

Dan Godston

## Violet Gas

*“With Coleridge on one side and Watt on the other, it was a happy arrangement.  
At times, Sir Humphry Davy breathed six quarts of nitrous oxide in a sitting.”*

*– from Madness in the Making, by David Lindsay*

My head has become multiple bubbles, like fly eyes, resplendent  
with happy illustrations that mix methane with lamps  
attempting inward transports, yet are my limbs oxides

that fall in trinkets along apothecaries’ shelves? The fly eyes  
are patients that wander the grounds taking in “airs.” Clad  
with newborn drawers inside cabinets that giggle nonstop,

electricity fills ecstasy with wiry cobblestones. 16 quarts  
of the gas in seven minutes, what a mighty agency of light  
experiment, stoked with Count Rumford’s prizes that pile up

like towers of chocolate covered cherries wrapped in blinding foil.  
Guffaws issue forth, cut with Lake Poets’ cadences.

I try out Watt’s beehive oiled silk rolled in charcoal breathing chamber,

and our murmuring sounds decompose colorless substances  
until general currents are clad with poetic dreams. The explosion  
temporarily blinded the laboratory, an impulsive rush that consumed

Faraday’s beautiful jets of fire. Nothing exists but the beehive,  
not in the rapture-awakening chlorine, nor in the rosy blushes  
that sparkle with white-hot carbon, yet are my eyes odorless

as they knight apostasies? Have I beheld Rumford’s drip coffeepot  
which tested other maladies including syphilis and the “hysterical  
and nervous affections”? We stand before the Royal Institution

and pull unknown radicals out of our fingernails. Hence ammonia  
bookbinds scenic art with unknown metals, separate globules  
of pure Genius that drip electrolytes. Nitrogen sprinkles values



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with iridescent paths that will not fail to confirm our hypothesis.  
Copper-clad ships bring forth jubilant agents whose molten hearts  
fix Faraday's hissing salt with lovely lavender electromagnetic rotation.

