



# Danaus Plexippus Plexippus

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## **Cashews**

Edible moon  
Two crescents stuck together  
Though the moon outside  
Is whole and blue! Tonight  
I have my half circles  
Little, tasty smiles  
On New Year's eve  
A swing's upward path  
Held between my index finger  
And thumb  
A small boat on the lake  
Of my tongue  
Disappears one by one  
Above – a full moon  
made of a cashew  
Split into two

## Maps

Pieces of broken crackers – the geometry of the United States.  
Your finger traces a blue highway along the Atlantic coast and pauses at periods.  
I seek out circled stars on a page and name them,  
find vast open green spaces and cities within a centimeter of white paper -  
to journey back in time and hear stories.  
My hand lifts an entire state and turns it over  
to where it continues on the other side.  
I lie here on your bed looking at maps  
Thinking – *Travel me, enter my capital.*  
Your heart – a matrix,  
womb from where  
everything grows.

**Evolution: *Danaus plexippus plexippus***

Taking into its body the reason for its  
survival - its ability to live with poison  
and become it  
a Monarch flickers its orange and black  
lashes on a milkweed stem  
tongue uncurling to drink the poisonous  
white sap  
it takes a bird once  
to learn the lesson in eating a  
Monarch  
How we survive: alchemize our poisons  
into milky white sap that sustains us  
Spread our patterned wings and be  
harbinger – of flowers,  
plant, food and  
water

## Walking Stick

*phasmida* - olive green like leaves and limb  
how nice it is to be an apparition,  
to be apparently not there.  
How the branches jangle in a slight breeze,  
a moving fragment buoys a bouquet of leaves  
with such a yearning to be tree.

Indistinguishable by a bird's eye,  
maneuvering by night,  
chewing shedded skin, leaving no trace.  
Silently shifting among the shuffling,

quiet against walls, still as furniture.  
My antennae perceives static.  
I have inhabited this earth for so long  
that I blend into sidewalks,  
billboards, magazines, t.v. shows.  
Voices imperceptible from one another,  
camouflaged.  
How I wish, for once, to be pecked,  
to detach a limb from a beak in my escape  
because of my uniqueness.

## **Blue Lion**

We measure air's history from a tube  
stuck through the heart of a blue lion.  
Watching as it enters the silence of stones  
in metal spirals, anticipating what centuries of ice can tell us;  
we are transient yet leave much behind  
and rise in the clarity of glass.  
What is invisible, imperceptible is captured  
in an air bubble and preserved like a gesture.  
What two hands have fused is instantly universal  
and we watch the birds for affirmations or forebodings.  
We look for replies in the stomachs and on the slick black  
and white coats of emperors.  
We are agitated as chunks collapse into ocean.  
We are both of water  
and we both hang by a thread.

**L'art D'aimer**

*from the perspective of Baltimore Orioles*

First are the songs - a composition of whistles and rattles. *You always hear an oriole before you see one.* Then copulation; black and orange ruffles in leaves. They find a branch high above the ground to weave a bag. Pieces of plastic strips, strings, branches, grass, one by one in the beak, mixes with saliva. In the building and in its intent is nest and what is to come afterwards - eggs, hatchlings helpless and blind, throats stretched out in a choral for food. Insect legs dangle from a parent's beak. The younglings will soon leave the nest with a nudge off the edge - the first time wings are used to convince air of its ability. Between two elm trunks vertical and black - bird in sky is an absolute.

## **Intimacy**

The sky is the color of hydrangea;  
blanched clouds and shades of purple-blue,  
a touch of pink-flushed petals here and there.  
Hydrangea in morning sun and afternoon shade  
where thoughts like winged insects alight  
on a cluster of forty-three blossoms.  
Blossoms that color according to the aluminum  
or lack of the metal in the soil.

## **How Chopsticks Were Invented**

Against a backdrop of sunset,  
two reed-like legs are dipped into water.  
Snake-like neck swings back  
then forward like a sword  
and catches a small fish  
between its beaks.  
Anyone who folds a thousand cranes  
will receive their hearts' desire.  
At the table, a woman's arm  
is a neck in its loose white sleeve.  
Rice, chicken, broccoli carried  
on the tip of chopsticks.

## **Bike Accident**

My closest encounter with a rose  
bush was when I crashed into one.  
While a child and riding my bike,  
I thought I would challenge myself –  
pedal fast, let go of my feet and hands.  
Then, I lost control and went straight into  
a rose bush. The bike on top of me, thorns  
in my body. Flesh cut and bleeding.  
The rose entered my bloodstream  
and eyelids scattered over me.  
I guess it was then, as when Peter Parker was  
bitten by a spider–when I became a poet.

## **Resourcefulness**

### ***Santa Catalina Island in Soloman Islands Archipelago***

The fisherman finds a strong spider web,  
wraps the silk around a stick.  
He paddles out in a wooden boat  
to catch needle fish,  
the fish that can't be caught with a hook,  
because its mouth is too narrow.  
For centuries this is how it is done.  
In the waters,  
he takes out a small, black kite,  
slips the wound web off the stick,  
and ties it on the kite string.  
The wind carries the kite up into the sky.  
The glob of web bobs like an insect  
across the water.  
The fisherman holds the kite's string in his mouth.  
When the kite drops, the fish is ensnared;  
sharp teeth and rough scales are trapped in the web.  
And the fisherman slowly pulls the string  
towards him.  
The needle fish moves its hips and swims in the  
clear water.  
The fisherman lifts the fish up,  
flickering for a moment in the sunlight.  
Holds it gently in his hand,  
places the narrow mouth of the fish  
in his mouth sideways and slides off the web.  
Places the fish next to the pile of fish on  
the boat's floor.

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