LEAD,
GLASS,
and
POPPY
Often there is a star comes down from the blue
and lands in the deepest part
where a heart and the flesh
that beats it out
in a trickle of daylight and ash
do conspire to hold
all flying things "sacred"
as bombs and Eros
collide with the same surface
and mark their intent
with an obliteration
elemental as fire
but not as bloody
now that the blossoms
make the faint fit
for the heart
by blowing shrapnel
through the wind to be planted
like any other seed.

When Comet Hyakutake
streaked close to Earth,
a German scientific
spacecraft made
a discovery that has astonished and
puzzled astrophysicists.
The comet was emitting X-rays
in a crescent pattern
on its sunward side.

The dead, 13 adults
and 3 small children, were found
in a circle around the remains of a
campfire, laid out on the bare
ground in a sunburst pattern.
Split in two down the middle of the page there is always the gutter holding two ends together making them flow in two but meeting again at a point in the spine the stem of disbelief or a warning of fire that burns right through it since there are no legs to stand on, no text by which we are saved, no permission that has yet to be granted and the liberties taken are someone's surface, a story not meant to be torn apart.

The bodies were so charred that it looked from a distance as if they had been draped in black robes. Among those thought to be among the dead were Patrick Vuarnet, 27, the son of a French sun-glasses manufacturer, and his mother Edith.

The final fringe of the forests in which they had been hunters and gatherers was put off limits for all hunting and gathering of food. A Wanniya-laeto who tried to stick to the old ways would be arrested as a poacher.
The charcoal smears over bombland where airplanes drop poppies on targets preparing to seed. From them comes the emergence of teflon-coated icons and worshipped telephones that mouth prayers in place of small talk.

Bowing down graves are already prepared with reports and proclamations broken wires of cut-off connections garbled by the gutted inverse of poles linked at their equator by chemical clouds.

When the chiefs of ancient Panama went into battle, they wore golden disks the size of Frisbees on their chest. The disks were said to represent the sun god, and in the blazing sunlight, as myth has it, they shone so brightly that they blinded the enemy.

At the stroke of midnight on November 10, 1983, the creation of a new national park in Sri Lanka made cultural orphans of the Wanniya-laeto, the last remnant of a people who appear to have lived on the island for 28,000 years.
Spread thin and wavering
burnt into willows
ready to fly.
Spread out and wanting
but prevented by
snow in the outer atmosphere
and the sand in her wings.
Protected from whatever
was out there,
the light off yonder
of love or of hiding
of hate and the never-ending
here and then blurry.

In 1940, a new grave was
discovered at Sito Conte, and archeologists
found the remains of what they thought to be
the most important chief. He had been buried
with five embossed disks stacked on his
chest along with an animal pendant,
gold cuffs at his wrists and ankles,
and strings of gold beads
encircling his neck
and waist.
The spine in the book is a crease in time
and we're lowly wavenders
between the cracks
of what might seem to be
unthinkable but true
(because printed)
for certain, and spreading.
Through the tracks buried over
where have you been
when needing you
stuck here where the dawn
and the day that meets it halfway
can't get it together in time to say:
"Here is a house.
There is another's home.
At the corner is an arsenal.
Pick this up and explode, here."

France-2 television
broadcast what it said was
a taped telephone conversation
between two disciples of the sun cult shortly
before they died
in Switzerland in 1994. They chat about
a program which says the sun is halfway
through its life.
"But in any case it's been organized,
we're going to Jupiter."
"So Venus is out? I think we'll first
go to Venus."
"We'll see. I don't give a damn.
The main thing is to go where we have to go."
And what of the shuttle through from I to you (nonexistent). And of the liver, heavy and filled with the lead of thousands of years of tears and nonsense.

At least a third of the world's inventory of human cultures have disappeared completely since 1500 – their languages, their traditions and ways of life, their world view and very identity.
The clearing is variously inscribed
with official words
not quite innocent of all
that has been cut out.
Where the planes themselves
in time will rot
back into the sea
irreversibly, a story
that repeats itself over and over
now more than ever
as the globe shrinks closer and closer
to Eros, you
burn me
straight through to the wars
over the rumors
of wars
where a fire means
there is always an other side
that has died for one reason
or another.

There seems to be
a significant chance
that within the next
1.14 million years,
an asteroid named
433 Eros
could hit Earth,
with dire results
for the human
race and most
other species.

All quoted sources from *The New York Times*: “Scientists Seek Explanation for X-Rays Emitted by Comet” (April 5, 1996); “16 Burned Bodies Found in France; Cult Tied Suspected” (December 24, 1995); “Anthropology Group Takes Activist Stand to Protect Cultures” (March 19, 1996); “Mythic Shields of Blinding Light” (December 24, 1995); “Math Experts Say Asteroid May Hit Earth in Million Years” (April 30, 1996).
LEAD, CLASS, AND POPPY was written using synchronous thinking, which involves actively seeking out coincidences: forcing connections between images in dreams and images in the street, seeing the link between ideas in one's head and stories in the news, reading the connections between different newspapers on different days. In the case of this poem, the December 24, 1995 New York Times (in which there was a story about the charred bodies in France) synchronized with my research into Anselm Kiefer (my particular focus was on his charred books.) After the connection was established, I began collecting other newspaper clippings that synchronized around themes of the sun, burning, and cultural destruction. The poem was written to connect these themes, and then was shaped into a sunburst pattern. This poem catalyzed a whole series of newspaper/synchronicity-based poem-projects, the most extensive being The Parasite Poems.

LYRIC INFILTRATION is a cut-up technique I devised when looking through my notebooks and trying to find a form for rambling poetic notes. Here's how I did it:
1) Compose poetry that is tonally in the lyric/epic tradition. Put it aside.
2) Make a scrapbook of news stories over a period of six months.
3) Type up one-line descriptions of each news story.
4) Break apart the lyric poems and fit them together with the one line descriptions.
5) Pick a news story/editorial to be infiltrated (mine are excerpts from longer stories).
6) Begin jamming the poetry and one-line descriptions into the news story.
   Pay no attention to grammar and syntax at first.
7) Revise the now jammed news story so that it is grammatically correct but maintains the accidental synchronicities of meaning.

The READING INDEX (TEXTE INDICE) series was inspired by the work of the artist Terence Gower, who creates graphs charting the hypothetical emotional response of an artist reading an art review about her/his work. No. 1 was a stream-of-consciousness exercise in which the poem was edited to conform to the criteria of the graph. No. 2 was created by first drawing an arbitrary graph
SCRATCH SIDES

Poetry, Documentation, and Image-Text Projects

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