

WHELM: A BOOK OF POEMS

by

Dawn April Lonsinger

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

The University of Utah

August 2012

Copyright © Dawn April Lonsinger 2012

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

Whelm is part wildness and part witness, part love song and part lament. It is an elegy to former times and selves that admits fear of a future where humanity, community and strangeness are lost to manmade systems, and is also an ode to oddity and intricacy. These poems attempt to understand how difficult it is to be a thinking, feeling, speaking being in a largely impenetrable world—both wordless and written over with various conflicting narratives. In this manuscript, people are engulfed by forces larger than they, such as natural disasters and love, and are equally overwhelmed by their own feelings, desires and ideas. A central concern of the manuscript is figuring out how to live an authentic life or have real intimacy in a world that rapaciously wants to name, categorize, and commodify us. I conceive of language as an intervention, as textured and complex in a way that frees us from abbreviation and generalization. This manuscript suggests—as Bataille and others have before me—that there is violence in the ideal, that cruelty often arises out of category-become-hierarchy, and that perhaps the only conceivable solution to our flooding is flooding . . . to resist being capsized by giving into the roiling mess of our hearts and minds by admitting the endless cataclysms of our love, our inimitable eccentricities, and the ineffaceable plurality of being. This manuscript is informed by these wayward enactments of grief and loss, and by what Czeslaw Milosz called “A Poetics of Hope,” wherein poets remain hopeful despite an intense awareness of the dangers menacing what we love. The world is not comfortable, containable, settled, or transparent, nor is what our own perspectives and collective narratives do with that world. I return to the truths of

particularity and plurality, to detritus, explosion, fracture, to trying to cut through doxa and cliché to attempt to articulate the complexity of existing in the world, let alone a world increasingly ravaged by the forces of the market, industrialization, and large-scale mechanized warfare, wherein we are often very remote witnesses.

You cannot fold a flood
And put it in a drawer,—

Emily Dickinson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
HURRICANE BIRDS	1
HOLDING	2
WHY DELUGE.....	3
BACKYARD	6
THE ECONOMIST'S DAUGHTER.....	7
THE FLOOD IS A FIGURE OF SPEECHLESSNESS	9
DIORAMA: MURANO	10
CENTRALIA, PA.....	11
THERE WILL COME SOFT RUIN.....	13
LA FILLE FRAGILE	14
SOFT PALIMPSEST	15
THE BLUE-GRAY BODY OF THE ZAMBEZI.....	17
TRYST	18
FORAGE	19
AQUARIA.....	21
[RUIN IS A THING THAT HAPPENS IN THE PAST].....	22
THE TRILLING WIRE IN THE BONE.....	23
FALL OF FALLING	25
THE CASE OF LYDIA	26
AGAINST PLUGGING AWAY.....	28
INCIDENTAL LOVE POEM	29
THE NESTED OBJECT.....	30
EMERGENCY BRAKE	32
ORPHEUS XXX	33
CONTOUR FIGURE ON A CONTOUR FIGURE ON A ROCK	34
SUNDRRESS	35
PET.....	36
IS THERE ANYTHING LEFT IN THE LEAVES TO SPEAK OF	37
THE LEAVING	39
AFTERNOON ETHER	40
BINDWEED // REMEMBERING	41
INTERSTICE.....	43
SLOW SAUNTER OF WITHER.....	44
ARCHAEA.....	45
HULL	46
HAWAII OF MOURNING	47
INSCHMATIC CASCADE	48

KNEE-DEEP.....	49
HONEY ME, HONEY HUNTING.....	50
MATTER-OF-FACT.....	52
VANISHING TENSE.....	53
THE LAWN AGLOW.....	54
TOUCH ME ALSO, GODDESS OF INEVITABILITY.....	55
FATAL LIGHT AWARENESS PROGRAM.....	57
INCOMMENSURABLE.....	58
MY TONGUE FEELS LIKE A WILD ANIMAL.....	59
THE ENGINE.....	61
ARDENTIA VERBA.....	62
THE FURTHER WE WADE OUT.....	63
THE BODY IS A NEST OF PINS.....	64
SUNSPOTS.....	65
CONSANGUINEAN.....	66
FOUR.....	67
STORAGE.....	68
CUL DE SAC SONNET.....	69
LOVE LITIGATES LIKE THIS:.....	70
[SALVAGED IN ASUNDER].....	72
GOD SHARD.....	73
THE ICE FIELDS.....	74
ITHACA FALLS.....	75
[BUT THE RAIN IS FULL OF GHOSTS TONIGHT].....	76
NOTES.....	77

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am indebted to the writing and artistic communities at Bucknell University, Studio Arts Center International, Cornell University, and the University of Utah, and to The Fulbright Program, The Dorothy Sargent Rosenberg Fund, The Burton Foundation, The Utah Arts Council, and Western Humanities Review for their support.

At Bucknell, special thanks to the Stadler Poetry Center, the Bucknell Brigade to Nicaragua, the Bucknell Caucus for Economic Justice, Sandra Morris, Cynthia Hogue, Karl Patten, Stuart Horodner, Charles Sackrey, Michael Kaufmann, Jesse Heatley, Harold Schweizer, Robert Love Taylor, Pauline Fletcher, Michael Payne, Meenakshi Ponnuswami, Nicole Cooley, Lynn Cazabon, Tess Gallagher, Linda Gregg, Stacey Waite, Mike Diamond, Robyn Dillon, Jim Bush, Gene, and Annie Wiles for their passion and early encouragement. Thanks to everyone at the Jubilee House Community in Nicaragua, at 7th Street Café, and who were a part of the student art collective, *Exposed*.

Great gratitude to my Cornell University MFA community, especially Alice Fulton, Ken McClane, Larissa Szporluk, Phyllis Janowitz, Cori Winrock, Charity Ketz, Lisa Maria Martin, Lauren Alleyne, Jose Beduya, Pilar Gomez-Ibanez, Marisol Baca, Tien Tran, Pelin Ariner, and Michael Koch.

This dissertation grew bigger lungs thanks to the artistic and scholarly input of Kate Coles, Paisley Rekdal, and Jackie Osherow. Thank you also to other committee members and faculty members who have been devoted and inspiring mentors: Kathryn Stockton, Anne Jamison, Lela Graybill, Barry Weller, and Melanie Rae Thon. Eternal indebtedness to

Rikki Rogers, Danielle Cadena Deulen, Timothy O’Keefe, Rebecca Lindenberg, Robert Glick, Nate Liederbach, Chris Tanseer, Ishion Hutchinson, Michelle Kyoko Crowson, Matthew Kirkpatrick, Kathryn Cowles, Geoffrey Babbitt, Derek Henderson, Barbara Duffey and all others who so kindly and brightly shared workshops and world-shops with me, and whose own work moves and alters me in astounding ways.

Merci to those who gave me feedback on some of these poems: Eleni Sikileanos, Peter Gizzi, Susan Howe, Junot Díaz, Ron Slate, Stefanie Strickland, and Arthur Sze. Thanks also to those writers who chose my work for awards or special recognition: Elena Karina Byrne, Timothy Donnelly, Claudia Emerson, H.L. Hix, Wayne Koestenbaum, Dana Levin, Thomas Lux, Heather McHugh, Tomáš Šalamun, Susan Steinberg, and Lidia Yuknavitch.

Incalculable gratitude to my dearest friends who have shored me up during the solitude and uncertainties of writing, who believe in the way my words whelm, and who are all such tremendous light: Ariane Allen Green (lover of forks and music), David Green (doctor and dad extraordinaire), Sebastien River Green (hoarder of books), Liv Rain Green (mover and shaker), Kathleen Jones (supporter of the arts & horses) and her always warmly welcoming CT family (such flowers!), Melissa Renzi (butterfly catcher), Hector Hoyos (“I’m on a cliff *&^!”), Ximena Briceno (giver of salts and seas), David Poznik (coalescent, indeed), Ryan Frace (historian of rebellion) and Carol Barbera (soul of souls). Also Shannon Ruddy for helping me understand early what friendship entails, Zelia Lopes for the dancing, and Stefano Pasquetti for being the first to love my wonder. Thanksgiving to my family: Barbara and Lance, Heather, Lance Jr., Rob, Sean, and Jess for the splashing around pools and for always believing in my eccentricity and wanderlust.

Great gratitude to Patrick Foran, who sews with threads of light, without whom this would not have been written, and my experiences and heart greatly diminished. Finally, for those with kindling eyes and sea-deep hearts, who believe in love, community, and beauty above all else, who shelter and lift up the subjugated.



Sincere thanks, also, to the editors of the following publications where these poems, sometimes in different forms, first appeared:

American Letters & Commentary: “Archaea”
The American Poetry Journal: “Diorama: Murano”
The American Poetry Review: “Soft Palimpsest”; “[but the rain is full of ghosts tonight]”
Another Chicago Magazine: “Holding”
Anti-: “Knee-deep”
Barn Owl Review: “Sunspots”
Bateau: “The Flood Is a Figure of Speechlessness”
Bellingham Review: “The Trilling Wire in The Bone”
Beloit Poetry Journal: “The Blue-Gray Body of the Zambezi” (and reprinted on *Verse Daily*);
“A Contour Figure On a Contour Figure On a Rock”; and “Love Litigates Like This”
Blackbird: “Slow Saunter of Wither”
Bombay Gin: “Bindweed // Remembering”
The Cincinnati Review: “Emergency Brake” (nominated for a Pushcart Prize)
Colorado Review: “[salvaged in asunder]”
Columbia Poetry Review: “Incommensurable”
Connotation Press: “The Further We Wade Out”
Crab Orchard Review: “Matter-of-Fact”
Crazyhorse Literary Journal: “The Body Is a Nest of Pins”; “Ithaca Falls”
DIAGRAM: “Pet”
diode: “Ardentia Verba” (and reprinted on *Verse Daily*)
Drunken Boat: “Hawaii of Mourning”
Fourteen Hills: “There Will Come Soft Ruin”
The Journal: “Is There Anything Left In the Leaves To Speak Of”
LIT: “Consanguinean”
The Massachusetts Review: “Centralia, PA”
New Orleans Review: “Backyard”; “Incidental Love Poem”
Notre Dame Review: “God Shard”; “Why Deluge”
Packington Review: “La Fille Fragile”
Phoebe: “Storage”
The Pinch: “The Lawn Aglow”
Poetry East: “Sundress”
Post Road: “Against Plugging Away”; “The Ice Fields”
Redactions: “Afternoon Ether” (and reprinted on *Verse Daily*)

Smartish Pace: “Fatal Light Awareness Program”; “Interstice”
Sonora Review: “The Engine: Elegy for a Bus Driver”; “Cul de Sac Sonnet”
Southeast Review: “Honey Me, Honey Hunting”
Sycamore Review: “Orpheus XXX”
Western Humanities Review: “The Nested Object”; “[ruin is a thing that happens in the past]”;
“The Case of Lydia”; “Hull”; “My Tongue Feels Like a Wild Animal”; and “Ischemic
Cascade”

I.O.U.—New Writing On Money (Concord Free Press, ed. Ron Slate): “The Economist’s
Daughter”

Best New Poets 2010 (ed. Claudia Emerson): reprinted “The Economist’s Daughter”

The Nested Object (Dancing Girl Pres, 2009)

Poetry Society of America’s Emily Dickinson Award Finalist: “The Body is a Nest of Pins”

HURRICANE BIRDS

In the eye of the storm we came
up out of basements and found sea birds in our yards—
gulls and terns stockpiling debris, and frigate birds gliding
flawless over the interstate. A white ibis crawled out of
the gutter and loosed its looped limbs into the air.
Petrels and doves swarmed wet parking lots.
What glistened overwhelmed us, swallows rising
like a sheet over the injured

HOLDING

At night something blue
brushes over the laundry.

Our house holds our dishes and
necks away from the come-hither
chroma of stars.

The lamp flounces a little
skirt of light onto the dresser.

You are naked, kneeling
by the bath, your palm
under the water as if to
stop it.

Our house holds many mirrors.
Our house holds drawers
of thumbtacks and ink.

The moon is not a marrying
but in it everything a chamber,
remedial—

Our house is saturated
with carpet. I hear the hum of a sky
that scissors elsewhere. Sea
sound of unfastening.

Our house holds portraits snug
against its chest.

I am pulling out
bobby pins. It is an era
of subtraction.

From outside looking in, our house
is a gash between curtains.

But you are warm,
lifted, cupped, the water

hugging you in half.

WHY DELUGE

Forget, forget, and let us live now / only this
— Rilke

I.

because fruits have no mouths
you follow me into the pelted fields
where there is no way out of this—

storm windows sparking,
the delta splintered within us like veins

we touch our flinty skins together, but nothing
leaks inside aftermath, my pining deep enough
to trawl, my knees caught in the damp twine
of our historic sleeping bag

my skirt soaks up the whole of the landscape,
ankles damp and root-like in love

forehead unmeasured—there is no use
in asking why we are grown over, at this
point adjourned

somewhere the sloths so gloss
& grown-over & holding on

II.

because lakes
lean in

to hear the earth's alibi

III.

because *longing leads too*
I stare too long
watch them throng
feel myself fasten; how often
the past to the present,
an outer I.V., a trembling?

often into vagueness—
into the lawn of starlings,
& trickle like an answer and
have I tried to safety pin
felt the rain drip through my hair

IV.

because time is all
about the drag
of water through
space

for semblance. it makes a lace
divisible, a lace pretty, a night
full of flickering hooks

nature's applause echoes over glass
and I feel your forearm roll
like a wave over my hip though
you are far-flung and, as far as I
know, still solid

V.

because the river nearby, pulsing.

depressions fill & palindrome the children—a foot
casting out a foot, a face perched above a face

and we catch the chorus of discrete

beads falling into our haphazard
whereabouts and beveled shoulders,

for joy cannonball into our reflections

VI.

because I was once wet, fishling & fetus & fog,

and while we are watching the rain fall as signs

into the buoyed ships of stamen, particles are

gathering and ascending, swamps assembling again

the earth—who's to say we will see any coming at all?—

I hear you breathing but you are not here. The earth tries

to embrace me, ankles first. O gleaming birth of buildings,

palms, and hoods! I begin to see where the sun has stained

open a spot to sit

VII.

because the moon is a tranquil eye upon a less tranquil world
and my body is an island tugged in every direction out to sea,
my resolve the thin strip of coast that tides lift up over and envelop.

shells clink against my city wrists and your voice is in every shell

and your hands are all the wetness
because our breath is too heavy
to hang in the air and ablution seeps into us
through wounds, water tangled in the foreclosure of rocks, the mind
or it sways back and forth for 3,000 years in the sea, dusts our things
with the promise of salt, pulls us through the thin wiry stems of moss—

BACKYARD

The moon licks one thing, lacquers another,
is powerfully soft-spoken, turn heads of
lettuce porcelain,
and sometimes within the moon's bone china
dogs pierce the dome of darkness with a howl.
Each of us delicate & irrelevant under layers of
blankets, shellac, the cold steel of the grill perplexed.
Metallic insects at work, earthworms digging tunnels,
churning the soil. The laundry damp and glowing on the line,
and your dog pinned to her spot of grass unaware of
the two teenage hands that drop her eight pups,
one by one, in the pool, just to see
how they struggle, then don't, their yet-unopened eyes
laced with chlorine, their small bodies drifting
down, through, into
the amniotic sac of the world,
moonlight pulled over everything like a television
screen, what is real, difficult in the sheen.

THE ECONOMIST'S DAUGHTER

Wherever she goes, trees follow, flash their blank
greenback hands in deaf applause, nervous

excitement, as if to flag her down or surrender,
as if to imply a state of emergency, carve up the wealth

of light, but she walks through the forest
that clumps around her like it's the biggest nothing

to note. Despite this ticker-tape parading,
she skips to the slow messy churning

of her own heart. She shies away from addition
but gathers lilacs in her skirt, arcs her back into

a bridge to broaden her own custody. She seems
confident that her interest will not falter.

She tells her father that in her dream there was enough
water for everyone to go swimming, but

he only hears a faint fraction. He's too busy
listening to registers humming, money heaping

like bees to the hive. Her dreams may be instrumental
since he's always on the lookout for an apt metaphor—

“The economy is a small girl in the blight of morning;
it's an ocean, the tossing about of slippery schools

of glittery fish; it's butter—smeared, whipped, melting.
The economy is bubble, crater, rocket, a green shoot.”

She has gone outside again, into the glut of spindly things,
amid the dim cloying microbes poised over the dumb yard.

He's trying to coin just the right phrase, to say succinctly
what we are about to lose. He's pacing, thinking things

can't get more fraught, but when he looks out the window
he sees all the leaves suddenly drop down around her

softly like play money. It is the most beautiful schism,
a plunder he can not name. He can see in her eyes—

all spark and slalom—that she is not easily enumerated.

She is a bright light in a landscape of numbers;
when she smiles the zeroes flower into lust.

THE FLOOD IS A FIGURE OF SPEECHLESSNESS

you have noticed all of our syllables are
wet, mist of eyes. hydrant-worship. maybe

they can hear the glaciers

tipping, water rising. maybe
the ovary-nouns by their own de-
vice map the water in

our bodies dispersing like shrapnel.

the bomb contacts no one, but rattles
blood through catacombed cells—

flash flood. maybe *wet* is another word
for *without*. adrift. our shoulder blades

are perfect flotsam—rest your head here.

when a flood flails down—if there are gods
up there—they inevitably try to see themselves

in the flickering dark muck of it,
bright unforgiving

mirror, but there is only glare.

you have noticed that things wash up
from an unobserved but massive

sea. that your wrists move like moon

snails. maybe when you cry you break
with form, end up rippling through

the gills of a sting-ray.

DIORAMA: MURANO

*What is the whole place but a curiosity-shop, and what
are you here for yourself but to pick up odds and ends?*

—Henry James

Here, where the streets are stalked by streets of water,
where everything seems to sway in its impossible cup,
the vendors of memory sit in their stores of glass, their eyes
clear as marbles. Lampposts never turned off that we may
glint our way through the tiny unexpected murmurs of trinkets
that promise to intervene in death, to snag it slightly on
the brittle sail, or hoard minutes in corked bottles, the air sequestered
as long as there is a delicate ship in the center of everything,
as long as our brains stay sanctum-still.

Somewhere the hands of children glue together bits
in a shoebox : diorama, aquarium, people hushed
in their copy. Train of glass, vessel of glass, peacock
of glass, bowl of vivid glass fish, glass sun of no center,
glass ring, city of glass, violinist of glass caught on
one subtle note—the breakability of

everything wholly unambiguous. Light cuts
through each thing on its own terms. The menagerie
moves as slowly as your body turning. The vaporetto light
touches through the fog the port. My arms are full
of the carefully wrapped, and I say to myself—linger
as if you yourself are underwater, something tossed.

Every square and canal is lined with display cases,
but behind them a tank of withstanding—the translucence
more than we can bear, all that we want
to own. The tiny glass horse emerges from the hot wand,
and surgeons everywhere are making origami flowers
in our barely bodies, frail but possible.

CENTRALIA, PA

The ground is susceptible to suddenly sinking—
a fire tunnels through to the dirt from where

the earth's unassailable veins ventriloquize silence,
blue mouths blackened with coal dust, unswayable

as pigs from pig feed. But the fire does not
hunger, know fullness, is like the blood in

our bodies, just there, driving. No map, but
amplitude. Attempts to smother the fire were

unsuccessful. The fire is saturated with fire,
will not stop until stopped, chunks of granite

against its ghosted cheeks, calming to death.
The flames see nothing, smell nothing, just fold out

deep beneath our feet, forty-six years and burning.
Near the detour in Ashland a cemetery is singed

from the bottom up, as if bones were another
of nature's vocabularies. Where there was a church

pinned down with clasped hands, there is a fissure
hissing. The highway through town is cracked open.

Something is being born. A family stops, gets out
of the car, leaves it running clink & hum. The mother

bends down, flinches from the smell. The father and
daughter and younger daughter and son all bend down,

touch the road, find the earth warm as pancakes on
their palms through two feet of asphalt. The trees'

curtains are drawn, what's left—bleached, and this dissolves
in a float of sulphur. The older daughter feels nauseated,

doesn't know the feeling. They depart slowly—like those remote
residents, fumes flooding their backyards—drive down

61 toward Dark Water, PA. They say that the ground
collapsed under a man, that he clung to the roots of trees.

Most people left with government grants in hand, their eyes

as vacant as old coal shafts, memory stripped to echoes,
but a few remained in single row homes without rows,
fire bleeding through their veins.

THERE WILL COME SOFT RUIN
after *Sara Teasdale*

that we were present in the gone-ing, dawn
wiping away the green night vision, the pawn

shops shattered with lust. that we hunkered down
in our couches, hit play, skimmed the day's drown

-ings. that the hydrangeas silently hemorrhaged truce
while we mechanized, were thrilled about the cruise.

that the fences hum and deepen, become zones,
the canaries—cage-float—dimming the neon bones

in our 10mm thick tanks & skins—shark, combatant.
that the singing is singed, mothers picking off lint,

nerves. that the grounds will come, rise up around us
like a gown of inescapable mass, mudslide couture, fuss

of forensics—rigor: we the swallow, tremulous fragment.

LA FILLE FRAGILE

Her silver waist went out to sea
like petal debris, rain-tattered *ma chère parfois*

and my feet lessened into shore
so not even the biggest mirror could reach me

Now the sky sparks with remembering
her eyes afloat in the darkness

mon autre moi, my sad little nuptial glance

Who will risk more extremely the south of my sorrows?
Admittedly you sleep whereas your smile—

Nous avons dormi dans les beaux bâtiments;
light is remorse and what fades repairs her

Clearly, you very little till now not to be phase of phase
and the mascara is sad. She wilts the way I clutch purple
elderberries in my shirt

J'espère coïncider

How to risk more extremely *la nuit*? A small bridal fall?
How to make wither the quiet black city she left?

You play the door. I will play cumulus. *La musique fait.*
The song of lamp flowers festoons foreheads as they pass.
Probably rightly you the ailing repair, you the light of regret

Ne pas Ne pas ma chère parfois

If the peaches fall and disappear
where the peonies parcel out the moon
and our fingers scatter like lightning
bugs, *des serviettes oranges pour l'occasion*

Elsewhere magic acquits us

Obviously *il y avait beaucoup d'oiseaux*,
obviously we sleep underneath amplifying

departure

SOFT PALIMPSEST

the forecast kisses my cheeks

with upheaval, says *here it comes*

and I feel a little tingly, sky darkening to slate, then brightening to white

the thrill of undoing and hurdle

pouring over our windows

cans of soup and wax beans just roll off the shelf

and then it starts—the slow

wet trickle of love,

the weight of what's above us divvied up, an unfamiliar parent dismantled

the spilled milk of it

who doesn't need an intervention?

beautiful bright excuse

to see the accumulation of evidence

as answer

to time—soft open structure filling soft open structure—

the trees mock ups of trees, branches the cups that runneth over

even the windshields are cocooned in material silence

the gauntlet has been thrown: to dare romp, to toss

oneself, to fall

and let the cold recalculate you, to let the landscape adhere,

drip into your carpet

the street lights spread cellophane and we know

our cars will need to be shoveled out (mini-drama

of loss and recovery) but not yet

first the brilliant long pause before utility

it's a recap of the present—the shadowy shapes

of everything traced as if by the hand of a lover, music ensnared in
the strange hubris of solids

our own hands covered for protection
seem instead—like little Christos—suddenly more
present, closer, plump, alive

my eyes begin to water

because the gathering gods are hard at work,
insuring each exposed thing is spooned

THE BLUE-GRAY BODY OF THE ZAMBEZI

The river is full of albescent bodies
 floating, water tossed with light,
 lumbering undone
 in the earliest arcana of submersion.

At night the bloat
 of hippopotami sinks
 into the earth, envoy
 of a galaxy draping
 its animal counterpart, the massive
 mouths slowly tearing up shortgrass,
 hunger chasmal.

Now—sunlight a kind of king-
 fisher—these creatures, amassed,
 dial back the flow
 of the Zambezi with bulk.

Each bull, cow, calf born underwater,
 drifts silently through the glass of under,
 river horses galloping
 through the ambient
 cords of water lilies strung
 gutless between
 surfaces.

A cow and her newborn stray
 from the others. For hours they blink
 & plunge & drink & defecate,
 but now—the sun, a dim commute—the dominant
 bull rushes through the quietus, opens
 his mouth four feet wide, bites down
 on the calf. The mother tries, but he thrashes,
 releases the blue-gray body draining, loosened
 bricks of blood filling
 the Zambezi.

The bull wallows. The sun does not bargain
 with the bleak: one new body floating lifeless down-
 stream, as human as ascendancy.

TRYST

We are all addendum,
 the pangaea of our bodies knotted
 above linen facsimiles
 of our movement,
 adagio the others that stir
 with our thrusts—
 the bodies that have dented our bodies,
 distant seas we smell in each other's hair.

We pull the air like winches between us
 & I know only that I would let you

dismantle me.

when you move in me I can hear
 the dead trying to tear themselves
 from inconsequence,
 like us and it is not the body but
 the bodying forth that titillates me.

What if I could look at you and not

wonder how the universe was
 constructed?
 swarms & disperses? If I could desire

nothing? But occurrence? Our two spines
 form a bank in the dark
 that no one will cross
 over to get to the raging,
 famished river.

We walk back and forth between
 the past and the future, carrying the present
 as two small pools of saliva in our mouths.

Will the impending
 silence record everything?

We linger
 into morning, and discover: we have not
 tinged anything, we have not yet disappeared.

FORAGE

before barbed wire it was easy to walk
 away from cruelty and hunger to move
 like wind over the nearly uninhabited earth
 bursting with fruit the wheezing of deer
 mushrooms expanding inside of wet nights
 trout gliding knives downstream but cutting
 nothing to the next best thing forage
 and forget there is nothing primal about
 hoarding about the anonymity of faces
 in houses about the stress of holding on
 to clout to brandishing now every prostitute
 knows how to simulate a prostitute make
 itty Os in motel darkness nobody
 speaks of the wildness of farmers someone
 somewhere eating deep-fried songbird
 and Jenny talking to the stuffed parrot
 hanging in her cage winding the alarm
 clock she keeps in a basket because she
 does not own a watch and birds twitter
 in the skull of her hedge because the children
 and their little feet running over every blade
 are terrifying though at least one of those
 children feels suffocated by the sadism
 of normalcy knocks on her door to be
 near the beauty of foible to see her hands
 hold chocolate bars like hymn books
 to begin to imagine that the codifiers
 will not win the compliment of haunting
 by way of the violence of conclusion
 his mother gasps when the football players
 on the television fall down because she
 hates when they fall down because she
 has known great loss it does not make
 sense to replicate it even playfully
 she gasps as humans do when
 witnessing everyday obliteration
 or when hurtling their bones into one
 another during sex or conflict swoon
 or wince inescapable cry at the origin
 of the storied world prior to money
 but not desire and water and tongues
 carrying through with it inescapable heart
 and pubis of darkness *wherever you touch*
the story it is not nice our journey began
 in leisure and pleasure famine is a function

of fields that belong to someone the rape
of states untruth that conceals the rape of
individuals with telephones and the saddest
Jell-O molds a ghost like Yeats for every
decade to teach us to again walk through

AQUARIA

It's a lot like consolation, the way snow slices the window in half, and beyond it the ocean wobbling as if to hypnotize us. We are miniature within the warm glass atrium of the aquarium, which has been placed sensibly or ironically against what it tries to portray. We wend our way around brackish bowls that invite us to touch creatures that breathe water. I say—*wouldn't it be awful to be one of the "Hands-on Area" starfish, to be a specimen relentlessly fondled?* You say they probably can't tell the difference between our hands and an ocean tide. *They're brains are probably teeny.* I think, *our brains our teeny.* I think, *maybe some people would be better off if they were regularly stroked.* I think of the time we were going to sleep under the stars, but I was afraid a bear would eat me, of how disappointed you were in my clichéd fear.

I don't comment on it, but you are wearing a transparent sweater. And your chest too is transparent, and your heart, and in that little beating carafe there is a man in a boat, and he's always looking up at us, but never speaks. He does not do anything as shameless as open his mouth, but he seems to be asking where his ocean is. I know he is thirsty because he is also transparent and his see-through organs are full of dust. You wind your way around the giant ocean tank trying to keep up with the green sea turtle's ancient eyes and crackled glass head, and the teeny man in his boat in your heart tips from side to side like a metronome. The turtle's mouth is much more avian than I expected, and its flipper-legs look like misshapen wings. The plaque tells us the turtle is over forty and eats lettuce and brussels sprouts. *She's like you, baby,* you say. When we get to the top of the tank and look down, she is blurry but we can still make out that her shell is heart-shaped and covered with horny plates.

When I return from going to the bathroom, I find you in the Northern Pacific Room beside the giant octopus crushed into the upper corner of the tank. It looks like red velvet cake, but for the bright white suction cups that invite and threaten. You are in the middle of the room, turning in circles. I ask you what you are doing and you say you're moving. You are drawing a small circle around yourself, again and again, until the air seems to thicken. I ask you to stop, and you start crying, but the little man in your heart is not. He does not forget how you felt when you first looked up and I was there, all freckle and giddy girl. He is waiting for you to walk out into the light again, to drink water. The aquarium seems suddenly too dark, too scripted. You say—*did you know octopuses are very intelligent? And strong?*

When we leave the aquarium, you say you have decided to become a sea voyager so a few days later a group of us go down to the dock to see you off. You are wearing a bright yellow shirt that I can't see through. The sun swarms our sea-salted hair, and you impress us by getting a seagull to land on your shoulder. Your cheeks are rosy and your eyes look like commentary on the limits of glass. Then you are off, drift into the blue distance. We all feel a little bereft. When I get back into my car and flex my foot, join other sitting people sliding over the gray interstate, I picture you being jostled in the sturdy U of a boat, how life-like it must feel. I picture you peering up at the endless uncommunicative stars, sensing sea life ribbonning beneath you, how nice it is that nobody puts a lid on it.

[RUIN IS A THING THAT HAPPENS IN THE PAST]

rain spreads like a negligee over everything—

My longing is a forest, and your voice is all the birds
that live there, are hushed in the rain. Let me learn
the candor of falling, the open-endedness of roofs,
how to knot my fingers with earth and let go, how
to put down the unending letter. When I look out into
the porcelain night, see all the fissures widening—
beauty shattering in deep magenta alleyways, I long
for the moxy of the torrential. The old men in doorways
speak in a language we cannot know
of how to slice evenly down the belly of a fish.

The children keep darting out into the lightning,
tempting the gods to tackle them. The rain is making
a case—that baptism, that flush. That the stars will
never belly up. That luster is, of course, an antidote
to our eyes, and we are no more purgatorial than
the pools underneath it all, catching the seemingly endless
runoff, dirty as all get out. When it stops we go outside,
electrified with silvery dampness, and stare down into
the puddles. We see only the sanity of suggestion,
the torn sleeve of time, evidence that we are not
yet ghosts—all echo and ripple and swig.

THE TRILLING WIRE IN THE BONE

The bone broken for luck, scraped
for meat, collected for construction,
gnawed on. The temple of bones.

Bones that finger the shape & texture of other things—
vellum, pudding, papyrus—only to find they, too, have bones:
strawberry bones, mirror bones, horse bones, slot
machine bones snapping back.

A deer-like shape turns its neck
and you can hear the tiny crystals
cracking like fish bones.

The big bones hold their breath.
The tiny bones ballast the void.

Turned over, culled, buried, dug up, desiccating
in the carbon-digging light. Ultraviolet rays.
Bones dislocated. Bones hollowed. Bones stained.
Bones archived, crushed to powder. The wind blooming
bone red. The singing bone.

The translucent bone bodies of the cicadas abandoned.
The alien borderlands: cartilage, tusks, horn, beak, hooves,
their unique hip structure, *a bracelet of bright
hair about the bone.*

Baby bones seafloor-spreading. *The wonderful fish-like
economy of the lower back.* The soft seashell bones of
the ear vibrating: malleus, incus, stapes. Bones sinking, sinking in.

Bones audible, frank, corrupted,
bones splintering in the platform,
in the crackle of the microphone:
the lecture bone.

Bone orchard. Bone box. Bone cellar where
beets gulp vinegar, where marrow pauses.

Bones in the bread, in the backyard, of the swing set.

My buttered, residential, bones,
sugar bones, damn bones, hip bones, crevasse.

Bones boiled in broth.

Bones reconfigured into tools, stegosauruses, jewelry.
Whale bones gathering the desert, *the prayer of
the bone on the beach*. Signature of bones.

Joint pins and hip replacements gravely gripping while
ligaments pull away from the scaffolding,
blood caulking the body, opening the amphitheater socket.

Bones licked with live tissue. Bones connected,
disconnected, wet. The moving, incoherent, bone.

Imposter bones. Electronic spine. Skull captions.

We were subjugated. We were alone.
And the bones began to bargain with the body,
vibrating first the heart.

FALL OF FALLING

Everyone notices the fiery storm of clapping before the fall, leaving in the branches like a light left on long after wildfire has sucked the sockets dry. The whole undivided sky like an eye upon the set, where names are so new they jostle inside of things, things ripe and mouth-watering. What if we could watch it happen—the leaves blush & curdle in the lawyered air, all sugar given over to the blue reckoning of time? What if we could see the earth twirling like an aged ice angel on a shattering rink? Everyone notices the girlish cheeks of autumn, the electricity of severing. But what about the sheeps' blood in the farmers' sinks? The flaunting choreography of clouds crushed into rain? Pumpkin fibers gunked between our fingers, seeds already salted and swallowed? Wherever we carry the corn it disappears. Whichever unmarked trail we take the night follows us, and when we emerge again onto an open road we are marked by the desire to get out. Someone smokes in the middle of it all and the thin strands of smolder drill open the sky. The hawks kill the rabbits but do not eat them. We are intoxicated and damp, but also lost. Count the cotillions. Pile up the dresses that fell from girls' shoulders dramatically, like fucking might transform them. The boys' arms drop to their sides like brackets. Let us admit the ache of harvesting—the apples multiply before throbbing against the cold earth. Let us watch them rot, backward blossom into abstraction. Time tastes the zipper as you pull it, kisses my neck with your mouth, trails your tongue to the 6 o'clock hour of my wet vulva. Time is a tease, a tramp, a bully. Time with its mouth full of dirt, with its hands up our skirts. There are not enough Eves—knees ground into the grit of the evermore sophisticated garden—to devour the evidence.

THE CASE OF LYDIA

Lydia treasures looking
 out from within display
 cases, tenderly
 climbs inside,
 a fawn beside
 mannequins.

She leans against
 glass, tries
 to comprehend
 legs like lost
 roots in the water
 project.

Yellow
 descends
 its butterfaith,
 trammels the ellipse
 in the dark horse
 breath of planets.

Curtains across
 the pedestal dream
 and Lydia swims
 in the solitude
 of observation—
 divinely plotless
 diorama, medium-
 ship.

Eventually
 the glass takes her
 shape, begins
 to slip cellophane
 around her skin—
 Lydia vessel,
 Lydia capillary,
 Lydia Lydia,
 drained Lydia
 but for the real

Lydia who lies down
 inside this thin
 transparent version
 of herself, is unhinged
 by the vim pastoral

of her former body,
can only look
up through her domed
skylight skull,
envy the outline
that cages her—

lowercase Lydia
Lydia gathered
and frozen in
an aquarium of
Lydia

INCIDENTAL LOVE POEM

I step in the water sloughed off your body onto the bathroom floor. I sleep in your stains, wake in your border, eat your leftovers, sweep up your dead skin cells. Your sauces sit in my refrigerator like organs in their transparent, breakable containers. When you are here I hear you cough, stroke your skin as if to keep it taut. We swap colorless, odorless gases and saliva. Our eyes bob in our magnetic faces. When you are elsewhere, I curl like an old photograph trying to raise its dead. I swim in three lakes simultaneously. I part my hair down the middle of my head through the mirror where you untie your face, the sutures undetectable. I think of your body as a plank and a screen, of your soul as a cloud of grasshoppers. My tongue absorbs the salt in your skin, swallows oceans, the giant gyratory seagulls scanning my face, the sun holding my tender pink core together as you do. I finger through your pages, listen to the symbols grind their teeth. Your things congregate in small heaps. They take on significance, crystallize, and I am deep into the damp cavern of idolatry. I put on your shirt, spread peanut butter on toast. In my dreams I fondle your blue glacier, pull hummingbirds from your chest, feel quenched. I admire how your mouth never looks like a dam blasted with carp, how it evaporates in the skeletal light of the hallway. Our gravity is horizontal, palpable as heavy whipping cream. I decorate absence. I pull one of your hairs from my mouth.

THE NESTED OBJECT

this is where shape incubates

the topiary brain—scissored
by shadows: I have never touched
the parrots at cage-distance mutely
swooping in the air

since the elegant filament flickered out
in the forgetting curve. The shell
of things is sometimes enough
to track the tiniest center of

the microscope nearing
indifference: as surfaces give
way, in, color disappears

division is the darling of this time—the apple
garnet then white then brown then the near
absence of atoms

these objects—inflatable pool, stuffed
rabbit, cherry cordial, clarinet—can only be manipulated
in dreams, the lobes lulled in lightmilk: staired
beside the picture window. O, lettuce primped in
plastic satellites,
little house of lemon,
red piano

cupped in the palm of the ocean, everything we do

not keep like heirlooms in the burgundy velvet of our organs—
bell jar; spine lamp—krill staining the sea a similar red,
even then a segmented translucence: our elegy
cannot travel down the diatom breath-hall

*There was an old woman who swallowed a bird,
She swallowed the bird to catch the spider,
She swallowed the spider to catch the fly,
I don't know why she swallowed the fly,
Perhaps she'll sublimate, disperse with value,
the ghost of wholeness absorbed by living
cells like water sinking into any thing*

visualize the voiceless
blood flow,
bone pocket,

the nested object

there are no figurines that heap the form
of my lostyetenduring selves: enormous page, strange
pasture of minute humming, lifeboats dangling
above the terrific leaking, hallways of satchlings,
cartilage clinging to the flung diagram, big dipper
inside the bigger

we are swarming animals, leave
our exuvia as decoy, but our organs
remain canisters

in the sinew nest box:
hush-hush pit, cup of coffee, night
jars, battery, palmed heliotrope, land mines,
dolls insulating the bedroom, gears veiled
inside machinery, reusable space-
craft, time tangled around fingers

Ovipositors dip down into
the meat of fruit, deposit eggs
in the coddle-code of interiors

Sometimes I am conscious
of the sheath thickening

the exit ramp leading only elsewhere,
not out of the conjurer's cloth: dove
then no dove: little spatterings of sameness

I nest myself on this rocky ledge like a sea
-bird married to the sustenance of surfaces,
sun-bevy: held inside this ether, this ozone,
dark ovum of space. If you look
where I linger you will find the hearts I have
harbored, swarming like sardines: the waves
churning the bloodstream, an undercurrent
dragging them back into the depths

of the synaptic cleft

where dreams and whale bones
and all who I have loved: drift
inaudibly by in urns
like cars in a floating city where

a skyscraper trembles inside a skyscraper

EMERGENCY BRAKE

The car will roll down the hill.
Everything you own is disentangling.
Everything falls to the floor around the corner
into the wall. Through the window, a distortion of plains.

The car will roll down the hill.
Everything you own will betray you, tend toward victim.
It is best to unload yourself.
It is best to unload as much as possible.
The car is the first to go, a muffled negotiation.

Finally your skull, heavy thing.

ORPHEUS XXX

In this version you don't look back
and does this mean that I escape into
the light, that we might frolic there?
or that I'm released into the whole-
hearted solitude of being?

You never look back, slip like wet clay,
your arm already around another life,
your Saab in her driveway, your head in the hollow
of her unerring clavicle, your body like any other point
along the dim horizon.

The light presses in all around me
like water. Breath by breath I turn to neon.
We, you & I, are some brilliant unbetrothed interstice:
sunlight & branches & a bird flitting here & then away.
We are the most relevant unreality, the most distant
truth, the glass door of some hell wildly revolving.

I'm not sure exactly what I mean
but I long & long & am lost in the phantom limbs of seeming.

Outside of simple demise we are still susceptible.
Beyond one brink we enter another, the memory
of the last still swallowing our feet like tar.

We attend, now, to our separate lives as if to vines
of tomatoes, the fruit flushed to *its* brink
of bursting. Our gardener wrists are delicate
and ruthless.

Light pours almost through me and I look
like a corpse shuffling among the greenery, snipping.
I see our reflections pooled in the still pond
of the ceramic birdbath.

Looking back is as likely as going forward,
but you never look back. Outcome is inevitable.
Either side of this fence could be myth. I am drowning
in freedom, my augury of birds scattered
as though by gunshot.

We are both living in houses built by others,
and the windows are blinded by their own formality,
the furniture already figments, the fire escape gone,
just gone.

CONTOUR FIGURE ON A CONTOUR FIGURE ON A ROCK

the way the elbow leans on the knee — it could be coming from anywhere, this body or that — it is only when we trace backward to the conjunctions — wrist joint *and* ulna, *if* clavicle, *if* sacrum, coccyx *or* tailbone — that we realize we are looking at one body, presently wrapped in its own evocative pause — the closer I get the less definitive you become — you are a model leaking out of a model, an archetype dunking donuts in your mirror image.

thin red and blue outlines jangle about the body like eighties bangle bracelets, vie for your contour — that final clause that collects you up and says — *here* — to the waitress, lover, interviewer, et cetera with eyes — so who shall win — the blood red rendition or the less permeable blue of you? — which too — cobalt, glum — is its own kind of blood, uninvestigated by anything — swings, stethoscopes, ATMs — outside the body — swirling secretive inside — yet thumbtacked to injury: *anyone feeling blue today?*

your hair is equivocal, seems clamped on, the death clutch of a parasite — like dried icing or lava — we keep backing up — you sit on any rock — your eyes, wet chestnuts in a puddle of pixels — the blur of double-dutch dead-center — stare into the massive arbiter of all of this — space — the mouth cuffs itself like an activist to your image — such dedication to the thin borders that rope us off from everything else — each of us an expensive piece of art — the way your hand is cocked on the jaw, sitting like a dead crab on sand, makes us keep our distance — which means you become clearer by default — but one might find this very suspicious — superficialities — the crab, the hand *playing* dead.

SUNDRESS

The young girl felt like a swing attached to tiny straps that u-turned over her shoulders. She didn't have a waist, but she knew she had the makings of one, her hipbones small omens. Grape was her favorite Fla-vor-ice, and when she pressed the jagged plastic edge against her lip it dripped across her chin and into the violets on her dress, staining the fabric like a bruise. When she smiled her teeth were a calendar of plums, incomprehensible. Everyday, the young girl looked up into the pornography of clouds and wished to be a new girl. She didn't know why the neighborhood boys leered at her, but she had a hunch that it had to do with the future. She looked away from the overture of eyes, practiced being the girl she would like to be, dragged the translucent flowers and gauzy white cloth with her, through the grass, in pursuit of crickets, her clavicle a compass. Her hair was a tangle of insurrection; her hands unfolded in front of her like they were each their own animal. There was her and the dress that held her, her and the dress that hid her. There was the wide world and this pretty semi-transparent cotton, among other things, between her nerves and the gnarly nest of growth. The hem divided her at the knees, bobbed in and out as if sewing her to sunlight, the whole yard fastened with lemon thread.

PET

The room begs to be further inhabited, to have a sun moving in its plaster gut. At moments a decorative urge, the parrot bright and entertaining. At others—a death cry, everything so still and lasting as sandpaper, burning through to your bones with that stillness, where even you are armature, near-couch. You would not be alone. Your love would transfer directly through your hands. Someone pets the linoleum, then you. You pet your lover's head, smooth "I love you" into your child's hair like amniotic fluid, like cellophane around a dome of chopped carrots.

The Maine Coon sits on top of your refrigerator. You are fond of the unusual form following you as if it was your motor. As if an inexact circle was the shape of commitment. A shape you tend. Small box, cylinder, beak of noise, trace of liquid. How it curls in your lap, is impatient in your lap, slithers around your neck, licks your face, tracks up and down your arm, fidgets in your cupped palms, wants in. Even as its eyes swivel, cut through with an alarming precision. Even as we move, like them, constantly. We are hemmed in. The Dalmatian yanks on the leash, cuts off his own airway. Invisible in the pitch-black apartment, they still see, see nothing. A car drives by, headlights flooding their eyes, saucers filled before falling into silence.

Only the fish remain at a distance, flash like memory through the tank. The basking light burns all night, as in a driveway of twenty years ago, illuminated nets echoing our hooks, mayflies amassed at the surface. A tan Chihuahua with three legs hops up the stairs. A python presses like SPAM against the glass. No one knows why the dove started to pull its feathers out, reveal its pocked skin. The frog doesn't hop. Stuttered gerbil. Shape is no promise. Our hands twist, more or less away. We live in a petting zoo. Touch everything you can get your mind on. Feel for the goat. Don't be stopped by his hyphenated eyes. Don't just touch. Trail that touch, pet—slowly, slowly. He, too, is fascinated with disparity and freedom, rolls a green ball black back and forth in the grass with his nose. Can you hear the whimpering through the packed dirt, through your bent wrists, petting? You pet the carpet where you once slept, and it curls at the edges.

IS THERE ANYTHING LEFT IN THE LEAVES TO SPEAK OF

Trees hymn the architecture
with slight movements.

Over there students with the heft of books
tugging them toward the earth.

A quiet wind whips,
and lone-together trees plug into other-than,
weightless coins dropped, hit&run
snip of autobiography.

We are as dunked under splat, near-wrecked
as nature, but don't rush to grab up these loose
apostrophes, though in each leaf is the pattern
we seek in sentences, the cliffhanger writ out—
that we do live varicose, falling, golden.



We blow machinal, or pull tines through tainted
lawns, out nature from nature, though soon the scene
will be burnt shut with frost, burst open as blank
documents, white with gorgeous interference,
all our effort toward the pretty punched out.



Electricity flits amid the branches, and we are quiet
startled onlookers, though horsepower is also in us,
breaks out as muscular hallelujahs, gasps, applause.

This is when the birds lift up in unison like a plume
of smoke, and the colors of summer drain from the meadow
behind the factory which knows no seasons.

You read the landscape's lesson for the umpteenth time:
letting go is natural and inescapable.

Everything has a talent for leaving except you, who mourns
how the light slides out of the window, how the birds take
their songs with them. You know they will return,
but the knowing never turns into trust.

Our greenhouses glow as if they'll survive our hunger.



Breathing's such a battle when air is a treacle
of *was*, goulash of concrete and bookish
things. Foliage falls through, and before we know it,
we are beholden, combination-locked.

Of course, nobody knows the numbers
and it would take a lifetime to turn
out the answer, or turn over the equation in which a duplicate
of the answer is locked.



Dear Fall,

At least *carte blanche* the buddy next to me, who has spent all day igniting
your hectic math.

For me, I only ask that my face, like the expression of trees, is blown apart
a bit by the wind.

THE LEAVING

pumpkins hushful and heavy in fields swell through vines
 that tunnel & fidget underground and leaves fall
 like table skirts, stillness scattered all at once from its frame

the chain-link fence, the spokes of bicycles, the river's ceiling,
 glasphalt—all doused in autumn's rum: crimson, chartreuse, russet

to be under the right tree at the right time, when a little wind comes
 crackling—as if that simple gesture might blur my life back

once I helped my brothers pile leaves on top of me as I lay
 on my back, arms raking wildly at the air and ground, my eyes tightly closed
 until the commotion ceased and I was entirely under, the smell of decay and dirt
 pouring through my body. I opened my eyes and saw hundreds of beams
 of light loosened in the leaves around me, the world beyond my masked breath
 glistening, and I felt for the first time the joy of being buried,
 of disappearance

now, I drive I-81 South, alone—Mack trucks, median strips,
 my mind loud as locusts, thoughts of war, of work, of therapy, which rest stop,
 which end, a loved one with brain cancer. The windows are cracked
 and the wind hisses, amplifies the smell of upholstery

if, only for an instant, I could be consumed by the dropping trinkets of trees,
 embrace erasure, but the foliage flickers by, the trees bright & translucent as damselfly wings,
 the whole spectrum strung like fish from a wire

AFTERNOON ETHER

Mold spores land on wet surfaces,
and for three hours I remove this evidence,

disinfect the bathroom with chemical pine,
wipe away our wandering animal hair.

On the shelf, I dust the clotted memory of mollusks,
press the lightning whelk shell to my cheek and it threads

through me like a pozidriv-head screw made of nothing:
and saltwater swells in around my organs,

fills up my body and spills out into the whole of
Eau Claire, river spent on river, swallows dipping

down, just above the new aquarium of the room,
the house buckling, papers and furniture turned

planetary, mute. I am split, underwater, wearing
a bracelet of fish bones, wet sand filling up my ankles.

Through the kitchen window I see an ATM
floating by, the ether locked inside it, wet.

Somehow, through the instantaneous, beyond the now
folded garage door, I hear a car pull into the ocean,

and my heart heaves itself back to shore, crowns,
retracts, and crowns again, splitting the linoleum.

Outside, the engine is cut, the minnows
are gone, and the sun is the oligarchy that perforates.

I feel my body in the shape of a shell,
hot metal cooling under my hood,

my fingerprints a whorl of branches, the bathtub blank.

BINDWEED // REMEMBERING

Necklace bindweed which glitters and cools.
 Necklace bindweed which hoists my joints through
 my ribs, felons the simple custody of our remembering.

How will I this hiatus? How will I this back which I cannot
 see without mirrors? How will you whisper when the wind
 has divorced itself from bluebirds?

Remember my fishnets, my snapdragons, my light-
 bulb hands, cable of hair that copes the living
 room. Now tomato atoms cluster in the backyard, shiver
 in the remorseless nuptial of where else. Children
 of the shorn. Vaulted voices. Small unfolding cabinets.

Which erupt. Which thicken. Which snag.



Now remembering bulbs our nuptial hands;
 wind glitters our joints—bindweed, bindweed

which fishnets tomatoes in light, snags

Bluebirds cluster in backyards, mirror atoms
 whispering hiatus. How remorseless unfolding.
 How divorced the snapdragons from voice.
 Will I remember the children, the felons, my own
 ribs hoisted into custody? Cable which I cannot
 see, which cools through a small thicket of hair?

Which room of where else?
 Which room will you back into?

Cabinets of necklaces. Shiver of necklaces.
 How, without, will I simplify this?
 The shorn. The vaulted. I which when itself
 wills from *my—our*, which in the copse
 has erupted—

my my my that the living



Tomatoes without hands
 will the children to remember
 necklaces of snapdragons, necklaces of voice

that bluebirds weed
and bind to light. Small vaulted ribs.
Simple joints. How I cannot shiver.

We wind their custody through the copse,
whisper our unfolding.

Rooms erupt into living hiatus.

If we cluster the nuptial in the backyard,
will a felony of atoms glitter past our remembering?

Bindweed the bulbs that otherwise divorce?

My fishnets cool back into me. Now into you.
Will you hoist me, our cabinets of shorn hair?

How else will we cable the room

which cools? Which itself thickens with remorse?
How I lessen. When and where and which snag. See—

INTERSTICE

A night passes inside small car doors, their empty handles confronting our hands. The precincts of everything evaporate. The canvas of the body unstretched & trudging backward through the visible corridors of the cornea, into a former, less rented foyer of yourself, where you can't even remember the body, let alone its religions, but what remains are these ethereal steps of spine, with which we climb into each other, into our disappearance, our shudder, our slight song. A seed exploding in blackless dark. We wake with a dusting of sugar around the mouths of our pores, a whisper about the body.

SLOW SAUNTER OF WITHER

A cow's ears can turn in any direction, and the field
is full of those flickering radar, small curtains

of flesh. We are an acoustic location, a passing thing.
Our car gulps in the grass air, is pulled by an under-

current. Dependence like a taste, the dark drawbridge
of night folding form down into nestle, wind rattling

the hollow half-note of mailboxes. The chest
floor opens upon the earth, slow saunter of wither

and hook bone, verb between *sun* and *graze*, *sun* and
subsequently. No moo. No matter. Who or what was

the first to look toward the teat of another animal and feel
thirsty? Did they also feel suspended? Sleepy? Cosseted?

Guilt or indignity for the theft? I am, even now, startled
by their calmness, heart girth purring like a small fan.

Milk teetering in warm pockets, and us nearby—
continuous intravenous drip. Dream of clotted cream,

sinewy lullaby. Water to wine—that's showmanship. Water
to milk—that's love and peril. A marriage that should raise

a cathedral up around their pin bones, sacred the space
so to take is to need: dire roast. But instead we

forklift the living into the living, harvest what we can.
News reports recall meat is piling up in school districts.

Freezers. Hangs from our bodies. When the cows lie down
in unison, we better run for cover. I try, but my feet are full

of meat, heavy against the moving vehicle on the moving earth,
milky clouds amassing above us like a scavenging.

ARCHAEA

flushed quietly out, so quietly

cut at the ankles, tethered to a tree
in the dark specimen jar, carried

off, eaten glistening cherry,

correspondent, spoon tuna out of
aluminum, moist flakes pull off in
one piece like a chemise, the zebra's
cutis the horse swarmed the kangaroo
tail all that remains of the kangaroo

after a billion years will suddenly collapse

into no kangaroo but the specimen,

the jar filling with dust and brine,

we are the bright luminous hydrogen
clouds and prominences, the extremophile,
gulping toxic skirts nerveless anything debris

blood platelets under the swarm

of ants, the aluminum cloud closing
both its mouths, a tube jellyfish
slipping like a spoon into a can

digestion a light show of the bottomless

HULL

after *Egon Schiele*

my hand a small
piracy on your chest.
your arms splint
of light & effluvia.
how mounting
seems an answer.
trains have cut
through forests
of voice but here
our pubis glints
like chrysalis. we
disappear in back
-ground. swarm.
cluster. I hazard
the knots of you,
cling to your contour—
thin skin so as to
gather. all the pink
parts of us glow,
plumb inward,
like the postponed
anchors of water
hyacinths. nothing
overt as bone, cells
lurking. in what
truth could we float?
your shoulder is a cut
of meat I would marry;
I place my ear against
your back, hear
an inner form I can
almost comprehend.
bravely our masturbation
unlocks the combination
of diary hips, gestures
toward a juncture
that invents solitude.
our rib cages keep
pressing into each other,
as if to nurse, to disperse,
to come undone.

HAWAII OF MOURNING

Imply the body to something beyond the body, from ground to floating, from the chemical swap of spit to thoughts wraithlike in their delicate coats. But enter the televisual, the virtual, the skin skinned, the sun neon in this cave. If only the fleeting, the pop-up, the chatting would drop like concrete into our cabinets of tissue. If only the copies stopped reproducing, and we pick ourselves up from the plush carpeting, rewind our knees.

Light hums in the belly of the machines, myelin scarred and unable to pass messages through our bus stops' toxic skirts, end stops, camouflage. 9/11 tendered, carceral, a skin with pores so deep they fit planes through and come crashing down, backbone through facades, surfaces on the verge, surfaces that distend like over-watered lawns. Gloss the seemingly spontaneous event.

The children freeze at their darling desks. We try to pry their fingers open, but the Play-doh in their palms warms. Click on Suicide Girls to see salty skin spread boldly over its scaffolding, stick to its origin like spilled glue. Audiences grope 9/11 like this: dislocated unease, hawaii of mourning. A lap bar falls across the gut. Intestines wind like a rope into a basement. Close the door.

Pull back the skin to prove I am full of the working wet equipment of space. Chemical embrace, nitty-gritty. Blow-up dolls dreaming of a blood theater. Each bomb an albatross necklace, each cluster a communication. Put this pinecone in your pocket. This is a challenge. The seams seem into you.

ISCHEMIC CASCADE

don't plan anymore. how wholly the city floods
with electricity. yet the body is most alive when un-
plugged, voltage centered in meat. who may
well enter. we enter. we go into the emergency
room, babies blooming in the linoleum vault.
the stain relocates: body—cloth—brain—brain
—brain. limbs are rulers of memory, the conservatory
of self closed with arctic blueing. $\frac{1}{3}$ of all heart attacks
are silent as snow against grass, the intricacy at once erased.
the flow stilled in the stem like wine. somewhere beyond
the measurements the bridge sways. the attendees panic
in their tending. the universe originates inside something
small, but not me. the tools and bulbs purse. you must be
attentive: my hand has touched everything.

KNEE-DEEP

The body – god box – holds
 the stuffing, blunt-winded plot,
 until it doesn't

tissue of tiny details
 soaking up gestures of wedding
 parties, neurons, steering wheel,
 sugar bowl, the solarium

the nectar ebbs from the design

an autopsy, the openings filled with liquids,
 already locked-out of the house, embarrassed

The river bank has been dented—
 material ghost, the knees lock-kneed, knee-deep

What is left is fact and its antihistamine

Carry it to the river and drop it in. Watch it give in
 like a vocabulary greased, the fish unlocked by their own

removable beauty

Echo the ocean of you when you (carrying the description)
 are gone. So swam the surplus, blindingly bright, away

HONEY ME, HONEY HUNTING

I. Head

in the inner hive, total darkness

seven thousand hexagonal facets
affixed to its be/e-face, the mosaic blooming

while ours singulars in a locket of bone,
the neck the root of possibilitybut

riven with sight: diehard mirror,

committed buckets—and this, this
barrels around at a knock; even

invisibility is registered, and I
look through the peephole with
thrill and horror, though mostly

with those buckets again, hungry
for light, for your body against

the night lulling a bell in the blackness,
proving it's not whole, but you are not

there, just my head in its leaning-tarp.

II. Thorax

if only we could walk, fly, & sting
without our pitch-dark firebrains,

but traces of loving gum
in the pollen-basket of our optic nerve,
our ordinary nerve, as if useful,

honeyready, I walk repeatedly

toward the door that neither nor,
is not a gift or message. We met

in the sun which I suspect

inspires that mid-flight mating,
uncalculates the cunning rooms.

I want to believe in this bigger picture
you whisper into the receiver, this fate

you formula over my lips, but

drones die in the act of mating
and women have been paid to hold
horse penises in their mouths.

III. Abdomen

near the nerve ganglia: the honey
stomach, near the aorta: wing muscles;

bar here, where our eyes, nose & ears congregate
around the brain, the heart measurable

expanses away, desert of blood buried
beneath the glistening amber of our s/k/in;

hark the right atrium collects the poor—
gazebo of stingless bees, debeaked birds,
ceilingless floors, mouthless humans.

“Honey me a song, an avocado, a walk,”
I say to the diaphanous fossils, the detached

words like wings, literal wings, falling
flakes from that nowhere place of
concoction inthesky

I stick my tongue in—the future
tastes like the motion of

oranges tossed on the bed
around me to suggest I am

edible, pulped, segmented inside—
in the hide, hidden, the honey den

—and before the form is truly,
my heart more than a swarm of cells

the hands hover, dip down, hunt
for the dream of autotomy,
that toxins & matter drift

MATTER-OF-FACT

Umbrellas open inside the body—can you hear the sad music from hand-painted furniture, the clamor of teeny apparatuses: tweezers, eyelash curler, razor, or further:

scalpel, staples, stitches—the whirl of shopping carts pushed through space into the echoing basement of the brain. One woman encourages another to *get in shape* as if there is

an answer to the body—rhombus? star? chandelier? What word of mouth, paraphrase of ligaments, leaves us half-whole, entirely hole? The only channel coming in

is a soiree of fragmentary debutantes, spread sheer across our skin like sweet&sour glaze—but in the dark of flood lights those beauties button up their monologues,

wish away their cut&pastiness, cry truckload after truckload into Iowa, an ever more distant self. What fête, what adieu is there in throwing one's body back into a black hole,

light eaten by absence, leaving nothing but the sputum of light? This disappearing act has gone too far—into our DNA, which will eventually grow hips, parentheses

that suggest the body irrelevant, and there is nothing left to do, but step out of the gauze, empty anesthesia into the streets, and watch the tarmac go numb—feel the skin

tingle under the fat sun? the untidy rain? We don't melt—and this is how we learn to love our other -worldly warehouses, our flesh so near

it is the only clarity.

VANISHING TENSE

Fruits are tweaked to tang
 like other fruits—tangelo, grapple, jostaberry,
 plumcot—hybrid rapture at our fingertips—
 Vegetables plumped colossal
 while pixels multiply, scurry like silverfish,
 then glaze. Kiosks migrate inward.
 Fumes douse the air. One thesis brandishes cutlery,
 another cuts. Wires dip down the throat, hood
 the plosives as connective tissue grows
 on the sides of buildings.

Here, organs seem residual, romantic even.

Light is the lake we remember through,
 jogging our memory with each undulation, our teeth conical
 and interlocking, our backs momentarily
 dorsal, no bones, small inconspicuous openings,
 the dangers glittering & spinal as fluorescent bulbs,
 the county line drawn over the sutures of our skulls.

A dolphin's grayish back blends with the dark of depth,
 its whitening belly with the bright surface of the sun-laced sea
 while we stand in the foyer, eyes wet, waiting to be let in

where genetics & scanners & peroxide have not yet burned
 through our bodies, made them transparent as surgical gloves,
 the heart beating in its gelatinous vanishing tense, the chambered
 nautilus knowingly curled in on its prehistoric cache, light leaking
 into its eyes, our arms full of measured solids.

In the tampering we are saved, sliced off, repeated,
 the images & information of our images & information dropped
 like dollops of cream into our common, cyclopic sense,
 our faces paper panels spreading like lily pads across surface.

We sit at the table dumbfounded by the intimacy we feel
 with meat, how long we stay with the gristle on our plates.

THE LAWN AGLOW

Finally the sun has come out again.
 The slatted roofs are silently warming,
 small mossy things tingling in the pith.

Poppy after orange poppy after poppy
 the earth laces its lack of ambition into
 the air as if to bind it. The cat cannot be

convinced out of the bed of tall allium.
 Who can blame it for bathing in its body's
 island of warmth? What amniotomy

of light. Cohesion ruptured. Shade & glare
 absorbing walls and birds then slipping away.
 Oubliette where everything emerges. Porches

of fragment & leeway. The warm hose snakes
 around the foundation, drips tepid metallic-tasting
 water into the soil that hugs the house in place

like a strange uncle. Get up thermal thing.
 Follow the flickering where ants lick
 the pink pink lids of peonies.

TOUCH ME ALSO, GODDESS OF INEVITABILITY

Or watch how long I sit in the bathtub waiting to ripen,
transfigure, transform into anything else really, something slippery and barely geometric.
Let me be an unbeautiful beast with a heavy heart and eyes as wide as the night.

Let me have no taste for song or salt, no cause, no boat in my brain I keep
rowing even though it just knocks against the dock.

The filmy indifferent water looks like amnios, no? It seeps into my body until the skin is
waterlogged, buckling. How long before this version gives way, dissolves completely?

I have no talent for fortune, cannot read the baby spiders traversing the droplets on the
fogged window behind the shampoo. I just can't stop seeing how small they are, imagining
the nearly nonexistent spool of their breathing.

But you, Ananke, you know when to paint whiskey onto the barn and let the horses lick,
when to let scatter a scene with a whipping boy, a dazzler, an outlaw, when to let go of
a girl who cannot caramelize a kiss, when to consent to murder or an eternity of birds,
whether the bullet grazes or sinks. You know when to let the landscape burn away and when
combustion belongs to a single soul about to board a bus in Indiana.

I have tried to know these things, to go with my gut, to be an arrow that organizes what it
passes through, but I always end up with sadness upon me like a lace of pesticide laid over a
field of fruit.

Still, I feel another me inside of me struggling for a way out from under the endless
compulsory ruin. Or maybe the tiny spiders trapped in the catastrophe of my waiting are
already me on their multiplied way elsewhere, to a world of diaphanous invention and quiet
design.

Ananke, you know when to whisper into the animals' ears: *go ahead, eat them. They're yours.*

Is it wrong for me to want to be near that? To be touched by such force, such certainty? To
not have to single out a life. There's not a hesitation in your body. You are all wind and next-
door-neighbor-knocking. I see how you just get on with it, interrupt a chest with a sword,
arrhythmia, love. You know how to bring a city to its knees, how to discombobulate bodies
with rubble and smoke, how to wait well beyond when the sirens stop and breath sinks into
the soil and there are no questions left upon the cold earth.

I am lonely. My body is lonely. I sit outside and let the wind tangle my hair. I understand
that this is nothing like a relationship. I understand that relationships take time and hack it
into bits. I understand that while we're not looking time slithers back together, wins.

I understand that caring about relationships is still imperative. I understand my alternatives
are limited: money, success, things on their own, collecting snow globes, darkness, having
fuller lips, youth, money, death, death's big triumph, other endings, a lawn, escape.

Touch me, dear goddess of inevitability, with your giant mouth. Let me inside of that mouth where it's warm with ferment and finishing.

Tell me the next person to come upon this apartment will find the bathwater beautiful and the glorious cables of cobwebs strung across the air like a note will be read. Tell me there will be translators for this sort of thing.

FATAL LIGHT AWARENESS PROGRAM

Even the birds cannot avoid such reflection,
the perils of daylight brushed so bluntly over things—

tiny bones
big world

the infrastructure as much box
as highway, the guardrails crumpled
the bodies up against,
intimately dying

asphalt, vein, distance arched
always under us

a side mirror lost in the brush

At night the artificial lights draw
the birds, by day
the inweave of trees, cumulus,
all that is bluish & giving
way

O that the glass might open
up, give us room,
that we could marry the mirage, stay whole
as seeds swallowed

O spectroscopist—
if only our radius, our hipbone would not lead us there

INCOMMENSURABLE

The empty silo is begging for light. The mint is gone, though the trellises and the shop of replicas remain. Instead there are orange berries bursting like lottery numbers, shelves that lead tchotchke, whatnot, into sediment.



Polygons grow old in the shadows, grow tentacles in the margin, begin to think of shape as something more complex than itself, something more like a giant squid washed up on shore, the pressure of matter replaced with the pressure of light. The loss of medium too much to bear.



Pet the polygon. Toss back the squid! Leave the ocean on because it is the only television for me, and you are the medium, the undercurrent, the single frequency I understand: blue wash, blinding.

MY TONGUE FEELS LIKE A WILD ANIMAL

I sit upright and listen to a lecture
 about body-soul dualism, God and Darwin
 and Descartes mentioned so many times
 it seems a nursery rhyme; meanwhile a sea
 forms in the groove of my tongue,
 nearly overflows my small unlockable mouth
 and my tongue twitches as if coming alive,
 rolls its thick pink body against the felt
 ceiling of its cage, and then splits my face to feed—
 I am the watering hole, the geyser, the gulf
 I cannot return to. My eyes drop wet ropes
 down the shaft between us.

It lifts its head and I can see a dark underbelly,
 swollen purple knots nearly bursting loose.

Which end is its origin? Where cherry lifts up into
 the air like a sensor or where it slips like a blind
 snake down the hatch of my throat? I can barely
 get a glimpse of it but I sense the quilt stillness
 of starfish prowling about my mouth— tip, blade,
 dorsum, root, body.

Though leashed it seems to lead, my body
 now nothing but secretion, merely the place
 where the lingual lives. It's an in-house baptism.
 How else to reckon all the fleshy fruit everywhere
 bursting from zilch, the dumb universe?

What is scattered might be gathered in the catch
 and release of air, in the patient explosive syllable
 repeated—ah ah ah ah-ha. So I am its shepherd,
 though it is no sheep.



Writhe and pant through the aquamarine night.

What can I say? It wants what it wants,
 ravenous bundle of cables—licorice, cream,
 bubble gum, the pinkest dampest parts of others,
 brine of the viscera. Let us in.

It sees the world as supine test strip, slip and slide
 of meaning and shock. Knock knock on the nodes of
 Ranvier. Give me the hot moist insides of things

or give me death. Give me songs that seed ellipses,
 that run our tongues over gravel. It moves
 like the magnetic eye of a panther, licks along
 the creases of the world. It's true: *I'm* hungry for
 dumplings, juice, inner ears, remedy, umami, nipples,
 apples, psalm. I try to stay calm, roll down a window,
 but the world wafts in and my tongue goes after it—
 licking legs and knives and lollipops. I am breathless,
 my hair sweat-soaked and tangled. I could bite
 my tongue, but it's got nerve, thrashes, arches its spine,
 breaks free.

It cannot be trusted. It says one thing and I mean
 another. Besides, it's tied to splatters of sense,
 a nozzle disappearing into a car, and the car sputtering
 into a crowded town—Welcome
 to the Tower of Babble.

When I'm not listening, it floats a valentine
 to other tongues, and the next thing I know I'm mouth
 to mouth, resuscitated.

Operatic going-to-town. Smooth slathering.
 I want to say something to let you know I am
 here, but my tongue is trying to tie itself to yours
 so as to not drift off. Or is it trying to devour yours?
 It's a tongue-eat-tongue world. Even now
 some tongue turns a bit of cow tongue over
 in its mind. Even now someone is silenced,
 someone glossed.

My tongue gazes into your tongue's face as
 if staring into its own for the first time.
 But kissing can only carry on for so long.
 Eventually it backs down, realizes it can't
 untether itself from me.

But sometimes it curls up and sleeps like a baby
 in my maw—desert fox; giant squid; parrot; urchin.
 Something is on the tip, but it's not what you think.
 Mostly, kittens mew and lick each other's ears, and I fall
 into the gaping muteness of flowers. The quiet sun
 covers us, low lilt of a lullaby in the distance—

THE ENGINE

Elegy for a Bus Driver

The door opens. The door closes. The sun somewhat perforates our profiles. Whoosh that we were a collective. You keep your eye on the road, let the rearview mirror transcribe your body as backlog. I look at him. He looks at her. She looks at her. They look at me. But you, you are left out of this loosening and thickening, seatbelt keeping your chest intact, gauzing against shoulder and into bus. My skirt spills, leaves me legless; my hands like fruit in my lap. Always outside floods us. You take our coins, drive us across the river. We are distributed and/or alone. You are yet again pale with restraint, your heart and the engine twins vying for which will consume the other first. When you bend the body wherein my body lurches I sway like a reed in a storm, know that we are caskets-in-waiting. Now is the time for someone to say they want off.

ARDENTIA VERBA

the ocean laps toward shore, but land puts nearly its whole
body underwater as if to live there, where touch decides

we know nothing

each medusa an organ disguised as debris
the autocracy of the photon disperses, the diluted

light of the moon returns to the surface, gently tosses
tulle over a language of living tissue, the distinction

between animal and location all but illegible, organized sea
water amasses at the edge of breath to feed—mass

ascension—radiant inkling of asterisms—in hydrostatic
spirals deep below where the ocean hears the heart

of the earth churning, urchins spill their sperm & eggs
while jellyfish light up the sensory bath—instruments

in the submersible bleached blue—mate & prey in sheer
incandescence, luminosity a lure, lines of stinging cells

billowing

THE FURTHER WE WADE OUT

You have come to the shore [and] there are no instructions.

—Denise Levertov

Look here where we limn the shore by the thousands,
laze away the day under an intercom of sun, let the collapse

of water lull us to sleep, and you easily see wealth and languor,
that we are wildly pleasure-seeking, honey bees lapping

at a vast trough of nectar, cans of coke glinting like altarpieces
in the sand; But look closer and see this: that we are together

the children of spheres, lying out under a tangle of clouds
with the persistent hope that the dear distant scattering orange

animal will touch us with its warm tongue like a mother
cleaning her offspring after birth. Each time it disappears

into the sheet music of movement, we stare like kids
who have lost their bright yellow ball in the brush, wait

for the world to push it back into our palms, golden layer
cake our everyday. And it does, roll out each time like a new idea,

a yolk. The motes around the sandcastles slowly swallow
the castles down, leave only the glistening subdivisions of light.

The sand affectionately covers us with convection, glitters
across joints. We wade out into circularity, our knees going under,

our mouths O-ed in eager anticipation for the next wave to fold
us into the diameter of an undivided world. Our earthen eyes

reflect the sun's imperative—pour out another ocean. We are
momentarily breathless, rich green seaweed ringing around our bodies—

dispatches from the deep bell of beneath—sea swell like heart swell.
The further we wade out, the less distinct we become, seeds scattering,

making the horizon less linear. Seagulls scavenge, leave the carcasses of
shellfish strung like syllables on the beach. And we emerge, our lips

salted, the hair on our bodies beaded like the luminous strands of
a sonogram, speechless but aglow.

THE BODY IS A NEST OF PINS

The body is a nest of pins
to stitch itself to sky—

roughhewn hem that lets birds in and is still

prone to piers, lets drop anchor
after ghost anchor :: skiffly one—

The body is an animal, waist-caged
like a canary :: diagram of light and getaway.

The body is an untilled field shot
through with weed
 and wild; time afloat in onyx
aperture :: eyes, tremulous night :: sight—

isles submerged in a darkened pond.

The body is the ideology of God :: joint and
 marrow

and sparrows in chimneys to remind us :: permeable
is each thing, and we :: *things*

in which other things are repeated :: the whole
world caught in silver nets of tissue and re-erected :: forms
 without form, but felt formly—

Echoes electrify our less hollow chests—sigh, kiss.

The body is a gathered curve collapsing
upon earth :: swoon or faint; *Ravage* as a way

of speaking— everything eaten
down to scintilla, anklebone, bolt. Encyclopedic wind

roils into us, sings amorously of zero

in our glassy throats :: message
after message swallowed—

But maybe the body is most lace
:: S.O.S. from one universe to another :: or a confession—

blunder, love.

SUNSPOTS

red spills from my nose, from small
 linear openings, gash, shredded cuticles, vagina,
 spreads out over my eye—a quiet dangerous lace—
 claiming the vitreous pasture of assumption,
 marking the ever-edits of my bulk. Nests of pink
 and plum form near the surface. A net emanates
 from the body, almost divulges the tenor of loss.

to suggest no architecture can jell without light;
 blood swims inside, but bleeds outward toward
 the sun's ongoing magnetic moment, seems
 to want out of here like a teenager on a spree
 toward contamination.

sometimes I even taste it in my mouth

am reminded that I am a puncture of fractions
 that accrete toward a whole, that gather around
 openings like bright lipstick. Elsewhere black holes
 assemble away. I watch the liquid rise its diatribe
 into shape, then exceed and trickle—immigrant
 hieroglyphics of swarm. The blood jostles
 inside its own cell.

love at first wrapping, liquescent kaboom

so that the girl who grips her own wrists like celery,
 cuts through the uncanny seamless, is asking to undergo
 further faster amendments, to evaporate, even incompletely,
 into the air we breathe, to make a sound by letting
 out the living from the living

zombie particles aloft

CONSANGUINEAN

countless things float in a séance of water,
 irrigate cohesion
 (though each, also, a lesion
 in the ether of sheen)

the water not yet touched
 or named, I trust
 its solvency/heat index/meaning even if

it remains opaque/dense/saline,
 not anything downright as a reflecting pool, a birdbath, but
 some sort of quantum entanglement between you and me

flux folded in
 unfolds
 fragility
 scaffolding & light (lux that crams the eyes,
 the unembroidered properties)—deep sea life, the bells of jet propulsion
 stinging

water (death by water)

everything was haunted

(pools, lakes)/diagrams of the errant organ
 the support system and mutiny of everyday objects
 (their electron clout) & the sometimes
 terror of the inanimate—diorama, miniatures, blind trinket, the souvenir floating
 off

the shelf, all whatnot withstanding beyond our lives, perhaps, terrifyingly, forever
 glass, relationships
 lost in language
 cruelty (our level of attendance—
 kiosk or junkyard,
 quarry or church): god & crowds & butter from one point source

slowly slowly the glaze
 the blueing print dead center, forms flailing
 sugar amassed
 at the surface—haptic (phew) interference

I swallowed some dated sun
 rain through the hole in our Pantheon heads
 I tapped the Lladró, stomped my hearts, collected shells how long
 I cannot count
 please, with whatever epoxy works, the mesh our only body

FOUR

it wasn't to be foreseen
this chance assembly—
our four hands some
hindu god over the raw
fish so that I think—what if
I put my hand inside
your hand, not the titillate-
courtesy of holding, but
hand-in-hand, my hand
swallowed by yours, your
hands filled with antecedent—
matryoshka hands; what you
touch I touch
you reach across the table
to touch the ghosts of
my former hands and I feel
anticipation burn in
our bloody double tissue
like the second coming
of some other christ—
tinderbox
your desire twice over.
and while we're fucking
I imagine the whole structure
collapsing down around us,
everyone undone in the
stream of headlights pouring
from the river's edge.

STORAGE

The baffled translation of souvenirs. The other lives we've shed like mayflies risen out of one kind of breathing into another, grade school exuvia, vehicular middle life—all trinket gowns thrown away, and this simply by being in time. River gallop, epochs, years, seasons, ice suddenly suffocating the macadam and then drifting. The curtains are tied back, but sway in the draft, faintly disintegrate. We keep our things in boxes, piles, bags. The basement is racked with our former selves. dawn. Before-dawn dawn. I am matroshkya, but cannot contain my inner dolls, only the traces of her in plastic storage bins. And with her and her, then and then—mixed tapes curled in on themselves like the secret of ammonite, knowing they are pre-post-matter. Spooling the silent z-spin of time. We amass these evermore wraithlike things because we think it is important to keep in mind the bodies we have carried, the hands we have held, actions vestibuled and written into cloth. We think we will go back, page through these tectonic shells—geography tests, action figures, letters that drowned us in inversion, bits of colored plastic. Flotsam that rises only in our hands, splayed out on the living room floor like fossils that cannot be reconfigured into a dinosaur, a dinogirl, a diagram of everything.

The ink fades in the dark like a live thing.

Sometimes I fantasize about such a whole spool, a string strung out of me like a spider's web since my birth, something that has tracked my every move, can show me at satellite-distance the shape I have made in the world with my movements. Maybe it looks like a constellation with a discernible outline—lotus, frying pan, mythic body, goat. Or maybe my wanderings are so small that they make only a small dark circle, like a pile of deep purple yarn. Placenta. Filigree stills me in its center of doubling back.

CUL DE SAC SONNET

We drag the mattress into the night.
Hour of duration and mulch. Stomata
opening. Dandelions sift moonlight
through yellow tendril-skirts, clavata

swelling the horizon. To remember
the house, just feet away, is difficult.
Electricity hollows the inside ember
like quiet hammers of demolition, jolt

of magnetism. How it is a barb
of emptiness that holds us down. Lust
for mineral beds, thick debris, the arb-
bitrary steaming fractures. We trust

the sudden animal arc of our hipbones,
the androgyne bloom of subsoil moans.

LOVE LITIGATES LIKE THIS:

sugar sugar sugar go go
go sheet sheet sheet

I dip my felt-tip face
to your page and let all the ink in me run
out, leave a dark & rebel stain.

The heart beats so bloodily,
so why can't we feel the blood along the arteries,
the perpetual massage of living?

We talk with the pulp of fruit
in our mouths through the chain-linked
fence of our faces, quaint the ceremony.

Beauty persists, you remind me,
and the little moons in me chuckle,
tug at the intricate rug of ocean that is
your heart, immense serenity & torrent vast.

In my dreams my gypsy
emotions are pumping gas, preparing
to look for you, some deeper truth, away
from this sexual grind of glimpses.

This morning I woke with your voice,
but then, I opened my eyes & it drifted as if
realities are only made of corneal playthings –
Your voice is at least ten swallows
emerging from a chimney.

I have never in all my poeticizing
produced or erased a piano, and yet, when you
say something, suddenly, tangibly, I can feel
the piano press in all around me as if I were born
in it all along. I move, and despite myself, a key twists
out a sharp note, a sustained note –
the crescendo comes.

At night when your fingers drum on your chest
in a small incision of light, you remind me
of my own imminence.

My dependency clinks & chatters its teeth. Can you hear
its minute vocabulary of *come*? This is just to say:
I pledge allegiance to your maverick canon,

your anthro-apology, your peculiar thirst.

It's a rather small church—
just the revered-one and the reverer.

[SALVAGED IN ASUNDER]

were it not for the shifting
 blues in lakes dark sky scalloped
 by bats glint of glass insulators
 available sugar nerve endings
 mossed inside skulls
 were it not for the numbers
 we memorized and swapped
 the necklaced numbers tugging
 of streams translucent hair
 suspended

were it not for the mending
 of roots airbags fuss couriers
 blinking gust layers of gauze
 beauty held bubble-like beneath
 the tongue mantelpiece
 turpentine bewildered with red
 were it not for the panting
 of dogs silence of celery
 hurricane birds barrettes
 downpour the corrugated
 unanswerable density
 copulatory song rafters
 were it not for the surprise salmon
 breaking open the surface steam
 adjustable knob mischievous mammals
 rest stops plumbing squash
 grasp tears communicable life

were it not for the swelling of fruit
 and injury and the body into a body
 brittle drafts the inner electricity
 that lifts us up off of our knees

GOD SHARD

In the interest of honesty
and poor syntax
this will be streamed from a secret
excess

in tiny pauses.

That there were influences kills
any subtlety of attempt.

A literal eye screams for emphasis—
for a field of field to become crucial,
convinced that metaphors crucify
space.

But without you I am
condensed to a single point,
lobster tail in my mouth.

An eliminate beyond.
An illicit still.

The scene is fleeting before resuming,
lost somewhere between the fervor
of a minister and abysmal lyricism.

Bodies blow back against
the vaulted ceiling of our memory,
leave the soul irreligious & flapping,
and finally we swallow.

THE ICE FIELDS

at first water trills the air—
fragments bleed down,
silt jotting on vinyl
siding—a prayer

of accident. roots
ravenous, but sipping.
night presses amorously
against our unsleeping

lawns, untwines lust
and °C. Then things divide—
everything is trapped
under ice, coincides

with silence, Saturn. thin
parable of belonging.
nasturtium unopened, double-
lidded, pits like small beacons

pulsing above the sealed
sidewalks. darkness hides
the birds amid icicles,
and the world yields

one electric cable at a time.
moonlight becomes
schizophrenic in the sun,
glancing off of the eye

of everything, impromptu
mirror. we are careful, brace
each other, slip on the surface
over the surface. we are

warned, hinderlings—
the asphalt calling to us,
dangerous little chrysalis
spreading

ITHACA FALLS

It is hard to sleep when I smell water falling
 all around me, the air smoldering
 with mist, so I walk out again into the night, pilfered light
 hooked into the elms, to one of the thundering cataracts
 of this small city of waterfalls. A river daughter hangs her hair
 over sheer drop off and it tangles into dark knots
 almost clots under the surface

before loosening into wet kisses along the banks.

 There is no guillotine that can cut *falling* from *fallen*.
 The present and future roil together, then float as streamers
 down the long calm of remaining into the past. Further out
 blond fields of corn give up their ghost when the wind shakes
 it out of them. Here, spray bewilders the air,
 carries the rumor of oceans:

everything is shipwreck and habitat, such hovering music.

If I stare at it long enough I can't tell if the page of water
 is being written or erased, but I know I share its turbulent fidelity,
 its stuttering. Moonlight tries to intertwine in the fall,
 but the water just drops
 its mirrors, one after another, into trespass. And suddenly
 you are there, my love, the nectar-stained glossa of bees all about you.
 When I lean back into you, the water dreams of mercy.

Shining translates into soft moss clinging
 to rock, green gratis. I dip my foot in, watch the water plunge into itself,
 contradict the notion of a self separate from what it wades through.

 Magnolia petals like bits of eggshell
 mosey downstream, flood the damp darkness with scent.
 The flowers, we understand, are made of sparks and wetness,
 and the sun, as ordinary and forgiving as ever, draws near.

[BUT THE RAIN IS FULL OF GHOSTS TONIGHT]

and it has taken something from me,
 driven my feet from the earth,
 tendered a gift that displaces me. The water
 pours through where-I-was like a lesson
 no one will tell me—a breaking
 up by filling. Each droplet glints like the eyes
 I have consented to and then let go of.

Because even your deepest stare could not stitch
 me to the landscape. This rain, and its interminable
 music, at once initiates loss and turns from it.
 I try to gather its signatures, but they come undone
 like parachutes without bodies. How can I step
 through this gauzy curtain toward you? What in
 the world is so adamant about division? Cars
 continue to butt their way through delicacy, leave
 tiaras of smoke in the falling.

Love, do not turn blindly from evidence—there
 it is—time as obvious oblivion . . . and repair.
 Time touchable, drinkable, blitzed. The mangy
 cat huddles itself under the cold engine
 and the awnings are full of compliance. Now
 is the era of standing apart from it because
 the wetness makes us suffer too close to eternity.
 Can you feel the terrific weight of its accumulated
 utterances? Still, it feels so buoyant in my hand—
 the umbilical (or elevator shaft) of heaven yielding
 to space—O innumerable pollinated yeses

NOTES

CENTRALIA, PA: a small coal town, where a trash fire ignited a vein of coal in 1961. Over fifty years and 40 million dollars later the fire still burns under the town.

THE TRILLING WIRE IN THE BONE: The title is a variation on a line from T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets* (Burnt Norton). These lines belong to: *A bracelet of bright hair about the bone*: John Donne, *The Relic*; *The prayer of the bone on the beach*: T.S. Eliot, *Four Quartets* (The Dry Salvages); *The wonderful fish-like economy of her [the] lower back*, Linda Gregg, *Aphrodite & the Nature of Art*.

FATAL LIGHT AWARENESS PROGRAM: FLAP is an organization, formed in April 1993 to find a solution to birds dying from colliding into skyscrapers. During migration seasons, FLAP volunteers patrol Toronto's downtown core in the early morning hours to rescue live birds and collect the dead ones.

ARCHAEA: A unique group of microorganisms. They are called bacteria (Archaeobacteria) but they are genetically and metabolically different from all other known bacteria. They appear to be living fossils, the survivors of an ancient group of organisms that bridged the gap in evolution between bacteria and the eukaryotes (multicellular organisms). The name Archaea comes from the Greek *archaios* meaning ancient.

ARDENTIA VERBA: (noun, latin) words that burn; glowing language.

[BUT THE RAIN IS FULL OF GHOSTS TONIGHT]: This title comes from Edna St. Vincent Millay's *Sonnet XLIII*.

I began writing poems when I was 17 or 18. Many of my poems were inspired by my own experiences, but many were also inspired by what I saw and heard from others and from studies from the Bible. I didn't consider them seriously until I was about 30 and then decided to compile them and keep them as a collection for myself. As I wrote and collected, I began to see attitudes changing from selfishness more to selflessness, and growth as a Christian. Many of my later poems have double meaning; thoughts from a physical standpoint, and thoughts from a spiritual standpoint. I sincerely hope that as the A Book of Poems, Expressions From Our Youth © 2011 by COSTI Immigrant Services and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without the prior written permission of COSTI Immigrant Services or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Forward. Voices of the future. For most of my life as a writer I was fascinated and guided by a few poetry lines written by German poet Bertold Brecht in which he asked himself "In the dark times will there also be singing? Yes, there will also be singing. About the dark times".

For this, deep waters whelm the fruitful lea, Wars ravage, famine wastes, plague withers, nor Shall cease till men have chosen the better part. 4. But, like a virtuous medicine, self-diffused Through all men's hearts thy love shall sink and float; Till every feeling false, and thought unwise, Selfish, and seeking, shall, sternly disused, Wither, and die, and shrivel up to nought; And Christ, whom they did hang 'twixt earth and skies, Up in the inner world of men arise. 5. Make me a fellow worker with thee, Christ; Nought else befits a God-born energy; Of all that's lovely, only Poets. Poem-a-Day. Library (texts, books & more). Library Home. Poems.Â Not long beneath the whelming brine, Expert to swim, he lay; Nor soon he felt his strength decline, Or courage die away; But waged with death a lasting strife, Supported by despair of life. He shouted: nor his friends had failed. To check the vessel's course, But so the furious blast prevailedÂ The Task, Book II, A Time-Piece [excerpt]. Oh for a lodge in some vast wilderness, Some boundless contiguity of shade, Where rumour of oppression and deceit, Of unsuccessful or successful war, Might never reach me more! My ear is pained, My soul is sick with every day's report Of wrong and outrage with which earth is filled. There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart, It does not feel for man. National Geographic Book of Animal Poetry: 200 Poems with Photographs That Squeak, Soar, and Roar! J. Patrick Lewis. 4.7 out of 5 stars 73.Â Absolutely lovely hardcover book of poetry. A delightful collection for children of any age. A wonderful gift, a must for any family bookshelf, and a great resource for an early childhood or elementary classroom.

MILTON. A Poem in a Books. To Justify the Ways of God to Men. The Author & Printer W. Blake. 1804. p. 2. PREFACE. Milton. Book the first. P- 3. DAUGHTERS of Beulah! Muses who inspire the Poet's Song, Record the journey of immortal Milton thro' your Realms Of terror & mild moony lustre, in soft sexual delusions Of varied beauty, to delight the wanderer and repose 5 His burning thirst & freezing hunger! Come into my hand. By your mild power; descending down the Nerves of my right arm From out the Portals of my Brain, where by your ministry The Eternal Great Humanity Divine planted his Paradise, And in it caus'd the Spe6lres of the Dead to take sweet form. 10 In likeness of himself. A Book by Emily Dickinson. .There is no frigate like a bookTo take us lands awayNor any coursers like a page. Page. Share this poem: Emily Dickinson. Emily Dickinson (10 December 1830 – 15 May 1886 / Amherst / Massachusetts).

A Book of Poems, Expressions From Our Youth Â© 2011 by COSTI Immigrant Services and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without the prior written permission of COSTI Immigrant Services or the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).Â Some of the pupils who submitted their poetry works won awards, some of them received recognition, but each of them who participated in making this world a better place make me happy. My hats down to their teachers. Goran Simic,Writer www.goransimic.com.