

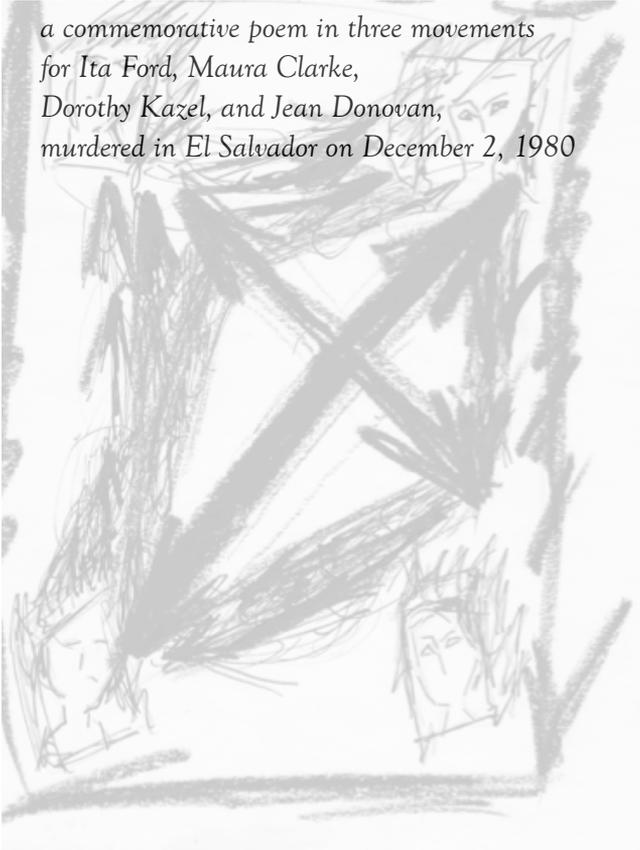
B L O O M

B L O O D

J O E N A P O R A

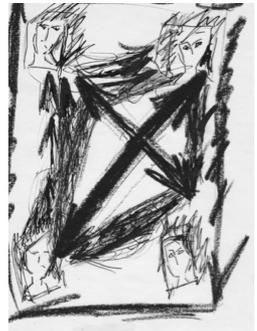
B L O O M B L O O D

*a commemorative poem in three movements
for Ita Ford, Maura Clarke,
Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan,
murdered in El Salvador on December 2, 1980*



This country is so beautiful.
Where else would you find roses
in December?
Where else but here?
Who else but us?
We shall be those roses growing in December
as we shout with our lives, *Presente!*

—Jean Donovan



FIRST:

Lesson in rime

The first image
is a flower stalk

in the barrel
of a gun.

The last image
is a gun stuck

into the corolla
of a flower.

Sex Education

The priest splits the girls
from the boys. The lecture unfolds
into a boring silliness about the birds
and the bees. And we

to imitate the bees' sting
we pinch the girls
and laugh. At night

at night they turn they turn
their naked bodies to the mirror
and see blue and black violets
blossom on the back of their legs.

We share the secret of what we learn.
We whisper of the stigma:
“a portion of the pistil
of the ovary of a flower
which receives the pollen.”

The recurring joke about the pistil.
About pistols. About pistols.
And what to do with them.

THE HISTORY OF DECEMBER 2

Feast day of St. Bibiana, or Viviana,
Virgin & Martyr

1906, Dec. 2

Born in Hungary
Peter Carl Goldmark

strikes it rich
in the new world, he

invents the long playing
record. The record

is far from perfect.
Like too brittle bones

it easily cracks. Sound skips.
Words repeated without

end. End-
lessly translated

from Hungarian in this
new American glossary:

ver ~ blood,
verag ~ flower.

1547, Dec. 2, Death of Hernan Cortes

“So it was decided to put Cuahtemoc to torture.”

We always made fun of explorers and
the missionaries who went with them
to the land of the naked brown boobies.
National Geographic photos. Our first entrance
into the commercial paradise of pornography.
And later the novels of Melville pointing
to how spreading the Word
lead to its breaking.

“...and when he was hanged, or was tortured
to reveal the treasures of Moctezuma. His
feet were smeared with oil and exposed
many times to the fire, but his torturers
gained more infamy than gold.”

Even young we wondered

how could they help
but be born again
into their flesh?

And yet. And yet. Even though we knew
just who was the enemy, who
had invaded our own innocence, who took
from us the child's heroes. Whole
peoples reduced to photos torn
from travel magazines. Even so

with them the missionaries took us
and in some small way redeemed us
from our unspoken privilege.

1980, Dec. 2

“Katan 8 Ahau”

Under the trees
Under the bushes
Under the vines

In such misfortune

The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel

The bodies form
a cross. This is not
the intent of the men
who use vines to drag them

out of the hole.
But it makes an acceptable composition
to the editors of *Newsweek*
who choose this picture for their centerfold.

No longer dressed in heavy habits
but in white and blue, and one
in a floral shirt, three other nuns
pray at the mounded dirt

the mounded dirt that was
but moments ago the common grave.



SECOND:

Lesson in rime

Synonyms
in Vietnam.

Defloration.
Defoliation.

Sex Education

A young girl begins to bleed
and begins a journey to live again.

Blossoms into maturity.

Reincarnation is a bloody flower.
Flow flower.

Red river to a sea
of recurring infinity.

The boys in their damned anxiety
pull petals and wonder

“she loves me, she loves me not”
at the answer they create.

A nothing.

A zero.

In their hands what they are
able to violate.

THE HISTORY OF DECEMBER 2

She was tied to a pillar and whipped with
scourges loaded with lead; and so she died.
There is though no compelling evidence
that St. Bibiana ever existed.

1982, Dec. 2

There is an end
to sacrifice

but not here. Here
we are in the middle

of an anti-climax
that ends predictably.

In Salt Lake City
the doctors gently

pull from the body of Barney Clark
his failing human heart.

And at the altar
of some machine

not yet imagined
is this scene ~

a puffy little bag
of wire and plastic

held above the cavity
of his body, and gibberish

written as a measured litany
confusing Clark and the Tin Man

and the Mormon Tabernacle
with the magic castle

in that precious memory
we call the Land of Oz.

1859, Dec. 2

Some eighteen hundred years ago Christ was crucified. This morning perchance, Captain Brown was hung. These are two ends of a chain which is not without its links. He is not "Old Brown" any longer, he is an Angel of Light. ~ Henry David Thoreau

I have no picture of his body
stretched from the scaffold.
My image of John Brown
is from a reproduction
of a life-sized oil portrait
by Nathan B. Onthank
which he painted on an enlarged photograph
taken in May, 1859 by J. W. Black.
A somewhat convoluted, even torturous
route for this original image to take
from this still mysterious
mixture of man, imagination,
chemistry and light.

1980, Dec. 2

Not a thing that
changes stands
outside of time. And
everything changes.

Each ballot for Ronald Reagan changes
into a bullet for El Salvador.

Each bullet also changes
into a dollar for the land owners.

Each bit of land it changes
to profits for the coffee growers.

Each cup of coffee changes
to a nervous fear and frenzy.

And bad nerves change
to bad news.

The news is four
nearly naked bodies
news we elected for them

which changes to:
know, we elected him.



THIRD:

Lesson in rime

Alexander Haig
good soldier Haig

with his ear to the phone
monitoring wiretaps for Nixon.

Looking for dirt. He said the four nuns
were possibly running guns

or it may be true
were heading for a rendezvous.

Sex Education

We would wonder didn't they feel
anything under that habit?

Were their bodies never hot and wet
with longing turned to sweat?

Our favorite put-down was then
"You're as funny as a pregnant nun."

We would not have dared
to touch them but we drove

our minds wild to penetrate
the many layers of black

folds of cloth. We tried
not to hate ourselves.

We knew we would be
the cause of their dying.

THE HISTORY OF DECEMBER 2

Because St. Bibiana is represented in her story as having been locked up with mad people, she was widely honored as the patron of the insane.

1901, Dec. 2

Patent for first safety razor
received by King Camp Gillette

“In the camp and the mountains
there was a great deal of terror,
the Guard killing entire families.
...In one of the roundups they captured
one of my first cousins who was involved
with the guerrillas, comrade Oscar Amando
Flores.”

The sky burst open in petals of light
streaming through the mist.
Xipe, the people once coaxed you into splendor.
Now you only exist
for the specialists
of the religion of the Aztecs.

Perhaps some Indians still venerate
your form ~ the sun as it renews itself
in the long passage through the night.

Xipe. God of courage and renewal.
Painted red, descending
into Netlatiloyan
where after worship the priests
threw the cast-off human skins.

Xipe. That the light
would come again.

Xipe. From the dry bones
of a ritual the scholar reports
“the cult ended on a note
of flower offerings.”

“They killed him. They killed this comrade
terribly. They skinned him with a ‘Gillette’
lifted all his skin with a ‘Gillette’.”

my cousin

they loved him not
Oscar Amando

Flores

1804, Dec. 2

At Charenton Asylum (with the authorities)
the popular cure

was to submerge the inmates in tanks of water or
to suddenly

pour vats of water upon their naked bodies
to wash away their madness *the inmates'*.

It was a secular baptism and the Marquis de Sade
hated both *kinds of baptism and kind authorities*.

Are sensibilities violated
if I assume that Sade reconciled himself
to being inundated

with these spurts & splashes
by imagining the change of water into sperm?

The Asylum
where Sade died is no longer
even a memory. Sade remains
as a symbol and a name.

The swollen cock of monstrous size,
the whips, the knives

endless streams of blood, words
in his books that continue to proliferate
with an increased popularity.
According to Sade's biographer

many of the tombs at Charenton were opened
and a Dr. Ramon obtained possession of Sade's skull.
He lent it to a phrenologist who promised
to return it but apparently
"lost it somewhere in America."

1980, Dec. 2

“Prophecies of a New Religion”

The Christians came bringing
blood-vomit
pestilence
drought
pustule fever

This land of misery
Devil's gift
white crown scab

The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel

“Jean used to joke
that blue-eyed blondes were the safest
people in El Salvador,”

said Sister Rody looking
looking into the cavity
into the cavity and the dried-mud
caked bodies. Like the sisters I remember

she holds a rosary, she repeats
“I guess she was wrong.”

We are all wrong
wrong not to know how hard it can be
to unlearn an old language. Turned
turned to the new world
Francis Xavier said, “I am terrified
at the number of inflections
added to the conjugation
of that miserable verb ‘to rob’.”

I wonder what I can take
take from the picture of the opened grave
that is a yawning mouth to me
even a laughing mouth to me
but I imagine a stomach
discharging its burden
the burden of the very earth

the earth sickened by the silence
the silence not hovering like a vulture
but shimmering and sun flashes

flashes off the knives, the stilettos,
bayonets and letter openers of the officials
in El Salvador and Washington.



Colophon

While I sit trying to figure out how to write this colophon, Sunday April 8, 2018, Tom Waits “Heart Attack and Vine” comes up on my playlist: “If you want a taste of madness you’ll have to wait in line / You’ll probably see someone you know on Heartattack and Vine.” On December 2, 2016 I had a heart attack while lying on the emergency room operating table. After recovery, I decided I would republish Bloom Blood, first published by Walter Tisdale and then by Larry Smith. Cover from a print by Kathy Kuehn, other graphics by the author. And by the way, the next song on my playlist was Selwyn Birchwood’s “Police State” : “Sayin’ you got the right to remain silent / Seems they got the right, lord, to remain violent.”



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