

# ROAD WORK AHEAD

poems



RAYMOND LUCZAK



 Sibling Rivalry Press

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## ARC DE TRIOMPHE, 2005

Once I arrived in Paris, I declared war against Time.  
That November I marched nonstop days and nights  
up and down snow-slicked avenues and streets.

Spies adored my aging face. It'd given away  
one secret after another. I had been shafted.  
Journalists never covered my side of the story.

On the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, I was on parade,  
but Time, drunk and happy, had been too busy  
snapping photographs. My beret wasn't enough.

The Arc de Triomphe rose tall like a general.  
Its sculptured reliefs stood proudly like epaulets.  
Its tourist army was electrified like moths.

Underneath its arch of carved stone, a flame burned  
eternal for the bones of an unknown soldier. How  
odd that a faceless man could have so many friends!

Napoleon Bonaparte, the wily rascal that he was,  
had calculated that stone reshaped to honor the dead was  
his best shot against Time. So far he's winning.

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## LUMINESCENCES

Trucks thundered by your blinded bedroom window:  
your eyelids did not flicker from light's slices.  
The moon was enraptured, as I was,  
with your round face. You hinted secret smiles.

What dreams were you dreaming? I thought of the moon  
where I'd drive from dusk to dawn past craters,  
but somehow all your friends who'd died knew  
you'd find them there on the blue-lined summits.

There, you stood proudly from your moon buggy to  
wave everyone from the luminous darkness.  
"It's beautiful here," you whispered.  
Gravity made the earth clouds swirl sadly.

I slept beside you, your warm glow (like babies  
not yet aware of their effect on parents)  
illuminating my hushed silence.  
I love your body, a wonderful moon.

## METAPHYSICS

Who knows why clouds fluff up when they see you  
sauntering all the way down on Broadway  
to your apartment? Who knows why birds say  
with many trills your name? (They've noticed too.)  
Who knows why the cold air seems warmer now  
when I find myself thinking of you? Oh,  
who knows why on cold nights you seem to glow?  
Who knows why sweat becomes sweet on your brow?

You are the wind rushing in from the north,  
the melody from the evergreens,  
the slowly ceaseless fireplace warmth's sheen.  
The metaphysics of distance drop forth  
into nothingness when I see you with  
arms waiting to hug, no longer a myth.

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## THE LANGUAGE OF SLEEP

Ease of years, understanding: two taps,  
a time to let go for a turn of body,  
shifting limbs around for comfort.  
The bottom of our sheets slides loose;  
on our sides we knit our chests.  
Nights of nothing are the sweetest.

Silence travels along our skins.  
The sensation of our hot breaths  
entering unmapped terrain through gaps  
endlessly changing, nudge our bodies,  
like a faint flashlight searching. Synapses  
entire between us remain familiar.

## I AM A SHOE

*for J.B.*

I am a shoe in need of a right-sized foot. I ache  
to have him slip inside me, wriggle his toes  
comfortably as I walk with him everywhere.  
No one would know how much I love him.

I know each crack of the cement ahead of me.  
Each story of my past would surely break  
my mother's back if she knew what I've done.  
The feet in my life would trample her heart.

I am a shoe softened by fuzzy socks  
that keep me warm and dry inside on  
days that chill and nights that pour.  
Each time a toe nudges me, I reawaken.

I am a shoe ready to itch from athlete's  
foot. Secrets that shouldn't happen did.  
I should be kicked every which way, but no,  
the grass forgives me everything I am not.

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