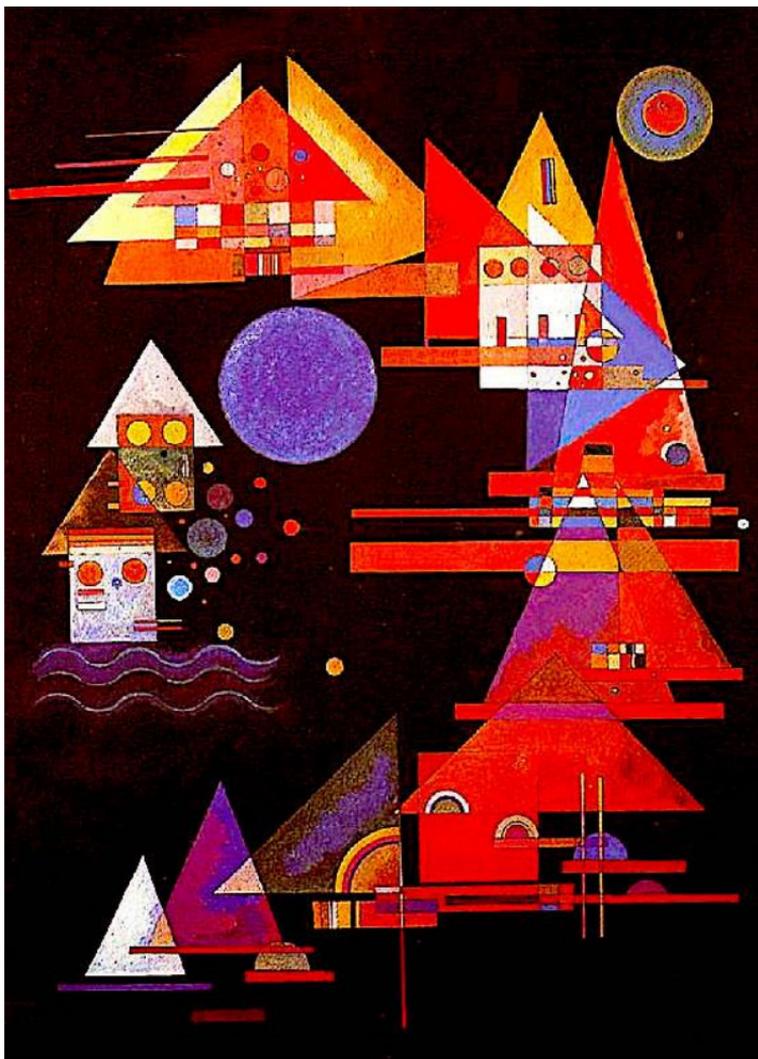


BUTTONHOOK PRESS 2022 PAMPHLET SERIES

THE CURVE OF THE OPEN PAGE



BRUCE BOND

OPEN: JOURNAL OF ARTS & LETTERS (OJA&L)

BRUCE BOND
THE CURVE OF THE OPEN PAGE

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Cover Image: *Points in the Curve* by **Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944)**. No medium specified. 25.4 x 19.5 inches. 1927. **Public domain**.

THE CURVE OF THE OPEN PAGE

Long ago the whole of the world was a book
blown open in the wind.

The whole of the ocean flexed a cross against the mast,
and the new world
watched from an ancient distance,
older than crucifix or savior.

The bow rose and fell toward the greater,
darker affirmation of the sphere
we never see.

The whole picture pulled from someplace
over the horizon. As a child pulls a parent.
A childhood a child.

I too have turned the word *world* over and over
toward a dawn
that never breaks.
I have laid awake and felt the earth beneath me roll.

Surely, I should have given up on spheres
by now.
But then sleep comes, and friends I lost or betrayed
trade places, names.

The mind is lonely for the mind.
Call it conscience, dream, convalescence.
The whole that never dies never comes.

But then I hear, in every voice,
another.
In every sea, the scattered paper of the waves.

*

The curve of the open page says,
what was that you dreamt last night.

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As if the answer had a home,
a bell in the ache that swells the surface.

If I gather molecules, a wish, a lash, an open lesion,
I cannot tell you why.
I cannot hold them
as clocks cannot hold the hours,
although they follow us. They watch.

The gables of the ocean floor swing their bronze.

If uncertainty is a birthright, who chooses this
profusion, this currency
pouring through its name.

When gravity pulls, the whole sphere pulls,
and I see a friend in the barroom dark.
He reminds me,
I was there, when it mattered,
behind the smoke that ribbons
from his fingers.

We were always a little ahead of ourselves,
back when we were younger,
unsure whose laughter in the air
was whose.

*

One day a ghost wades into the tide with a sack,
and out of the water crawls a creature,
out of the creature,
the sensation
of salt, sting, the throb of the shoreline
coming ashore.

Blood is a child of these waters. Ask any harbor.
Land's-end gave us gods and breathing machines,
entire wings of intensive care
crested and falling.

You, of course, were fortunate, among the chosen

to survive.
You were a sphere of water in the night sky.
Your value had no measure.
Your heart no seam.
Your ghost no beginning or end.

Your need for power blossomed into the cry
your mother took into her arms.
She was a wave, remember.
And she wept with inconsolable joy.

*

The mark of the beast, she said,
and I looked at her in silence, waiting for a word
to unlock
a cabinet in the office
of heartbreak and statistics.
There must be a name for feeling
nothing will change
the conversation.
A word for the tremor of the eye,
the rock in the river, the number in the rumor,
the friend who died sequestered
from his wife of sixty years.

Why not lay the beast to rest. Give him water.
A morning paper.
Let him lie among the others who would be gods
and turn over and over
until the life drains out
into one night's mound of linen.

The grave of language is a place on earth.

*

Divine light is cold. Clear.
It is the bullet in the car door, the choir
of the slaughtered.
With or without listeners.
Without speakers even.
We are all there.

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And the child with her plastic hammer,
striking a moon
lodged at the mouth of a hole too small.

*

When the eye feeds on light alone, it has no other.
No black as the soul of light,
the boat that bears an ember on the water.

Seeing as conversation then.
You, me,
the parlor with its ether of candle and hymn.
God's word jacketed in black,
a small gold clasp to keep the light in.

The days of my mother's illness, the world stepped away.
The gleam of elevator buttons,
the bell of arrival,
the TV talking to an empty room.
In each a longing to be seen in a larger context.
I know a man who saw in every light a twilight.
Make that dawn.
Tell me, what has changed.

Make that the door to a larger context,
each cradled match a farewell to the stars.

*

My first toy was a ball. My father told me.
I rolled it
to his feet, he rolled it back.
I rolled it to his chair,
and years later,
as the sun between us fell,
it rolled.

*

The ship on the horizon tells you, the edge is no edge.
More a beneficent falling off.

A *goodnight* to close the door when we are young.

No one knows

if the word *good* crossed over
the northern waters,

if its mother tongue meant

to fit together, to unite.

I use the sea to sleep.

I have learned waves accomplish nothing
with greatest mercy

when we are just powerful enough,

no more.

a star against the dark rim,

bound to the fall of all that rises.

ABOUT THE WRITER:

BRUCE BOND is the author of thirty books including, most recently, *Behemoth* (New Criterion Prize, Criterion Books, 2021), *The Calling* (Parlor, 2021), *Patmos* (Juniper Prize, UMass, 2021), *Liberation of Dissonance* (Nicholas Shaffner Award for Literature in Music, Schaffner Press, 2022), *Invention of the Wilderness* (LSU, 2022), *Choreomania* (Madhat, 2022), *Therapon* (co-authored with Dan Beachy-Quick, Tupelo, forthcoming), and *The Mirror, the Patch, the Telescope* (co-authored with David Keplinger, MadHat, forthcoming). His work has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including seven editions of *Best American Poetry*.

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2020

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