Parsnips, carrots, stored again in sand to be replanted in spring—maybe it's what my great-great grandmother whose name was America had to do in Montana or maybe it's related to those strange turnip-like beings I saw floating in the pool a few months ago and I pulled one out and wrapped it in a blanket like an ugly humanoid subconscious thought that needs to be swaddled and fed and taken everywhere like an adult-sized baby.

Jennifer who is skilled in dream-combing observed that I often dream about getting things for free like when I ducked through the line into the movie theater and I first thought this was a bad thing like a moral judgment as when CD laughed at me for taking a roll or two of toilet paper from the Crab House restaurant in Providence when I was a poor grad student, then I thought of my early obsession with the *Borrowers* and how they made a life from “borrowed” objects like a cigarbox with a fan for a headboard for Arrietty's bed and a spool for a table but then I think of how so much of what I write is “borrowed” from the words around me beaming in to start or write the poems

+

I've been remembering my dreams in technicolor detail and writing them up or down till about 2 weeks ago and then they have kinda submerged but somehow give further energy to the mind of day



Silas Rose has been sleep-talking throughout the night,
now rolled off the mattress onto the hallway floor.
He sleeps in a closet meant to house a washer and dryer
our temporary year. Can the year itself be temporary?

Yes, it can. I dreamed I wasn't doing well, but there was pleasure in seeing a stage full of children dressed in Native American cottons like the ones Cathy showed in her slides. I recognize them as midwestern, particularly the red bead-bib tops. Bruno sleeps, their father sleeps too, landed at one in the morning. Bruno will have nightmares and Silas will have had nightmares because most of what humans have is nightmares. Their father won't remember his nightmare. I swing a little virtuous rising early, but there's a flood of work to correct me. A machine hums, chewing mold out of the small atmosphere of my bedroom, an expensive and subtle iron lung. No. A real iron lung would probably have cost a great deal more. I took my pill when I fell off the bed, actually, says Silas and he has. Every morning I must check to see if the children have taken their pills. They don't grow larger without them. We turn on the pinkish lights of the artificial tree and the star-shaped lights wrapped about the real wreath and a lamp on the table we bought in the woods for \$25 from people who'd won the lottery. Silas illustrates a card for a multiplayer game he says takes place in a demon realm.

Hearing about someone else's multiplayer game is the same as hearing about someone else's dream. That is, it's easier to get interested if it's well told and I like to hear I've appeared in either, which often I have.



*The root of desire is intimacy;
the root of intimacy, desire.*

paradox leaves its residue
upon waking

koan or catch-22
how do they feed each other
how do we?

I dreamt I was on a bike ride down curvy country roads with my ex-husband. He was being followed, but somehow I wasn't. I was pointing out all the good hiding places up ahead—how about that barn among the sheep, etc. He wouldn't get off the road, the bicycle. Was he a wolf among sheep or a victim among men? Was I trying to keep him safe or trying to get rid of him? Why don't men seize opportunities to save themselves along the way? Who am I to believe in salvation?

The sun is not yet up over the trees.



I can't emerge from dreams and record them because there are no dreams, there is no sleep, there is no Google doc; I cut myself off, I guess, from my imagination, my friends, the collective. There's only the baby, who is old enough that I should be sleeping, but who only sleeps at my breast; there's my sick husband, my sick mother; there's the drive through the night, my resentments, just give me an hour, thirty minutes, do you want me to throw you out the window, I hate you, the Christmas tree glowing its solstice, your consolation is this light in darkness, this proof that life is beautiful at its cruelest, fucking Yule is your dreaming now

3:03 I dreamed something, for a minute. End the year at the house where you grow up

6:08 dreams of villains and fiscal responsibility; Marilyn killed Lily (her avatar/old self?) through debt

Stuffed dates three ways; missing the marathon, parties. Baby slept so well (for 4 hours) that the bed is a lake of milk (IRL)

6:3 I girls in tits out???

(later: what did this mean? Prediction of my morning: they were?)



Ring ring and rain. I open my mouth to speak, hollow in a Midwestern way. I say to you, *for someone who had a gay brother die of AIDS I'd think you would treat queer people better.* I say to you, *you know I'm gay, right?* You say "That's reductive." I am going to hit you with my fist of fingers turned flowers. I am confusion. What is reducing? Divisible? The dream is hazy from here. The morning's reactions are stars. A telephone somewhere, longish cord, the heft of as I wrap around my body full. Merry Almost Christmas. In the dark and a phantom limb singing cordoned off wire. If a rib cracks midrun, will anyone in miles see me fall? The big dog is in the poop yard howling for the little dog to come home and the little dog is dead, put to rest the day after the election, a bad omen. Ring ring. How to face the shortest day with the longest dread.



I woke myself dreaming this poem,
some lines about a tiny table with a heap of words on it
and the ache in my jaw I get sometimes
when I grind my teeth so hard I cracked one
and had to go to Dr. Sheth to get a crown

Now I'm finally
the queen I'm meant to be I joked, but it's 4:34 am

& I wonder if you're up too, dreaming this poem.
I've woken Shawn who brings me a glass of water, who I want
to tell about the earlier dream involving the pink squares
I rearranged on the screen
but I reach over for the eucalyptus oil,
drop some on my wrist so I can breathe it while I sleep.
Eucalyptus is dusty gray, with those little round leaves. All
the notifications on my phone are about a partial
government shutdown, midnight's glass slipper, &
Katy sent an email about some hashtags.

Later I'll give some
to the poem if it seems like a good idea. In *What's Your Idea
of a Good Time*, Bernadette writes to Bill with whom I once
discussed the spelling of Maybelline as in eyeshadow she writes
about her dentist too, a man who wears a gun! She quit seeing
him saying she prefers being "worked on" by a woman



i wake to dreams draining from my brain, down the circuit of my spine,
and into my gut, where some kind of acid will turn them into instincts i
can't explain. emotional residue today says i was content or curious in the
rooms my subconscious built for me last night—there's none of that after-
nightmare panic, and none of the desperate longing to return to whatever
situation was salving an ache. time for waking dreams, the ones that have to
squirm out from under my superego's ass.



In gray light I can return to the house in the dream
of Nino Nanette, the cyclist who has lost their peloton

and we have become their surrogate. The French woman
down the street is hosting us but we are very far away
from Powderhorn. The table is wide and we have to invent
the present because the circumstances keep flickering
in the dream but also necessarily in this twilight recall.
As if insistent on staying there, the future will not brighten.

Each iteration has its own aura
and governance like Frank Big Bear's portrait of the Patti Smith's
we passed on the way to artifacts from the sunken city—
each dream here its own cargo—ergo—lost world.

Nino

is fatless and laconic—a dream rendition of our intimacy
its lack or a *cris de tour*—to move past static interpretations and Nino
is no oligarch or pugilist and Nino is no snowman or debutante
in the nationless morning of the 3rd government shutdown
in two years and Nino is the naked intensity of anarchic refusal
next to the page beginning I am exhausted.

I wake up at 4 something to B at my side
of the bed asking to join us yes of course this is the party and I don't wake
again
until gray light, E saying something I can no longer recall
of practical import and me finding myself
with my hands on my head as if I am standing in a windstorm
and my hat will otherwise blow away. Hey nonny, nonny, crack
your tired cheeks. Belbinus said the book beside me says that Mares
when they smell the smoke of a lamp put out
bring forth their birth before it be perfect.

