



DEAN RADER

Octets After Cy Twombly: The Ferragosto Series

I

The more you look the more you need a blindfold.

You don't see with your eyes,
the scientists say,
but with your questions.

The sky is not only what the birds feel,
but what the angels pluck.

Wing and cloud-clot,
scorch and scoot.

What do we know, really,
about the sun
except that one day it will destroy us?

It's all a matter of perspective:
if you do not burn you cannot rise;



II

What do we know of the sorrows of others?

We might try to wrap them around us like a scarf,
but all we can do is wear them out
into the autumn dark.

What keeps us warm is heaven's black ice.

What keeps us praying is God's long whip.

Do you remember back before the self?

It was a lot like now,
except for all those commas.

Turn the page,
let the fire blaze:

III

In the beginning was the word,
and immediately after,
the waiting.

There are two kinds of waiting in this world,
and both live like a mole in your heart.



Little friend, own your want like a watch on a chain.

Time is like a phone call that just keeps ringing,
but don't worry,

Death has put you on hold for a little longer.

Be patient, ride out the Muzak,

you never know who is at the other end.

IV

In the dream,

Dante is teaching my son how to maneuver a
spaceship through the cosmos.

They fire on enemy vessels.

They make those *chew chew* sounds even though the game does as
well.

Dante's hat keeps flopping over onto the iPad.

My son asks him if he can juggle.

I wake. It is still night.

I go to the window, the fog's *terza rima* is relentless.

I make a promise to the stars that I'll never to use that line in a
poem...



V

A man can fish an entire life and never catch a thing.
But, that doesn't mean the lake is empty.

Once I believed I was young,
but that didn't stop time from reeling in its line.

This morning,
 rain the way one expects rain to rain.
This evening?
 More rain.

A bird can fly her whole life and never hit another wing.
But, that doesn't mean the sky is empty.

VI

3 am and the sky on a slide,
 slate-slick,
black as a seal swallowing a moon bulb.

Those who can't sleep, think,
 and those who can't think, write.

We slide into our words like an otter into a lake of blue stars.
None of us, though,
 are born swimmers.

4 now.

For the last hour,

I've been treading water.

Even the angels think I should drown.

