

# METOBELUS

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G. C. Waldrep

*for & after Peter O'Leary*

And so in the third of the great dreams I am afflicted with leprosy: snow-flesh, salt-flesh, sugar-flesh, semen-flesh. Frangible and inconvenient.

In the first of the great dreams, I am waiting: senselessly, eternally. In traffic. In the anteroom of a doctor's office. In the hollow square, waiting for the singing to begin.

In the second of the great dreams there is blood: spilt blood, quantities of it. I am there and I must have committed the crime, although I have no memory of it. Or I am there and the perpetrator is, must be, nearby: I must hide. Or I am there in advance of some vaguer violence the dream gallops toward, with me inside it.

In the third of the great dreams, *nightflesh*. I wonder distractedly whether I glow in the dark. Parts of me evanesce — a finger, scooped-out hollow of a shin. The teeth and nails also, and the hair. The hair even in waking life, a marriage one wakes into: the quickening matrix, little factories sloughing off their shadow-speech.

In the fourth of the great dreams, a river — wide, muddy, swift — and beneath its surface, something sharp I can't see: only the terrifying burl in the current. Into which I am about to be hurled, by chance or circumstance within each night's logic.

Inside the cavern a figure is taking shape, *almost* luminous — maybe I imagine it, or perceive it with some faculty other than sight. It is neither welcome nor dismaying. I've lost one or both of my hands, my feet, my arms and legs.

If you remain very still you can understand the effects your life has on the lives of others. A glowing presence where the body used to stand, surrounded by water.

In that mountain town we walked among the aeolian harps, books we couldn't open. The body dreams of being blown *through*. That music, otherworldly.

The leprous body, then, as stigma, micropyle. The grains wedging deep into the plasma, and viral — if you like, a scientific fiction. Not nacreous: the scintillations of consciousness merely deflect. What for whom? Whom from what?

I paused there, in that driveway in that small city at the center of a continent, to stroke the single remaining petal of a tulip. I wanted that feeling, like oiled silk.

Flesh vs. antiflesh. The lip stubbornly insists: on the vireo, the fricative, the pear. As if from vaster distances, stars forming like night-fruit.

What remains of the body after the burning is not the heart, but the larynx. Vitrified and recollected.

Baptism — *for the remission of sins* the body reasons, epiphytic, held captive by the mind.

And so in the third of the great dreams the body comes away from the body, within the intelligence. You can't really make a scroll of it. You are merely an observer.

But this is now the seventh dream, in which it is you who stumbles through the ashes, you who reaches down to pick the body up — and it burns you. It burns like dry ice, the scars streaking instantly from your fingertips to your palm. You want to drop it, but you can't. It burns and you hold onto it. It burns into your waking self like an ester, an abscess, a vigil. — *Inflorescence*. Contagious, like a cruciform tongue.

## ON CALVINISM

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*G. C. Waldrep*

Since I am not a Calvinist, I believe you have the right to reject God. It is the only “right” we have.

Space permits a little movement, chiefly in the vicinity of the arms & hips. The mind is along for the ride.

(And the soul? The soul steals the body, then sells the body to the highest bidder. Then steals the body back.)

We call a concatenation of fruit-bearing trees planted intentionally, at regular intervals, an “orchard.” We believe them to be pleasant places.

(The soul sings a green song.)

You believe in the body, which is good, because the body believes in you. Never discount the body’s capacity for belief.

I am waking for the second time this morning. I dreamed faith was a dance only the dead could perform. I woke hungry & shivering, at war with myself.

The demise of the drive-in theater is a topic of mutual interest, I mean to both body & soul. Belief plants its flag there, waits for it to bud (like Aaron’s rod).

Since I am not a Calvinist I believe in images, that is, the power of the visual to provoke soul & body to action.

It is not a power to be invoked lightly, which is why I walk around with my eyes shut, most of the time.

(The soul wakes the body from its waking sleep at intervals. We could not bear it more often.)

The body's nucleic acids parallel belief, in that they hide behind multiple walls. Belief's baffles prevent the orchard from catching fire.

(Unless that is what we, I mean the soul, wanted all along: the orchard on fire.)

Calvinism divides the soul from the object of the soul's pure affection, which is choice. It is useful in the same way wind power is useful, only like wind power it results in the deaths of other organisms.

The soul sings a green song. The body listens, can't quite get the chords right.

Space permits the body to be the body, for a little while. God slips inside the churning blades, the auctioneer's musical chant.

The blades, which thrust & plunge, look small from a distance but are actually immense. I've passed them lying lengthwise on flatbed trucks on the necrotizing interstates.

(The soul admires the wind farm: Arlington, Wyo., Exit 272 off I-80.)

I want what the body wants when the soul has *drawn it up* into its charged grasp. A great rushing. To strike the bat & the raptor from their night flights.

(The soul's song is a paraphrase, if we knew of what we'd be so much further along than we are.)

We are in charge of the orchard. We can do whatever we want to with it. If we burn it, we solve one important problem while creating others.