

## Duane Locke

E MAIL TO DAMNISO LOPEZ (DAYLIGHT)

Daylight saving time  
Became  
A dead nasturtium

Desert date palms present  
In closed day bed

Advice and vice from Sermon  
Seek the Dauphin's blonde daughter

But France now a republic

Her eyes colored  
Like Swiss blue glacier  
Motorcyclist rode on roads  
Paved on her pupils  
Her eyes shouted  
Slot machine gear noises  
Her lips  
Broken coral colored silk threads

Lemon colored ball tennis  
Played  
Played without a net  
She supplied the resistance

E MAIL TO DAMNISO LOPEZ  
(CRISS-CROSSINGS)

The criss-crossings  
Of mica sparkling curbed intersections  
Co-exists  
With the much kissed bronze doorknob  
Of a Gothic church  
On the way to a simulated quay  
On a concrete parking lot  
Painted to resemble an ocean,  
Flat waves  
Painted to resemble three-dimensions,  
A dock, gull-decked,  
With the vibrations  
Of a superfine Aeolian harp  
Was my orientation to the morning  
After a surrealist wandering.

I even passed a jazz band  
Practicing and rehearsing improvisations, When in my stroll The precisely planned  
city became A phantasmagoria.  
I walked without being forced  
By forethought of destination.  
I turned right  
Or turned light  
According to inspiration.  
I was as peripatetic as Aristotle.

A bin apples as green as ocean waves  
Was an Arcanum.

The unforeseen was seen  
And soon became with familiarity  
An unknown.  
I was a Buddhist, not a walker  
Who as he walked  
Was thinking about something else  
Other than  
What he walking on  
Or walking by.

E MAIL TO DAMNISO LOPEZ  
(MALLARMÉ)

Mallarmé confided  
To George Moore  
That he, Mallarmé,  
Was often tempted  
To jump from the bridge  
The two walked on,  
Fall down on the sharp points  
Of the rails beneath  
And bleed to death  
In order to escape  
The mediocrity of which  
He, Mallarmé  
Was a prisoner.

With keen attention  
To details,  
I hear the etudes  
From  
Long, thin-legged, orange insects  
On the pollen  
And purple of a weed.  
I disappear  
Into an infinity of possibilities.  
I feel cogmogonic  
Without being concerned  
With origins,  
Causation, absolutes,  
Or universals.

I'm happy, having cleansed  
Myself from theological beliefs  
Long ago.  
It is wonderful being decentered  
And non-logocentric.

I observe what I have never  
Seen before,  
And never will see again,  
Specks of gold  
On a black leg  
Smaller than a pencil mark.

“Hedge-crickets sing,” John Keats

“The real is transitory, mobile, fleeting, elusive, Temporary; the unreal is fixed, absolute, Universal, eternal,” Norris Benjamin.

At Hadrain villa,  
The ruin, the remained,  
The tourists counted the statues,  
The statues,  
Surrounding the swimming pool.  
Some say the statues were nymphs.  
Some said  
The statues were housewives,  
Carrying jugs of milk  
On their shoulders to feed their offsprings, And great-great grandchildren.  
One astute sage and observer commented  
That all the girls  
Had the same face,  
The same face as the beautiful boy  
Who drowned in the Nile had.

And thus it came to pass,  
Thus it came to pass.

It came to pass that I wrote  
My poems called “The Elegies.”  
I wrote my elegies  
In a room that leaked  
When it rained.  
In writing my elegies  
I had to move and remove  
To keep my hair  
>From getting wet  
As water poured through the leaks  
In my room.

I lived in the Tampa slums,  
On North Jefferson Street,  
The number one crime street  
In a city of crime,  
In a city where there are no universities, Only buildings, Buildings with Admission  
offices.

“Philosophy ought really  
To be written only as poetry,”  
Ludwig Wittgenstein.

I named my collapsing house  
“Duino,”  
So I wrote my “Duino Elegies”  
In a collapsing house.  
I lied to myself  
That I was the last  
Of the castle poets,  
But in my elegies  
I would not mention angels,  
Not even  
The angels of the false Denis (translated).

Figure it out, figure it out,  
Figure it out.

At Rapallo I saw a sign  
On an American-styled restaurant,  
“No dogs allowed”  
So I ate at a plein-air, plat-  
formed  
Ristorante  
Where a strangers’ dog  
Sat under my table.

Figure it out, figure it out.  
Figure it out.

“Dump Plato,” Charles Olson.  
Breathe.

At five o’clock  
This afternoon I decided

To erase from my vocabulary  
Meaningless words such as  
“personal,” “political,”  
“Immediate,” “eternal.”  
I hope by six o’clock  
I don’t forget. It is so easy  
To forget in a country  
Where my no one hardly  
Has any memory. In this  
Country all that can be  
Remembered is the “Maine.”

You figure it out.

“We need not fear gods,  
For the gods are us,  
Our invention, but if  
The gods are us,  
The gods should be feared,  
If the gods are us,  
The gods are to be feared  
More than anything,  
More than anything,”  
Norris Benjamin.

Accept the vatic, for  
The only real poets are Oracles,  
Oracles without a Delphi,  
Without an Apollo.  
All true poets are oracular,  
But without an Apollo,  
All true poets are in love  
With Daphne.

You figure it out.

The  
Word  
Cre-  
Ates  
The  
Thing.

E MAIL TO DAMNISO LOPEZ 1994

The razor blades Of dawn Their silver sharp edges  
Shaved away The all-covering black beard  
Of night, Shaved away

The thick black eyebrows On the dark face With closed eyelids whose  
dark skins Were backgrounds To brighten stars That served as ancient maps For  
ancient travelers who were always lost Thus made discoveries Of what was hitherto  
unknown

The one who knows his address  
Will never have a home  
The one who seeks the road  
Will never be a wanderer

It was a cold morning the children  
Wore thick woolen gloves  
And thick woolen caps  
That with multicolored stripes  
Covered their eyes  
It was a cold morning  
A cold coming we had of it  
Children clapped their gloved hands  
Dancing holding gloves around  
The white mound on the whiten earth  
The children sung joyously  
Believing they had found a snowman  
Although the snowman was lying down  
Not standing up  
As traditional snowmen stand and salute  
The children sung the old songs of joy  
As the children licked peppermint candy sticks Soon, the school bell rung and little  
ones Went to school where teachers wore black gowns And walked around in circles  
Left the white lump That was a brownbag drunk bum Who froze to death On the  
coldest night of the year

Cognac colored wild flowers

Swayed and gyrated  
As if dervishes doing  
Sacred, mystic dances,  
To worship praise the sun  
The god Sol that kept  
The earth multiplying and warm  
The holy dances  
Colored the air cognac  
But the air  
Quickly took off  
Their cognac colored dresses  
To be naked  
And preserve  
The natural sacred  
Of a sacred world  
These nymphs quivered  
In dance around  
Castoff dresses  
Colored cognac

The sun runs  
On a paved road.  
Concrete covering  
Seeds concrete  
Choking seeds  
Until the seeds suffocate  
Until life  
Is aborted  
The center  
Of the road  
Is a tightrope,  
The sun walks  
On the tightrope,  
The sun slips,  
Falls to right  
Side of road  
To dissect  
A bright red convertible  
Driven by an apparition  
That wears cap  
Tennis players wear  
In tennis matches  
The empty space

That is the driver  
Steers the steering wheel  
Covered with convicts stripes,  
The black and white stripes  
That convicts wore  
In 1930 movies  
The sun moved  
Faster than the car  
Going forty miles  
Over the speed limit.  
The sun ran far  
Ahead of the speeding car  
And soon  
Became a red glow  
In a gap  
That was bulldozer  
Through a mountain  
To make a road  
When the driver drove  
Over the red glow  
He discovered it was  
A red wheel chair  
That his tires tore apart  
As he drove on,  
He saw a hitchhiker  
Holding up a golden  
Glowing thumb.  
It was Apollo,  
The driver sped by.

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Duane Locke, Doctor of Philosophy, English Renaissance literature, Professor Emeritus of the Humanities, was Poet in Residence at the University of Tampa for over 20 years.