



POETRY  
\$12

"Valluzzi controls her line like a spider. The hungrier she is, or the lonelier, the more exquisite her cadence. From branch to beam to comet, this poet measures mortality by space and not by time. Men on choppers, women in night skies, lovers wearing wax suits...none of us are safe from the kiss of this eight-legged poet."

BARRETT WARNER, FREE STATE REVIEW

"It is easy to pick up *Part With Never*; difficult though to put it down. Hauntingly nuanced with a timbre which cuts to the heart, Valluzzi paints a portrait of a woman torn . . .

ANTHONY C. HAYES, BALTIMORE POST-EXAMINER

PART WITH NEVER

CARLAJEAN VALLUZZI



978-1-940092-00-3



# PART WITH NEVER

CARLAJEAN VALLUZZI



## PART WITH NEVER



PART WITH NEVER  
CARLAJEAN VALLUZZI

↗  
KITCHEN  
TABLE  
PRESS

## KITCHEN TABLE PRESS

Cover photo by the author, *Paper Birch* | 2012

Except for brief passages quoted in a newspaper, magazine, radio or television review, no part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system without written consent from the publisher.

Copyright © 2013  
by CarlaJean Valluzzi  
All Rights Reserved

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Grateful acknowledgments are made to the editors and publishers of ARTICHOKE HAIRCUT for the first appearance of "Awash", as well as those of ESPRESSO INK for the first appearance of "A Thousand Sweet Whispers".

## A NOTE ABOUT THE TYPE

This book was set using Palatino and Baskerville Old Face.  
Page layout & cover design by the author.



**MANY THANKS**

to Christophe Casamassima, Jill Williams, Jessica Lynn Dotson & Barrett Warner for their careful readings and excellent suggestions

to Beverly Lucey &  
to Ted Richer for their encouragement and wisdom

to Betty Anderson for decades of diligence

to “the Kid” for his generous support of the work, et. al





In the deeps there is a little bird  
and it only hums, it hums of fortitude . . .

FRANK O'HARA



## POEMS

WHY I'M DRAWN TO THE STING	1
HAZY	2
ELECTRA LOST	3
AWASH	4
PITY WHAT BORES	5
URBAN DEMORALIZATION	6
NOT THE FIRST TO SUFFER	7
SUIT OF WAX	8
AT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON	9
EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A RAINSTORM	10
CARDINAL LAMENT	11
LOVERS LAPSE	12
THITHERWARD	13
NO NEEDLES NECESSARY	14
A TRICK OF TWILIGHT	15
FECUNDITY : FUTILITY	16
A THOUSAND SWEET WHISPERS	17
AN EASIER FAITH	18
IN THIS MOMENT	19
IN THE DRIVEWAY	20
PUT IT BEHIND YOU	21
THE MINUTES OF THE AFTERNOON WERE LIKE BRIGHT MIRRORS	22
ANOTHER MAGICIAN DEPARTS	23
POEM FOR A MAN TRAPPED	24

NOTHING PRESENTS	25
ANOTHER TEMPEST	26
A WORM FINDS THE WINDFALL	27
AQUACADE	28

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR





## WHY I'M DRAWN TO THE STING

Down the red deck steps  
at the rear of his mother's house I'd run.

Swung up against the sissy bar, we rode  
through scenes I later dreamt about  
on the back of an ancient Harley  
driven by instincts to manufacture memories.

Beyond the vast vegetable garden,  
over the expanse of browned grass,  
the stage curtain of scrub pines  
had long since been left open.

For hours we'd circumscribe paths  
between branches, often flushing out galliformes.

The stacked white towers stood  
tall, sentinels by the stream.

Seen again, it seemed I had forgotten them.  
He'd cut the engine so I could hear

the hum; their strife—it seemed a comfort,  
a lesson in the necessity of fear.

He'd gently lift the lid, explain the difference  
between a worker and a drone as a few left home.

Deeper in, the mountain laurel blooming.  
I hadn't yet the compulsion to hide a smile.

My fingers never quite met  
at the front of his chest then.

Sundown signaled tears,  
the wonder if this time would be the last.

Not for nothing; my own mother  
would soon excise him with surgical precision.

Years later I still feel the phantom  
muffler melt the rubber of my sneaker.

## HAZY

The city's been a hostage to this heat,  
a mistress who's impossible to please.  
Citizens swelter, they're already beat;  
thirteen days above one hundred degrees.

At the call of the catbird on the rail  
I close my eyes: again I'm on the shore,  
prevailing winds distribute a gull's wail.  
The moment doesn't require something more.

The breakers beat a baseline on the sand,  
again drawn by an invisible net.  
I float on my back, deaf to your demand,  
confessing what the water will forget.

The salt is on my tongue now even still.  
I lull with elbows bent upon the sill.

## ELECTRA LOST

75 years later,  
what do they want with  
searching the deep off  
the reef? Who cares  
American unguents  
have been found?

If they really are her bones  
let them stay in the ground.

## AWASH

Who can say how long it's been  
since that wild dervish,

that bitch of a cyclops,  
first touched land.

Neither the Bahamas nor Florida  
were good enough.

As large as her loneliness  
she churned, gathered strength.

Too long out on the sea,  
one eye opening, widening in search,

swallowing heaving gulps  
of the Gulf and raining them down

again on Atlanta, the tips  
of Alabama and Mississippi

before those lights,  
the echo of strolling brass.

Hungry for something else,  
she had consumed too much,

didn't feel the guilt we wanted  
her to, raged on still unsatisfied;

curling her fingers up  
through the bible belt, she reached

for Lake Erie which washed  
silently out of her grasp.

## PITY WHAT BORES

She calls herself a supernova,  
builds in false intensities  
unaware of how that story ends.

There is a better word;  
stars will be born and die  
before she can name it.

There is no catching up  
to a comet. It is ill advised  
to try and grab hold of the tail.

Density cannot be measured  
by the removal of parts;  
honesty elusive, not impossible.

## URBAN DEMORALIZATION

I chose abandon,  
never favored the familiar.

I can't find a river to listen;

these kids throw whiskey bottles  
instead of stones to decompress.

The stars continue to hibernate.

Plastic bags stow away  
on the updrafts of ravens.

Home won't stay.

I skirt strangers,  
file away physical descriptions,

still think I see you around.

## NOT THE FIRST TO SUFFER

Catching bees  
in a broken jar,  
you only hear yourself

humming, delighted by  
the imminence of stings.

Warnings tangle within  
the barbed wire fence,  
pile beneath the maple.

Put on the blinders again,  
it's easier to sleep than to dream.

Your grief has been patient  
asking for our wings,  
has lost the autumnal lethargy.

Remove the redundancy. As free  
as we offer ourselves up,

pluck each wing away;  
better to be dead,  
just barely out of reach.

## SUIT OF WAX

Plumb the line.  
Set a single  
cedar shingle adrift  
on the innermost ring  
of concentrics;  
watch it push,  
lead itself away.

You have no  
suit of armor,  
what good is one  
of wax?

## AT TWO O'CLOCK IN THE AFTERNOON

Open the window  
to feel a breeze that isn't;  
nothing crosses here  
but arms and shafts,  
not unlike arms, of light  
leaked over wide pine.

If only for an hour  
then at least each day.

## EVEN IN THE MIDDLE OF A RAINSTORM

a house can be consumed,  
I have seen now this is true.

Those bricks didn't burn  
away completely,  
only charred

from the inside out;  
walls fell away.  
Flames contained within

rose from floor to ceiling  
to floor again,  
destroyed everything:

metal  
and wood  
and wiring.

Black smoky lashes  
peeking out  
from under sashes,

batting coyly at disaster  
reached for rooftops  
where the stranded,

amidst streaming water,  
awaited the inevitable:  
to be entombed,

an eternal kind of rescue.

## CARDINAL LAMENT

Her calves  
maps of rivers

that never reach the sea.  
To find the treasure

was to travel north  
to that valley

a well without water,  
once a constant spring.

Pretty words  
for ugly things

never quite convey  
the meaning right.

Without a compass  
we are adrift,

remember the difference  
between one and the same.

There can be only one  
true magnetic;

alas, no longer  
drawn to you.

## LOVERS LAPSE

We float through doorways  
of an empty house,  
all lead from nothing into the same.

Neglected postage, passions;  
reduced reflections,  
glints off picture frame glass.

You pass, leave only a cool draft,  
no longer a relief.  
I close my mouth before I've opened it.

## THITHERWARD

Displaced as the moon in daylight,  
we drive on.

Half of you is hidden.  
The radio is low, abandoning

forgotten violins into  
thickening air.

The sun follows, reluctant, lost  
as well along this road.

I left a cipher to linger  
ten miles back;

it evaporated before  
you thought to look up.

## NO NEEDLES NECESSARY

Cells knit themselves  
into something so much more,  
mere weeks before the recognizable  
undeniables start to show;

we teeter above no net,  
verge stretched  
between this exact &  
a euphemism: "Too Much".

Still, I laugh again  
recall the first time  
touch myself  
with the thought of you.

## A TRICK OF TWILIGHT

I thought I saw you  
walking from where  
gray sand turns black;

the sea lapses over itself,  
reluctantly leans back  
against insistent foam.

I thought I saw you:  
freshly trimmed hair.  
Clock hands bent slack.

The whitecaps ferry home belief  
as expertly sheens crack,  
built up left unfinished.

## FECUNDITY : FUTILITY

Stand, with  
pitchfork poised;  
tend our patch of lime.  
Imagine a shoot  
actually makes it,  
tendrils children's fingers  
reaching beyond this wall,  
stones which have kept both  
Out                    and                    In.

Allow yourself this in spite  
of our only real use        lying  
in the whitening of sails,  
useless in this landlock  
where only surrender  
is the only consistent wave.  
Watered with wasted tears  
they will know, to begin,  
they are no good.

I touch the sun,  
diffuse in the gray light.  
Whispers belong to neither of us.  
The mockingbird sings your  
always    the    same    song.  
You insist on closing your eyes, again.

## A THOUSAND SWEET WHISPERS

I

mother

of

raw head

languid honey

incubate a knife

will sit                    rip

my sordid gown

heave moons

blow their ships

about the lake

why swim still

urge no flood

dream of milk

sweat over smooth meats

shake winter

from the

enormous

tongue

a forest would

read the sea &

part with never

## AN EASIER FAITH

He's up there; a ring of  
wiry gray laid flat  
around that planetarium,

peering over bifocals he  
embroiders the staging  
each night.

Hunched, revolving,  
stitching constellations  
into the weft, weaving sleep—

a widening net  
the unlucky are lucky enough  
not to slip through—

over the valley, the roofs  
over sleeping,  
ricocheting from dream to dream,

remembered  
if only for a second,  
upon waking.

## IN THIS MOMENT

I think of you,  
thread the  
tiniest eye  
cold-rimmed in steel  
with a length of golden lash;

pass it through  
the wooden hoop,  
taut royal blue.  
Each twinkling stitch  
ties itself to above,  
a final wish.

## IN THE DRIVEWAY

I walk the wire methodically,  
in and out                            between,  
parcel attentions equally.  
The rust flakes;  
a cough, a memory.

Early morning                            cross town,  
the basement                            never locked.  
The briefest hesitation left to lean,  
a casual wall; the smell:  
old wood in the stairwell.

Silence struggles  
passed across the pillowcase.  
Reckless abandon the only alternative  
to the cluttered head  
in the empty room.

## PUT IT BEHIND YOU

Tonight my foyer smells  
like the top of your head, or  
your sheets when they weren't  
so fresh; I remember yesterday  
today, having held so long  
the end of a twisting rope, have  
begun to fray as well.

They say bereft, we fall  
crepe paper confetti  
along the river's meniscus.

We shine bright enough to illuminate spectacles;  
they congratulate each other  
when we leave no trace.

## THE MINUTES OF THE AFTERNOON WERE LIKE BRIGHT MIRRORS\*

I could see the reflection  
in your eye, my  
slightly curving right  
from the waist,  
leaning toward you  
yet looking almost away.

I saw everything in them  
both and in each one  
alone:                   your eyes  
fell at once, drawn shades  
in an empty room.

Thumbs and forefingers  
formed the mouths of hungry birds,  
filled their beaks with pink flesh,  
set aloft upon thermals  
generated by oiled feathers  
and songs disguised as whispers.

Each button on the blouse  
a boulder to you  
until at last the fabric parted,  
imparting the only secret  
you've managed to keep thus far.

\*from THE MEMBER OF THE WEDDING, Carson McCullers

## ANOTHER MAGICIAN DEPARTS

He packs up  
his illusions;  
the carnival leaves  
behind  
by the same road  
it came.

Having been ridden  
night after night,  
now naked, stripped  
of bodies and light  
the Ferris wheel becomes  
  
a windmill  
in a field empty of anything  
save the discarded  
flotsam of the  
temporarily  
distracted.

Bees busy themselves  
about a cola can,  
not asking too much  
only to serve  
some purpose there.

## POEM FOR A MAN TRAPPED

You fall

through the same holes every night.  
Universal Compromise lets you in,  
tries to sneak you past  
beneath their shadows;

all can see you,

walking on your hands for her;  
always falling, never free.  
Without fail, waiting out each darkness  
at the same coordinates.

## NOTHING PRESENTS

A broken windmill,  
in spite of yourself  
you spin, creak  
through your same  
sad circles, grind  
each year  
between your worn  
soft stones.

## ANOTHER TEMPEST

Trains bisect the hemispheres  
at sunset. This opera of Baltimore  
continuous, staged around me

its score written in the ravens  
on the wires crisscrossing the Amtrak  
beneath the highway.

I struggle with the net, but cast librettos wide  
exhale, swallow them back again  
whole; they taste, then, of somewhere else.

This morning no longer yours, or mine,  
retains ghosts of dreams  
we have acquiesced.

I linger here gathering dust,  
a paper spiral above a heat wave,  
supplicant to centuries of perpetual emotion.

The smell of a storm arrives first.  
The back of the swaddled tongue receives  
the tiptoe taste of wet asphalt.

## A WORM FINDS THE WINDFALL

We used to swing  
ropes over limbs,

swing bodies out  
over fast waters, but

we always swung back,  
fit foot to slick rock.

Now my feet fail too  
far from your funeral.

I let city stones fall  
from my palm

as they bury you  
in Abenaki topsoil.

## AQUACADE

You mistook me for dead,  
set me alight, adrift  
as I had requested without  
holding your wrist to my lips,  
misremembering basic first aid.

You watched, the waves carried  
me on their backs, so swift  
that by the time I cried out  
I had long since cleared the slips;  
swimming, I followed the trail the moon laid.

You turned and conceded,  
I felt the moment shift:  
currents of doubt curdled 'round me  
I sank in a last eclipse,  
became salt, a fiery aquacade.





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

CarlaJean Valluzzi hails from the beautiful Pioneer Valley region of Western Massachusetts.

A graduate of the Massachusetts College of Art, she creates extraordinary hand-bound artist's books, journals and other forms of paper-based-ephemera.

Her first chapbook is forthcoming from Furniture Press Books.



