

ABSTRACT

A DISCRETE HOLLOW— LOS ANGELES

By

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“A Discrete Hollow” is a collection of work that spans the past three years of my life. This project involves itself with the discussion of isolation, and our resulting growth as sentient humans; this is painted upon the Los Angeles cityscape. Within my project’s boundaries isolation resides in the banter of the cosmos as origin or expiry; in the anomaly of vagrancy; within a disjointed paternal and struggle for a permanent memory. These poems are shaped around the identity that is developed through separateness, and the reason discovered in uncertainty. This body of work is conjoined to Los Angeles as an inescapable coercion and background, and my poetry attempts to link identity through experience. This project is focused on the location of a unique self in a city that is founded upon facelessness.

A DISCRETE HOLLOW— LOS ANGELES

A PROJECT REPORT

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Two years before I was accepted into the program I immersed myself in fiction, only. I was reading classic romance, and modern L.A. prose like Mary Shelley and Bram Stoker, and Charles Bukowski, John Fante, and Gerald Locklin. One evening, hungry, while reading Bukowski's novel, *Post Office*, I realized the potency of the metered word through his prose, and I began to understand the importance of a calculated image: "The blankets had fallen off and I stared down at her white back, the shoulder blades sticking out as if they wanted to grow into wings, poke through that skin. Little blades. She was helpless" (Bukowski, 53-4). His books of poetry like *Mockingbird Wish Me Luck*, and *The Days Run Away Like Wild Horses Over the Hills* were written in and about this same time-span. To read those same scenes cut into free verse with some attention to line break, I began to understand why language was so attractive; it also felt like I had a behind the scenes look at the life of my favorite author. Up until then I had only imagined a true writer to be irresponsible, and a fantastic drunk driver. But then I realized that the best feelings were in images and sound, and pictures were only as interesting as their word play. The most vivid joy came from a few short stanzas with something palpable, like a contoured photograph. I was excited to discover everything I did not know about realism, and I was excited to learn and write my way into a new tradition of literature.

Fresh out of the water, I wanted to be immersed in the practice of creating images with language, and for the first time I felt like I was consciously involved with everything I did; my craft became a part of me like breathing and I could not remember how it felt not to write. Since then I have learned that everything I reflect on or fabricate does not have to be so contrived. I learned that I will never escape clichés or transcend awfulness, but that is why I write. I do this to be conscious of all that and push forward. To my advantage, I also learned at the beginning of all this that I meant nothing. At least professionally, or in the sense of my work as a precursor to some canon, it was important for me as an individual and artist to understand that I meant nothing, and that I had work to do change that. Instilled by choice words of professors and peers, I knew that I was only as good as the weakest words and line-breaks in my poems. Moving forward I would have to rethink my process. It was time to care about end words, and take pride in the power of internal pause. I had prematurely fastened myself down as a writer. If not as a writer, then I pegged myself for some hopeless creative. I also quickly learned what a mistake that was.

Eventually, and permanently, I became endlessly fixated with the merger of the fantastic and real; I find excuses to fuse the hardly remarkable and inventive and glow with the reaction. My project is concerned with the scene building of prose, mixed with the confusion of rarity. Like a person paranoid of something unknown or ignored; like a lonesome planet ominously silent in outer space:

I wonder if the moon is made of all the stars that crash into the side of it.
Ones that died so long ago that nothing even noticed.
Just pieces now of outside, you and me, slammed
into the belly of the great reflective rock

(“To Fruition”)

The emotions that I sustain require constant energy. Therefore, even in the lowest gear or most quiet setting, they require incessant imagery. I want to procure ideas and scenes that may not be unheard of, but at the very least are uncomfortable. And I illustrate that with images. I attribute the discomfort to confusion, and latch my scene building onto that unease. My work always maintains a level of disparity because that dissention is the most important part of the world's palate.

During the final semester of my senior year as an undergraduate, Dr. Elyse Blankley led a class on Virginia Woolf and the Bloomsbury Group, and my understanding of poetic voice was forever altered. I became fixated more than ever on scene construction and character development, and I sought the homogeneity of genres that masterful language provides; she deemed this poetic prose, or some prose poetic. I wanted to be a snail in a garden and every multitude in the same instant. I wanted to be the picture and parts of a building and nothing at all. At that new venture of my writing life I knew that word economy was king. Left and right margins were not just pre-sets any longer, and I had to relearn how to process thought. I had to use the entire page as a platform, and I could now only choose the most important words; I could only use new language that could be naturally lifted from my favorite writers:

A row of birds drifts
past the morning blush
their arms bent
 into the wind,
 cutting
 just enough
 to separate ions
to skid across a cardinal
direction without even a batted wing
 ("Good Morning Armada")

Writing into a new voice and focusing more on situation than on ego, I had to evolve from the “little emo-kid that could,” and I was forced to retire unmitigated anger. It was time for me to start constructing stories or scenarios that played out or ignored things I was distraught over, and searching for themes in my train of thought, or concept of poetic voice. Above that, as an obligation to myself, I was not allowed to exasperate my or my readers vocabulary and reference catalogue; I wanted bare bones.

This style of narrative minimalist poetry, with its scaled down build, reflects a new path that my work took during my second year. After the greater part of the program, I had taken on the responsibility of story building that was pointedly less contrived and more directed. I started to bring my work closer to the way things really were, first, before altering the truth or varying possibility. Even more, before I chose to expand my story I had to first attend to the untold histories of each character; I did not want any setting or anyone to seem as if they were part of some exercise. So I began to center my stories on the types of people I would encounter, or anthropomorphize a bird or the cosmos or a skyscraper, and I would model the causes and effects that I would experience through something extremely raw, or intricately fabricated.

Virginia Woolf once wrote in an essay, “If you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people” (“Virginia Woolf-Quotes”). I remember reading this in her essay, “The Moment,” when it was assigned in Dr. Blankley’s class years ago. Ever since, I continue to find new definitions of truth as I met new people and grow older. After I initially digested her essay, when I was in a park or at music venue watching people act the way they normally would, I made sure to remember everything since I wanted to be honest, and believable. So, movement of plot through instances of

detailed and realistic imagery became part of my focus as I started writing poetry after my Bachelor's, and now upon being accepted into the Master's program.

Only after some time did I realize that nothing is worse than feigned sincerity; there is nothing so ruthless as guilty self-destruction. To prevent myself from feeling false, I chose and still choose my subjects wisely, and I render life first with sincerity and then imagination. I do not want people to be bored, I do not want to be bored, and I do not want my reader to know all of my motives. For some artists the writing process is nothing more than a few hours set aside to create material. My brain does not work like that; I take pride in less contrived work because of how conscious I have to be in order to create something believable and interesting. So, as any self-respecting and self-segregating artist, I need to conceal that and only present my best side and most interesting subjects.

"*But in things*," I repeated to myself as I wrote forward into the beginning of the program; "*No ideas but in things*," as I had gleaned from William C. Williams's poem, "Sort of Song." I knew what I wanted to create during my second to last semester. I knew the importance of pushing away from utter abstraction, and merged into poetry with efficiency of image variation; now I constantly attempt to answer and confuse why. So from then, "But in the make believe," I began to think, "no ideas but in what I make believe." My true pleasure was creating, and my new challenge was to make that creation as real as possible. As an attempt to continue or diverge from the same mode as Williams's, my work required the physical, and I spent a lot more time concretizing the unreal.

As I became aware of word economy and its effect, and my interests were renewed in Emily Dickinson and W.C. Williams, Dr. Mohr guided my work towards a more realized plasticity, temporality, and candidness. “Good Morning Armada” plays with the simplicity of images and story, and I build a scene that is dependent on each word. Everything is exactly where it is supposed to be on the page in order for the readers to feel what I want them to feel.

In the city of Los Angeles, the sprawling and parceled terrain of close-quartered but long-distance relationships, people are drawn to isolation. I am concerned with that habit of dissonance, and my work is involved with everything that either causes or results from it. Separateness in our tinsel-town is quite the social tragedy, and that conversation provides the through-line beneath my body of work. My themes bed with dependence and disjointedness in all of their glory: a discussion of the cosmos as origin or expiry; the anomaly of vagrancy; the divided paternal and the struggle for permanent memories. I think the line between prowess and weakness is drawn deeply in a glassy beach, but they still touch. As a poet out of the post-hippy, neo-industrial, hyper-reality provoked by the flood of home-computers, my aesthetics and resulting body of work are obviously a morbid lovechild of Whitman, Allen Ginsberg and Stuart Perkoff, and blended with the self-loathing of Gregory Corso and Jeffers:

The broken pillar of the wing jags from the clotted shoulder,
The wing trails like a banner in defeat,
No more to use the sky forever but live with famine
And pain a few days: cat nor coyote
Will shorten the week of waiting for death, there is game without talons.
(Jeffers, “Hurt Hawks”)

This was my first exposure to Jeffers, and I felt lucky to have found a poet that crossed the narrative line of Robert Frost with the grit of Cormac McCarthy. I was surprised and

renewed finding this mid-century poet who used language naturally and more alluringly than most other contemporaries or older poets I was being introduced to at school. I was not used to mixing most of the natural world in with my poetry, but it quickly became evident how foolish that was since my work was and continues to be fueled by my environment, and the world as it is naturally or modified. Jeffers work revealed to me the grit available in open air that I had previously avoided in favor of the concrete; both physically and symbolically. Now, within the clash of the natural and made-up, I find my most valid argument in the ambiguity of Los Angeles, and everything that it does represent because of that elusiveness.

As a neo-neo-romantic I lead my work to explore Earth as schoolmarm, and evaluate the instruction of circumstance and experience in the formation of an identity in the city of L.A. More importantly, this body of work represents the struggle to create an individual history, and preserve tradition in a city that lacks an identity and unified wont.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

In the Fall of 2013, Dr. Mohr introduced me to the American poet Hart Crane. At first I was shaken because this master of the abstract had already done everything I thought I was being so avant-forward with. After overcoming my ego I began to dwell in Crane's logic of metaphor, and I fell in love with his attention to a similar plasticity of environment as my work does. His observation is a bit more rooted in classical training than mine, but we share a similar conflict with our respective cities, and a taste for a similar line of nonsense to elucidate something more apostrophized. Crane removed ego from his work while still mixing in full self-awareness, as in his first book *White Buildings* with his poem "Legend": "As silent as a mirror is believed/Realities plunge in silence by... "(3). Crane's poem and body of work are a constant survey of existence and reaction, not necessarily but notably as a young gay male, and his use of a mirror in his opening couplet of this poem suggest that this depiction of reality is verifiable but still only an imitation and unreliable. After discovering this logic drawn between somewhat disparate images procured through Crane's layered and almost convoluted language, I began to focus my efforts on creating poems that balanced commentary with the ethereal:

I lay still as any Capulet
ignoring time for focus up above me
upon our holy nocturne:

clouds
like microwaved
marshmallow scooped into

filled the corners of the smoggy
yellow pocked evening
("Outside Beneath a Tarp of Night")

I was overwhelmed by Crane's sadness and intrigued with the notion of dejection yielding something more. I knew that I would never completely shed inaccessibility, so I wore it like armor. After absorbing Crane's work, I was free to center my poems on the musicality of language, and I began to render morals and ideologies through images by distorting something reminiscent of self-evasion:

I've contaminated my temple
with these offerings to you.
You, the great salt and electric
current that animates me

...
My body only moves in unison
with the mechanism inside
Like earth, my parts are only whole
if all allows it

("Outside Beneath a Tarp of Night")

I started to understand the significance of scene building in even the least prosy situations, while maintaining believability.

Presently, there are still motivations that my readers would not be able to deduce from my immediate setting, but my aesthetic necessitates a sense of privacy behind complete openness. I reach for some level of secrecy even in the most candid moments. Secrecy is not something that I can just switch on or off, but I have been learning and getting better at honing it to yield both background and foreground. Even though I still "contaminate my temple" in refutation of higher orders, "my body only moves in unison/ with the mechanism" ("Outside Beneath a Tarp of Night"). I know I am ultimately separated from my environment, but that acknowledgment involves me, and I still make an appeal to a larger community.

I am consumed by the paradox of individuality and tradition that is associated with a community, especially in Los Angeles. Someone like Walt Whitman might advise us to explore autonomy while beseeching the poet to delve into the literary history that she is attempting to become a part of. This consideration of art production sets the limits of the self and variation only as far as the individual sets boundaries for herself. Where some poets would rather envision themselves as separate from any practiced types of poetry, the basis of Whitman's project and my aesthetic is to discover how the poet is part of a larger ritual; the poet's experience *is* the experience of her peers' past, present, and future:

I know I'm as alive
as those orange rinds
When I force my body out of bed
I act as painted
thick and permanent
embracing monotony
I fashion myself a fixture
Until my friend with rounded glasses
refills his cup from my carafe
I think about the taste of almond
pastries dipped in hot Columbian roast
and I feel healthy sitting next to this happy
daughter and father I am welcomed drawn so poorly
in this portrait.

("Becoming a Landscape")

This final stanza presents the reader with an image of a writing community that they are responsible for providing stasis and security for. This is accomplished by way of a recorded written and oral history about our peers and idols. The speaker in "Becoming a Landscape" is reeled back from paranoia by the anomaly of life; by the sheer chance of being human and walking with other humans on a planet that is floating in open space. The speaker observes others near him and realizes his role in the backgrounds of their

lives, as they are essential to his timeline. Still separate with a level of amiable agreement, much like sitting in a coffee shop we wave to each other as we cut people off on the 405, and involve ourselves in a system of togetherness. Most of us are only connected out of circumstance, but we are still connected.

Alternately, as Emerson might advise, this type of discovery of pure motive only occurs in the privacy of one's own mind, when separated from the influence of others' opinions. Autonomy is the ultimate goal of poetry, with a steady consciousness of precedent and environment in order to provide validity for social commentary. It also complicates things by forever making the poet a thief and augments of words and ideas that already exist in our favorite volumes.

So, as I have made the transition into modernism with poets like Crane and Eliot, my work leans heavily on dissonance and reconnection, and the variation of language to mimic sound and physicality:

On a bench in Griffith Park
music rattles dust from small speakers
that cut in and out of each chord,
 some strings unplucked but strummed
into built up southern draws.

Night's side stayed brightly lit.
She shined through every nimbus
cavern above city eyes, non-stop
fourty-five watts heating up the fourth wall,
the whirr of engines eating away
our breathable environment.

And I worship all of this

(“Outside Beneath a Tarp of Night”)

This voice provides an opportunity for experimentation with white space, caesura, and new sounds. I want to be less pentametric or formal, but still maintain an emotional

charge and complexity, as Crane was able to sustain in his book *White Buildings*. In the above excerpt of my poem, the speaker is alone in a park set to ruminate or react to the churn of weather above his bench, and he examines his location in some steam-punk, but reversed because it's just a morbid-now, like a well placed word in a poem: "the whirr of engines eating away / our breathable environment. / And I worship all of this" ("Outside Beneath a Tarp of Night"). Even though the speaker is nearly trapped in this city, as the language surrenders movement and immediately asserts pleasure, the speaker finds comfort in continuity. The poem sustains a reliance on this permanence. Even if that repetition is painful for the receiver, they can rely on that pain, or rely on the practice of ignoring. This type of cyclical self-infliction is evident in my poem "Consolation":

I'm happiest when we argue.
It curls my skin
to see your hair vibrate
each time your angry head moves;
to watch your eyes droop
slightly, and your rearward
throat erect yawps
over the music in my ears.

The reader observes a safety in familiarity. This opening stanza indicates the speaker's knowledge of his surroundings, and also indicates his decision to still pursue pain out of habit; he can experience pleasure from misfortune. Even in its worst form, people will always choose to feel more vulnerable; they will always want to be loved or looked after as much as they choose to give to others.

Los Angeles lends itself almost too well to a discussion of isolation. The city has no fertile mecca for art. A person can walk along boulevards searching for a hidden venue showcasing quality work that they heard of from a flyer in a bar bathroom. The typical young Angeleno art enthusiast tends to find new music and a few friends, and

then covet everything; the modern art junky guards her found pleasures like a most important secret. People as city lights then, obsessed with discovering something first, always discourage newcomers. They form communities of peers that take pride in difference, while maintaining difference from other groups. Art has redirected to the kitsch, and honest creativity feels superbly unique because of its scarcity. This mentality is the product of isolation, and a process of perpetuity. Developing in the plastic sprawling landscape, the public has become accustomed to mimesis in art, so that anything distinctly good is defended, hidden, or both.

Los Angeles poetry is steeped in disruption and isolation since the early '60s, and there exists a poetic community in Los Angeles that is talented and fervent, but separate and difficult to permeate. The Venice West poets from this later period of the '50s through the mid '60s subscribed to a romantic and realistic aesthetic of post war counter-culture that was wrought from an environment of separateness. LA poetics during those mid-wave of NY and SF beat movements reflected an identity and a human condition that were both the product and reflection of separation that then formed into a type of existential romanticism. Sequestered into their studio apartments, artists in the fake desert take solace in the bliss of aloneness. The artist in our city is not used to being up in arms. Like Bukowski pointed out in his forward to *Anthology of L. A. Poets*, artists in this city like alone time: "It is important to know that man or woman, writer or not, can find more isolation in Los Angeles than in Boise, Idaho ... the great facility of Los Angeles is that one can be alone if he wishes or he can be in a crowd if he wishes" (as qtd. in Mohr 137). This is the one city of bustle that allows and sometimes forces its residents to wander apart.

The intense separation forced by living in Los Angeles has influenced my deep intrigue with the cosmos; with the isolation of zero gravity and the immensity of creation in complete silence:

her once young man fled
spread like cards
to warm new ground
 feed new mouths

...
the moon and sun are not
friends since love
ruptured them like velvet
hooks from one another.

(“The Moon and Sun are Not Friends”)

In the few space poems that I include in this body of work, there is a definite through-line of separation that draws me to the interstellar. Looking back on the outer-space poems it becomes clear that aloneness is never rectified, but it serves as a marker of change on behalf of at least one character or subject evolving in the poem. For the most part, my outer-space poems exist because space is gorgeous and terrifying. Aside from that love and the discovery of the unknown, I do not know of much else that lends itself so effortlessly to brilliant imagery. And that is all I really care about in poetry, anyway.

CHAPTER 3

CONCLUSION

Every city has its coming of age story, but it is particularly memorable to grow up in an overpopulated entertainment town with so little sincerity. It is also influential to learn that, in the city, identity is only as strong as imagination, and it is only as definite as a person is willing to sacrifice. This project was put together as a way to catalogue my discussion of individuality through separation. It is a means to understand who I have become as a writer, and as member of a writing community in Los Angeles. Moreover, this is an examination of what it means to be part of an art community that can be fabricated and disjointed, and sometimes compel people to feel possessive of their interests. I know I am a member of a community that is thinly spread. I am alone with everyone else, and that is perfect.

APPENDIX
A DISCRETE HOLLOW—
LOS ANGELES

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A Supermarket in (Southern) California

It's a constant battle
to crave the wind

The beeps and clinks of glass
on counter tops and cattle calls
through loud speakers
shuttle around the ones
with shiny names
 It brings nausea to the guts;
 kindness painted thick upon thy lot

I can taste each rind of produce:
 the sweet reds and yellows,
soft purples,
spiky oranges beside moist
greens, commingling with the sting
of pineapple and the chalky
crunch of jicama

 Aisles filled with husbands
 wives in the liquor
terrible children will continue
 'til their lungs ache

I can see you in the market, Allen
 cigarette in your teeth
gawking at the lights and
detested by the grocery boys
 This isn't the same California you once knew,
people won't reach back to reach a future

The world bats its dumb eyes
beyond those sliding doors
 fake wind gusts
life into these hoards
of mindless eagerly stuffed
through its open mouth—
 drowning in excess
 the poet is only a learned self-deceiver
 who will choke on blood with all the rest

Wind is in those trees
 the real stuff rushes

into small tornados of debris,
to tickle cars with sand and pebbles
 throw dresses into frenzies
It's on that woman's fingers as she
pulls the hair from her eyes
patient as her beauty to cross
 It's still pressed against the windows
beneath the tables and chairs,
 rattled and alone in a cooled sunlight

The Longest Shadows (said Benjamin G.)

Almost as crisp as a ninetyfourseven smooth number,
lithely placed piano strokes
escalate towards a menagerie of nearly visual
 like milk
 words
 roll in
 upon a steady roll of drums
there's a halo of piano chords
and the tempo waltzes on all fours
 lyrics count my past-lives as a dance step
to wax us reminiscent
 music to home movies
Geryon always saw his grandpa's house:
 younger him in the front yard
with all the overgrown trees and deadly rocks
 Sauntered in the sun- the mellow
globe charged my every move
 he had ten too many toy guns
 but Rambo didn't mind
 and he was there for a reason

And that song takes him.

 Gooseflesh shine like a finished-project feeling
 and he'd tape it to his car window
a ginger rogers sun across the dashboard
 rays shaken through thatched
branches, trees lining the road
waving hello in their Spring
as he drove between them bending.
 flaked ilford prints of freeway
flattened to the tires
 car flung down cold asphalt
through cities without names
 and gas stations or people
but with music in the stereo
 smoke in Ancash's lungs
 drink in their bellies
they'd probably be happy for a while
 Him listening Ancash talk
 and read and write,
watching him laugh about something stupid.
 Geryon could watch him roll a cigarette,
he got to look at him whenever he wanted to

they knew this would expire, not sad
since summer skin is impenetrable
if you forget you're wearing it

In The Morning

In the early morning, when the alarm continues
all alone, and my brain has been running full speed
since we watched the last consecutive
episode of Cops, I hope you will forget all of this.

As I mop up coffee and broken Pyrex
from the deepest parts behind the oven,
I will cry as I remember you sitting on the counter
laughing while you swung your legs in summer heat.

When I fold your clothes and organize your things
in boxes I will decompose,
and hold your shirt like you had stepped back into my atrium,
confusing you for the musty scent of my closet.

I will delete, tuck, and forget everything in increments,
eating eggs and toast with the same amount of butter,
the same excess of everything I love, and I will adapt.
I'll convince myself how nice it is to wake up alone,
and will adapt to your absence like the beating of my heart,
like lungs inhaling as I sleep.

Becoming a Landscape

I sit in this coffee shop
 with two friends
going over proofs and stealing
puffs of e-cigarette curls
 I sip mud
 from a silver thermos
 while we argue over which words
 look better in Courier New
even so, behind
there is an enlarged printed painting
riding on the coattails of my coffee steam
 Settled snug into our booth
 before this linen tarp of endlessly
 immovable activity—

 Four or five equestrians
 frolic over nourished grass
 one barely visible
 behind the weeping
 of a mediocre Willow tree
 American Warmbloods galloped one by one
 along the cool blue murky creek
 Their legs stuck out and similar
 and past tense only since
the artist chose to keep them lifeless
 Not like the wind swept golden locks
 of each well-dressed rider
 But stiff and Disney, and only there
 as long as eyes are looking
Horses bodies like hippocampus catacombs
 suckling at the entrails of imagination
except for the throttled humanity
in their stupid eyes. Their whites so bright
like the insides of orange rinds.

I know I'm as alive
 as those rinds
 When I force my body out of bed
 I act as painted
 thick and permanent
 embracing monotony
 I make myself a fixture
 Until my friend with rounded glasses
refills his cup from my carafe

I think about the taste of almond
pastries dipped in hot Columbian roast
and I feel healthy, drawn so poorly
in this portrait.

Self Portrait in Increments of Five

I grew up in the jungles
laughing in the hallowed quietude.
I grappled nervous cackle
as well-lit soldiers smothered
our brothers and sisters
finagled our moms and dads.

Actually, I grew up in the back of a pick-up truck
force fed raw vegetables and dirty water
prudence shrouded in experience and I left uninspired.
In reality, I never grew up anywhere.
Lines of passing time
form at my most bending parts
and I swear I'm still a punk kid
smoking Lucky Strikes outside the faculty parking lot.

I've memorized the thrill of waking up at fifteen
pleased by a flawed existence. Three times scared
that I was too dirty for an afterlife
my unanswered prayer became an undone sesame
of seismic portions
flooding my reality with renewed hope
knowing that I am always
too dirty, but never too to love—
to die in peace.

At first I was welcomed into the room.
We stood in a semi-circle
watching Gabo sink into his bed linens
lined with frill and the dangling Mexican
accent most Columbians dismiss.

Then Christ beckoned me away.
He waved goodbye as I walked
towards the beach, and I kept my burning back
turned. I seared my feet on black sand
quelled by the crash of ocean
white noise like the hiss of drying earth
and I smiled at the yellow beaked savage
skimmers cutting through the pier
harassing tourists.
I feared the ocean, once
as a gateway to that privileged refuge.
Now upon a moistened leaf
only as a reflection

of our brief future.

A Bunch of Wildebeest

There were these Wildebeest
 a young bunch, Nate and Pauly also
friends run frantic ‘round the desert.
They flirted with other Wildebeest girls
drinking and eating things
that made them feel like
they only had two good legs
 or turned them into the furry
flowers on the river-hill that rattled
blowing away into pieces.
They ran around like madmen,
children really, not even close
to manhood, madkids
 children interested only
in the good time.
So when they had to cross
the water with all their moms and dads
 for no apparent reason
they wouldn’t be the only
ones trampling that way
through some wretched
muddy water, riddled
with tooth plenty crocodile
 splashing about
as soon as their hooves touched the surface
 “Run you fool, run!”
huffed the lot of them into garbled
 yelling the sauna in tumult
sharp teeth and feet pounding
in anxious refute
 beating and beating
to maybe “catch one of those
greedy mother fuckers in the mouth”
 As tired and wet as they were
they made it safe to the other side.
The moms, dads, sisters, and brothers,
 some friends. “Pauly! Pauly!”
yelled one louder running faster
towards his friend in the distance.
“Pauly, holy shit man, look,
 it’s Nate back across the lake man, look!”—
three or four monsters
tore his pal limb from limb
 as they stood with the same faces

they'd always had learning
more about fear than they'd known
previously. Pauly almost thought
he heard Nate too, making the the moan
he made when he nailed that Waterbuck girl
down by the very same river-
but he never looked back.
He was still shaken
and had already seen his sister
lose her legs, then her face.
But Marcus had things for chewing,
and they had no more rivers looming,
for another hundred miles.

Recess

Clouds of dust echo from the creases
of my corduroy jacket. Little points where
wired hangers held it high within the smell
of old wood and pesticide. Tiny spiders
crawl over every inch, leaving silken
ropes to catch you when you reach for your
socks. It's hard to remember to use
the closet when I'm so used to tossing
everything over the computer chair.
I never think twice about the few
clothes that get to see the sun,
and the night. But I'll always keep
it's tall doors slightly ajar, the closet
thin lines of darkness peeking
out to still invade my dreams,
smelling like childhood and forever
hide and seek

The Moon and Sun are Not Friends

they were born
under similar blankets
 creased with blood and particle
from magellanic clouds

too moist heliades rolled in towels
barely making noise
 rushed wind
 on a wooden door
parts shaken loose wandering
into separate orbits

the great dust cloud inhaled
 a gulp of air
their celestine bodies pressed babes
beneath warm pool water

unraveled spools of silk
threaded into paths
laying perfect routes
to hungry arms
 two loved stars crossed
 tangled into safety

 then
 sun grew
leaving moon
 unattended
 in jealousy
 moon grew
everlasting hurt
 without
 sun

her once young man fled
spread like cards
to warm new ground
and feed new mouths

she alone, moon
now forever facing
a renewed neurosis-
a dirty marble

carved with canyons
dug like moats
protecting mountains
 a brown blue bulb
and opportune distraction
with only every now and then
a glimpse of Helios
in her peripheral
 moon would catch
around earth's ears, these times
over his bulging head, an inch of blinding light
when her bedroom
eyes weren't watered
 darted out the other way

the moon and sun are not
friends since love
ruptured them like velvet
hooks from one another

The Night the Muse had Died

*"We make our meek adjustments,
contented with such random consolations
as the wind deposits
in slithered and too ample pockets."*

*- Hart Crane
"Chaplinesque"*

Visage like a starless night
he strode easily adrift
 Deck shoes specked
with chunks of mud and ash
from burnt out cherries his pants
discolored on their bottoms
 dampened by eternal midnight
wandering he'd find his bed
or bench and clench his eyes
like fists until his brain burst
or he drifted into sleep.

Morning would awaken upset
 shaking light along porches
and sidewalks gleam leaned less
against buildings, rushed
onto all like a flood or bad decision
 shadows stretched thinly
thinly less thin until sun sat
above the fault line to accompany
the gargled hiss of boiling water

He sat near his window
 crossed leg rocking from the knee
He tapped his cigarette on a ramekin,
 watched seagulls fade into the clouds
 above the bridge
 and coughed up the green
 discharge of bugs and smoky soot.

He emptied his cup and
prepared his leave back downstairs
 Adjusting his collared shirt and combing
 his hair, he recovered
poise and progressed outside
to sate its thirst for him.

Grimace purged like last light

his legs crept away
 His shirt torn open
to expose a battered chest
and ribs too much friendly
with the most unkind. He
 dampened with eternal dread.
 He'd found his way,
this boat, and clenched his eyes
like fists until his brain burst
or he drifted out to sea.

Love is a matchstick burnt out
 Its smoke enveloping
the stench of a used restroom
moving through a tattered screen.

Swallow harshly
his proposed instruction,
 endure him as we follow
 to the ocean.

Given Parts

Alex let go of his family
like a bribe or last ditch
effort he let their car keep driving
Southbound through the blessed
evening, fade into the red
river of tailpipes and license plates
 and drive farther still farther away.

That night he left his phone and shoes
at home, and just walked
 The ceiling fan whirred for weeks
until the landlord shut the power off,
and called the local Sherriff about something
being strange.

The police found his Wife
and two sons in Colorado
living with an Oil-Man
in Grand Junction: a good man,
 an honest one who treated women
with respect, like human beings.

A man who liked drinking beer
and playing darts, and laughed
when she'd say *shit* or *asshole*
because he thought it was healthy, and always
loved the way her mouth moved
over hard F's the way she shined
when something vulgar tickled her;
Alex wasn't like that.

He
 walked
 west that night
 until his feet bled like spigots
and then he kept on
walking. death marched deeper
into open land to find something
that wasn't poisoned by him.

 He pressed through mangled toes
 trailing heel-bone and shaking pale legs.
Sharp rocks thrust simply through the meaty
moistness of his open flesh, and he stumbled
like a blind fool walking only
always forward. When he collapsed
he dragged himself some feet, and then

he lay there, reaching
towards a crest of small hills
lining some Western summit
like God creating Adam.

The city sent his wife a letter
when they found his body picked by vultures,
eyes and pockets empty,
although they didn't tell her that part.

She stayed quiet for a while,
watching dust move around the room
fibers outlining threads of sun broken
through new wooden blinds.

When one of her sons got home from school
and she kissed him on the forehead,
asking if he wanted something to eat before homework.

Colors Bloom From His Chest

Oscar watched two men
sand blast a brick wall
on a pre-noon Sunday
in the heart of mid-city.

They removed the elegy
with precision, following each
letter like a rewrite
with invisible ink.

The night before, Oscar got high
on meth so he'd stop crying,
and ran to where his brother
had been shot.

With cans of spray paint
he had stolen from his girlfriend's
dad, he rushed to lacquer
the church wall with his tome
for the fallen.

"Always" was his brother's name—
Peter, really, but he was always
everywhere, so it goes.

Their mom wanted to bury Peter
without Oscar at the funeral.
So Oscar drove to the park behind
the church he'd adorned,
and sat on a tree stump
to the side of a hiking path.
He smoked weed, sat still
in the pink late day, and watched
city tools remove his brother.

But Oscar could still hear him
talking about Music or the stupid shit
they used to do as summer-kids.
Oscar scratched Peter's name into the stump,
cutting his hands on the bark
as he dug each letter deeper into the wood.
He heard his brothers laugh
and cried this time. So he kept him there,
on earth, always moving always happy.

Touring

When the world ended nobody had a clue.
People made coffee and exercised
like a regular weekday or Sunday morning.
Internets and newspapers detailed pedophiles
and car thieves, sub-lets and farmer's
markets; the apocalypse became
more of a catch phrase and a marketing scheme.
Policemen ate breakfast in their cars,
talking about weekend plans
and pensions; old men picked up their
Times; and coupes, sedans, and minivans
clogged the freeways. In other cities
it was nighttime: Mom's assured their young
that no monsters lived in the closet
or under their tiny bed. Some finished
bottles of wine and had sex on the couch
or in laundry rooms,
under down comforters and blankets
with giant animals on them;
others spoke to friends and family
barely eating lunch. Radio stations
cycled their djs and Subway cashiers
stalled anxious parents trying to find someone
to pick their kids up from school
just so they could catch a breath.
All at once, as everyone did
or did not do exactly what they were,
the sun popped-
growing brighter in steady shades
of brighter light: people held
hands up to interrupt conversations
and squint their eyes at the hottest
thing they'd ever sensed.
Those in darkness were disturbed
only by a low growl as the sun
did what it did, and began to melt
the half of earth immersed in glorious heat.
News spread quickly out before
buildings and wiring were liquefied:
social networks and phone calls
warned the lightless of their future.
Most began going west, tried to beat the
day as it crept closer. Those with boats

sailed to more night,
rushed in panic towards an idea
of cooling molten rock that they could run
across, and just keep running—
but nobody made it to the other side.
The sun was bigger and moved
with much more purpose now,
quickly catching up.
Some hid in their cabins,
steam-cooking curled in a ball
on the floor. Others jumped
into the water, slowly falling apart
as they doggy paddled
in a boiling Atlantic Ocean stew.
Stiff scent of rotten fish and seaweed
dusted clouds of chemical smoke
above the oceans until all was mush
and everything evaporated. The earth turned,
mountains melted to the surface
of the 3rd planet, and the sun finally extinguished.
It died out slowly like a light bulb:
the sound of great machinery
churning to a painful end, cogs crashed,
shrieking in their final revolution
to the static of the great expanse;
until all nine rocks rotated to a stop
in complete noiseless.

Cities Between Anton and His Son

I.

There is a shrine built in Chicago
for Anton Lavey
 In Dunham Park behind
 the civic center, beneath the biggest
 tree in the western end of photographs
there are rarely ever
winks of blacked out catholic
votive candles circling the trunk
 99-cent religiosity
 equal acts of glory and convenience

II.

Growing up named Satan, it was important
to be stronger than everyone else
 As irresponsible as *Sue*, he began to crave impairment
 As sweet as learning curse words, he learned
 the art of reciprocity.
Coming of age usually hints
some gradual change
 but for some the climb begins
 promptly, as time slips discernibly about
 seeking out instead of waiting to be found

I.

There is a shrine built in San Francisco
for Howard Levey. At Julius Kahn
 to the side of Washington St past Veterans Blvd,
in perpetually wet earth sits his creepy picture
on a placard with the dates he carried on
 At times tealites pepper dirt
 with their six hundred and seventy-one
 miles of bobbing paid dues, checkering
 the base of a New Zealand Christmas
 tree for the few who still admire and miss
 his fanaticism like an aptitude

III.

twenty one degrees are plenty
to white-mask breath
 swells of steam like a refinery
 leave dampened circles on scarves
or sweater-necks. Evening friends
walk to bars and to other friends' houses

with bottles of garbage Cabernet
 wrung from car trunks, warm and sweet
 to slop down their throats like medication
pretexts for poor quality
as they open another bottle
 preparing each one's trek
 towards warm beds

cold comes closer after heavy sleep
 the blend of purple light
 and weathered door jambs press morning's tile
 into shards of glass

I.

There is no shrine built in Los Angeles
 The desert floor
 Is not so acquainted with the craft
 of preservation.

Endless settlers divided

 cut in half by filthy run off

I.a. ditch water churned into acid piss ocean
through and over inclined walls and trains
with sprawling varied cordials,
 discrete rites performed by wanderers
 in the arena of an open sewage
 pipe, the auditorium of an unused freight door.

But still,

 there no focus for the keepers of faith
no adorned tree in a city park
 only impermanent sites of veneration
 waiting to be painted over

 dome lit cum soaked doorways
 quiet receptacles line the catwalk
 alleyway, straight to the bank building

Here, the city is only an experience

 Worship

 here

 remains self-aware

III.

Summer stays longer every year

 In the middle of January, 80 on a winter evening
 we lie naked in bed watching late-night

 the city lit by a waxing, or waning moon

 It is only natural that we stew in dissipation

cooked by the sun, insides
puckered eggs and water.
Still grateful in love with being here
we filter our vision through sunglasses, burning
incense like a radio station cycles the same Van Morrison
since all they want to do is make us smile.

II.

Satan was the only son
the only one with the nerve to manage
something like a family name,
but he too had to compromise
since family always supersedes the make believe
each for their share, he surrendered
to his sisters. Satan, then, was only one
third as spiritual as he would have pleased
he was just a part time beneficiary

“Bright Lights” (No Brighter)

The parking lot remains
quiet as the aged evening
draped about it—

perfect, permanent, and imprecise

Lights like dried spring
flowers before heavy breathing,
patient for their perfect angle
 hardened forceful fingers
 will entertain the sepals,
allay them open and steal
 behind the pedals
 to explode all into dust:
 dandelion lashes blended into milky-murk,
 into darkness only pinkish orange dare resist.

When darkness comes
there will only be the building
lights. Heavy breath will circle back
in search of better prospect
to be met by moistened dearth.
Like viscous sighs,
sometimes-sounds of plastics
will scrape the opal blacktop,
to be hushed swallowed by the open-
empty sky.

The ground drinks heavily
the wet. It throws the smell
between the Jersey barriers
to beckon day’s break
and guide the early,
as each seeks the closest spot.

When Recollecting Less-Calm Father

I'm glad my dad never fought in war
glad he never dies from bullets to his hidden face
overwhelmed that he survived the riots and did not become the man he wanted

instead he fought at home
he flicked king lighters like a poor man raised-flame higher
then allowed like the mist of first-frost to crystalize
his glass and cook the smoky chem inside

behind the glass I'm glad his picture doesn't stand with his uniform and cap
no shit-eater beaming before time drew gaps between his teeth
time like tapered floss daily separating insides slowly farther

but luckily he does ooze like that
He is just some cut plant crudely hacked with a razor blade
one that breaks like a cheap shaver on his thorns and month old beard

unlike fresh roses he does not stand straight for three days before wilting
he does not balance a clot of red at the tips of his fingers to leave us with
dead but everlasting

Sinkhole

Earth danced
as the crevice opened.
I stood at the side door
facing the main Boulevard
through the perfect view of my d.i.y. back door-window,
nauseously clung to the washing machine.
The bus bench and a woman
walking her dog hopped
along the sidewalk, capered to the rhythm
earth kept. Inside cabinets mounted
improperly fell onto the television and model-car display
so that glass and cheap plastic shot
like confetti into books sopped with fish water
on this cloudless silent evening, all spread open for the night-sun—
her ivory
neon swell of ashen white.
tenor cradlesong to worn out day
while the front yard fell into the opening:
moist wound
gashed
into earth's hip.
Tree roots and city pipes frayed
into the open,
stiff with rigor like removed digits.
Sprays of light tapped and clicked
from exposed wires
and the pit dripped deeper in.
No end to where the parts of earth descended,
at least from where my window framed it.
After a minute and a half the movement
stopped. My feet felt fake
expect of shifting ground
but there was just the rattle
of glass at its final vibration
the crunch of an old house
re-adjusting its bones.
I focused on Solo. Dogs barked
everywhere but he kept calm.
Steady as a Queen's Guard,
ears raised towards the kitchen wall,

well aware that something waited right outside.

We fell asleep beneath
the dining room table: He snored
and farted like any evening,
 and I wondered how Dante's
heaven still looked like a pit;
 if the one outside was splitting
 like cartoon ice all the way
 to the other side.

Uncle Abel

as my father once spun

My brother had diabetes
when he died he passed on the porch
as my mom stood next to a cauldron
blowing steam from corn husks
I didn't live there then but our younger
brother Red did and he kept pictures he saw him
purple faced lying on his back sprawled into
rusted floral patio furniture then went off to work
when he came home tired squinting at silent
ambulance lights panicked mother
still calm cooked recorded muted sitcoms

when my brother died he was bloated
and his feet filled up his sneakers
they pressed the tongues against the laces
and curved the soles into inverted dishes
his face was tight
agitated like a boxer's

The morgue called Red that Thursday
to describe stab wounds
beneath dead ribcage wounds taut
clay like the terminator when he rips
his face off wrinkled at the ends
cheap meat torn by a slob
the mortician decided foul play
we settled he'd been robbed
at the liquor store or at the park
when he'd be gone for days payphone
calls to his daughters or sister
more than likely though no calls
since he wasn't that kind of brother or dad
his blood went bad It curdled
in him and his brain turned off
feeding on the cocktail
pumping through his heart

Ma tucked his body into a drawer
eight rectangles high in a mausoleum
where she takes roses weekly to hoist onto his console
now he's there with all the other people
he always complained about but at least now he's resting now I guess

When I Finally Clean My Room

I keep a dream catcher
hanging from my room door.
 when people come or go,
 or the windows inhale
 a gust of sudden coolness
 upon a jitter of beads
synthetic crystal brown
turquoise and maroon
 pirouetted globules tap like acrylics
 on a kitchen table
 then the rush exhausts
 the catcher retains its poise
 and it's set to deflect or expend reveries

but they still float in at night

 red eyed terror flailing
 from the backs of mosquitos
 flagella segments diving from their wings
 to land on my chest and make their way
 into my nose, or ears, or ass.
Pores collected like dry mouths
 my body swills in trance and familiarity.
 Each moment guided to a
 different corner—

 My old house but not
as it changes from an orb of well lit
 to one of mangled shadow

 purring dreamachine that wets the carpet
 with poaches of revolving yellow light,
 into a gouge of cinder heaving in it's last breath
 the moist rumble of a monster at rest
 the final glows of intense terror
 dribbled on the sweetness of nausea.
 My body in a schism of reaction
 a metameric numbering of appendages

 the dreams don't stop they just adapt,
 and I enjoy the fear of new homes
and hate differently with something like
renewed vigor.

so, when the knot that holds the catcher to the handle
fails, the twist of string and bead
will a pile on the floor
and I'll forget how much it mattered
and what I dreamt about

A Tapestry

It is raining Thursday evening
vapor mills into a heather pillow
skyline green peripheral circles
lit by a fluorescent moon
surround the living room and den
windows muffled like a shoebox showered
house becomes its own island
fenced off by other islands with separate pouring

vulgar churning
fermented
to an ocean
tincture
clouds sagged
like tired hair around trees
that absorbed the coat of armor
sweating on a lawn

heavy ghosts pulled along this rainy glimmer
canvas they squirm down
sheets of luke warm water
and meet on roof tiles
dampen lapels

summer divides sound and rain
into separate tracts water whetted
to a day of static piled in a single room
a lull at times turned on and off
while everything remained wet

hands pruned by warm gloves
by holding moist hands
puddles outside
hiding toys and sandals

evening plays music
on the dry bones of a Mexican palmetto
the wooden sound of pellets
on dry shoots leaves wide
open to a circle of more dryness
beneath its fan a canopy of brown
where life crawls

Consolation

I'm happiest when we argue.
It curls my skin
to see your hair vibrate
each time your angry head moves;
to watch your eyes droop
slightly, and your rearward
throat erect yawps
over the music in my ears.
Your eyes are large and brown
and shine like quartz
upon their brink of purge.

I prod at that, and yearn
in your fury.

I always love
the love succeeding, but I only
ever want to make you cry.
Spaghetti and cheap wine
crash-frantic to faux cherry
oak, a familiar tinge of error—

I gather pleasure
enjoying what little time we've set
aside for peace.

Box Seats

A cormorant flew to the center
of the pond to land on a rock
 or a tangled pile of chino pants
 and t-shirts angry un-fixed
 junkies wadded and discarded
It watched the surface
and the edge of the water
 flicking its tongue in its throat
 a plastic toy engine
 revved beneath a pillow
 rolling dice inside a cardboard box

Three boys ran into the opening on the left
end, drenched in morning light,
 dripping wet with cockcrow moisture
They huddled round a tree
tethered to the city by a swinging tire
 and continued to push
 & curse
 & sweat
 One boy ran towards the tire at full speed
 mounting it like Superman,
unsure as Clark Kent
before the harmony of weightless
addled any safeguard
 A second boy ran towards the inverted
metronome and jumped on as the swing lunged
 “Get off of me” yelled the first boy
smashed beneath his sidekick, “You portly
fuck, it’s gonna’ break!”

weathered rope did fray upon the bark
 it snapped and threw the tire into the upshot
 like a malfunctioned pier
 pirate-ship
the two boys flew in silence
to the waiting ground.
 The third boy stood with crooked mouth
and head as the others hit the dirt
 as the thick rope followed
 the fallen tire
 slapping earth
 circling the pile like a target

The quiet pond-beach was only interrupted
by the cormorant click reverberating in the living's
ringing ears. The second boy stood up
holding his arm, with twigs in his hair
and stared at the crumpled body of his friend,
the wide eyed superman with a crick
in his neck
his unsure hero with bloodied teeth

now just
the scuttle
of tennis shoes
over ragged plants and gravel
running out to houses
dragging their new claws
away to no oasis

The bird, now damp from finding food
made one last call
its head jerking towards the empty
edge as if remembering
then flew into the sun to tell the others
what he'd seen

Getting Younger Like Dylan Talked About

Building a frame out
of reclaimed wood,
pulling sheets
and old t shirts taut
across the middle
 so they make that
cartoon leather sound.
Ash mixed with juice
from cigarettes-and-water
cans, spilled containers
and little eddies of colored
dirty liquid crawling over cracks
towards a drain
on down the driveway.

His home had people
who cooked good food
and spoke of worthwhile
literature, why
the education system
had turned out the way it did,
and recipes that complimented
being drunk.

 Before his sister and her
 husband died at the turn
 of the millennium,
 his parents liked to laugh.

The TV was steadfast:
shows proceeding with similar noise,
commercials that sounded like sitcoms
 tele-novelas like re-caps
from the week before.

 Their bleeding eyes watched,
staring at the shapes but not
hearing anything. They were only
concentrated on getting older
and staying sad.

Each night he'd sneak into her room
to steal her clothes
and blankets, building something
he could cover with color,
changing them,
making them more alive than she could be.

To Fruition

I wonder if the moon is made
of all the stars that crash into
the side of it. Ones that died
so long ago that nothing even noticed.
Just pieces now of outside,
you and me, slamming into the belly
of the great reflective rock.

Standing with carafes of bottled
chemical from somebodies
garage, acid burns holes down
my esophagus, whittling a flute
so that I creak like crates when
flu season comes to settle in

I stand beyond my friends' porch,
feet set warmly in damp earth
and stare up beyond the invisible
throw of fire that hugs our planet—

The stars still shine brighter
than the moon, hotter than the sun
staring down from however many
millions of light-years out, over billions and trillions
more millions away as other stars and planets with none
do some on their own

Comet breath hovered above
my morning coffee, I blow steam away
from a cloud of cream and sugar
follow small galaxies swirling in the foam
of an Arabica bean.

The taste of rot before breakfast
thickened on my tongue;

I dilute the
flavor only cause my stars
remain the same.

Outlook

Friend left quickly
like a glint of light
 gone before real-light
 walked right through the door
 to wake you just most of you
Some parts stay asleep
for days and weeks
piled into unused months—
 when you finally crawl into the morning
 of an unearned perfect day
Tears gain nothing here,
and gain is all this galaxy contains.
 So move stealthily,
 save your energy for the end.

Counting Days From Then

I remember showing grandpa my hands
Grass moist and itching its way up my legs
My hands were coated with blood
and dirt puttied into the cracks
to fill in scratches
etched beneath the bottoms of my fingers

“What did you break?”

He sat in his room with drink and TV
standing where they’d been since he had less years
near his shelves and bed only worn on one side
There were small holes in my palm
six of them
two filled with short nails from the lawn
when I pretended I was the Red Ranger
doing cartwheels, and the other four
just bleeding.

“I fell on them.”

It smelled like old shoes
and cigarettes, his heavy brow
set lightly above a roman nose, smiling
never showing teeth.
He reached with giant’s grip from his recliner
and cut through a boxing match
to cover my hand in a napkin
while the evening dragged the palm tree
shadow into the room
I indulge you,
just to feel the quiet careless of his old and aching bones—

I was his favorite because I ate habaneros,
and because I hardly cried.

We were friends since I was youngest
and I would be the last one to forget him.

A Vast Disinterest

It tasted sweet the way you pulled away from me,
my lips reached toward you like a leaning drink.
Charms of cars and metro swathed behind us
as silence made her entrance.

 Curls of moisture masked the sun
pouring water over blocks of dirty
brick and treated glass.
Happy-hour on siesta
until things loosened, when heavy shoes
 track mud angels on the sidewalk, and bound
over opal water tie-died with city frantic.

We were at your lobby door
before the clouds arrived:
you propped open the entry
and stood on the bottom step, The lighted hall
behind you bleached the stairway
to illuminate your lines: to blanket me,
 this sidewalk in your ghost—
 I savored heartbeats clicked between our teeth
 as the sky began its mourning,
 and the rain kept you beautiful, then.

 Why is it evil that you're more precious
than music? My brain reminded truth
is too good with outside context
as I retreated eastward to dwell on what I'd found:
to recollect your blurry body climbing
up the stairs behind the minster glass,
water gathered on my face
and I repeated your number in my head.

 Although we hadn't happened yet

Sitting by the window I smoked
until my teeth were sandpaper.
Stronger coffee watching people
walk their misled dogs and awful children.
 My father was dying in the spare room
 hooked up to every outlet,
 and I had hoped to watch him rot like this,
tingling apart. Wrath peppered on his sleeve
and he drank until he had to stop to let time treat him
worse, and with much more acuity.

He grappled his variance:
when his brother burst into a hundred shrieks,
fettered wings
 unclipped, spread
over groves and lines of wires
 into everywhere
 away from common history.

I made my moment. I created it and let it slip around the hallways
like a serpent, venom gone but patient for sleep to come
to wrap itself around me.

The jagged line pulsed under the doors.
It filled the house with chirps and scheduled drops
of morphine every ten minutes.
Later-day looked cloudy as I left my phone
and locked the door behind me, quickly off.
 Still sun hung above the freeway
 I fled west to ignore the hiss
and make happy ours all at once.

An Addiction

When the clouds finally soak
into the mountain,
let the sun burn shadows
onto clean concrete

Angeleno heir-
loom tomatoes, only organic will do;
only un-afflicted chickens
for my eggs please-
while I fill my lungs with fake
sage vapor.

Bended boroughs connected
by 469 miles of always breaking freeway:
frayed tendrils spit cars and soot
into the ocean; one vexed
but charmed by the attention.

I can't leave.

I tip toe around the umbilical
cordially invited to the park
where man sleeps and watches
suited man work just as hard
at something else On the subway:
not aloud to eat your sandwich
but please,
 youngster,
let me have two
snickers and some cigarettes instead.

The train blurs past charred and vacant
squatters' mansions, pushing past
the crest of t.v. antennas, wobbling
to a stop for us to see the rocky backdrop
and ogle what Castro handed Fremont
in a fit of haste.

Baby-blue specked
with palm and yellow hue.
Breathing is supposed to hurt like this,
injured for reminiscence.
I always love the flush of city framed
in brilliant lights, all at once

through the window of a descending
airplane; forever admire her lost patina.
Quite moved, standing on a Sunday street
in downtown, heart in beat with the sirens,
as they shriek up soap washed windows,
trailing streaks until their echoes break the sky.
My tether's only loosely fit;
my ankle has a crooked gaze to hold it warmly.

As Everyone Found Them

I want to paint
wood grain. I want
to move my wrist
without premeditation
with the wrong brush, and acrylics
instead of over-priced
oils. Even with an imposter
pastel whipped with water
flour and food coloring.

Without consideration,
I want to needlessly perfect
unruliness, discard
proper training and yell
“HA!” But only for immediate silence.

Quickly
vanished, any happy fodder
gone since I've faltered,
painting swirls of distorted
color mixes
and shallow misstep.
Only, there, a dried and chalky circle
in place of all that sweaty concentration

Repeat Fracture Daylight Saver

tonight's not filched completely as we've only lost an hour
gained more sputtered day that burns like trailing hi8 tape
our cautered evening steams the skyline like a bathroom mirror

tonight's not filched completely as we've only lost an hour
light snatched from father's wallet busy with embedded mother
provide a shaded entrance cuing gravecharm concentrate
tonight's not filched completely as we've only lost an hour
gained more sputtered day that burns like trailing hi8 tape

Grandpa, Hello Grandma Angel (Chango)

mom kept your bedroom unchanged
for ten years the turgid brown recliner
contrasted your deflated organ system
and was the last thing that you touched
 curled up like a child in it's bucket watching HBO
 the pockets of your folded parts still warm

it took three e.m.t.'s to clumsily scoot
your body to the ambulance
 young uniform advised mom to take us
to the other room, but nosey children persevere
 nosey children watch legs spread like daddy-long
 because you were too tall for a plastic pouch
 our halls too narrow for them to wheel you out

as a kid I tried to make your room my own
 watch batman daily on your dustgrey tv/vcr
 rifle through your closet and your dresser
but i was not allowed to change the sheets or alter placements
 sustain since mom swore she broke your ribcage
 when she tried to reinvent you
so she swilled in guilt as any daughter ought to

three months before you watched your last De La Hoya replay
northridge shook like vocal chords like falsetto
screeches breaking earth and homewares down the fault-line
and we, children, huddled underneath the dining table
 we all saw grandma's arms guarding the edge
 through ultraviolet sleeves she the keeper of weak
beckoning her partner to the line of cypress trees

Ways of Poor Habit

I.

wet gust blown from lung bomb
 promptly shot cough
 out of soupy phlegmquench
rouse the menthol-ember embryo

II.

My dog's a lazy asshole
 who never jumps over anything
he just eats cat shit from Queenie's litter box
and sniffs my girlfriend's pit-bull on her jeans

III.

linkup nympho junky
 my lil' poopoo plum
 unholy 69 yo' nom nom
ohm, jump on my pony

IV.

my phone died as I wrote a text
to tell her that I'd be home late
 then turned back on when
it touched the base of the pool i lay up top
 on the deck
 eyes white slits with blacks rolled back in head

V.

biting always biting digits
during movie viewings
 gnawing softened hardened-keratin
 broken protein matrix-baby vulgar cuticle extraction

VI.

animus vacuum a mosaic soma-sermon
woven over scum as a winnow-
romance souvenir an omen-exorcism
over narco ocean

Outside Beneath a Tarp of Night

I lay still as any Capulet,
ignoring time to focus up above
upon our holy nocturne:

clouds
like microwaved
marshmallow scooped into
filled the corners of the smoggy
freckled evening.

On a bench in Griffith Park
music rattling dust from small speakers
cutting in and out of each chord,
some strings unplucked but strummed
into built up southern drawls.

Night's side stayed brightly lit.
She shined through every nimbus
cavern above city eyes, non-stop
fourty-five watts heating up the fourth wall,
the whirr of engines eating away
our breathable environment.

And I worship all of this.
This dome of smoke above
to stifle any outward.

An extension of fear I seek closure
and my wasted body rejoices deprivation,
in exalted anguish, skin-mâché
like chewed paper framing
hungry bones
just a shitty dermis wrapped
around a corpse. Then I finish my drink
and fall asleep facing east.

I've contaminated my temple
with these offerings to you.
You, the great salt and electric
current that animates me
attracted to my limbs, bending leashes
swung with calculation
to anticipate the lag of a closing fist

My body only moves in unison

with the mechanism inside

Like earth, my parts are only whole
if all allows it as this system crashes
and we slip into sleepness
nights of elongation

Turning Over the Last Three Cards

My mind is only lost
because I've led it
to the wilderness

And There's Rain In the Streets at Night and Wind and Nobody

i.

woman named Voodoo
stands and rocks next to freeway exit
passageway L.A. Rams shirt stained with black
and mustard a ripped neckline like new fashion
although this one worn from wiping paper lips
and constant fidget
two weeks passed
of constant exits speeding cars through yellow
traffic throwing shade to Voodoo waddle
on the shoulder until one more week
for absent exit a flick of fraying
trashbag unmoved beside piled sweater
both lain down to cover sheets of paper
while Voodoo woman stays wherever she has gone

ii.

dad threw a cat against the street
last night because it meowed too loud
and free climbed the front-room screen
idiot cat
no one cried
because the cat was still alive and brain dead
only 'cause the girls
were sad that dad was crazy

iii.

follow a line of smoke and jagged trail
on the crooks of Reynolds wrap parked discretely
on a city street Dan's metal box vibrates
with each car's pass the family
wagon pulled closer to the street
with each car's magnetism it becomes a fortress
as the numb and cold sweat huddles
on foreheads and lower backs Dan moves his legs
turning the key again to start the radio, body shifted
with the van groove "Why's shit have to be so, like, relative?"
laughter a low and quiet weird noises from behind his tongue
head shaking and slow motion
taps his knee. Something natural for the first time since sixth grade

iv.

Magritte was fond of fruit because it lent
itself to natural beauty waxy apple

caught like elasticity of grape rind
 painting then was second to the savor
of a casual glance and Magritte chose to paint with taste

Faces, though, he only knew to misconstrue
 or reconstrue since everything he made
 was frightening for its likeness to reality

maybe son of man then was born faceless
 because Rene didn't know what the first man should look like
maybe eyelids tipped around the apple leaves
resemble D. Rivera since he was honest
 and reflected light like foliage
 kept truth and beauty separate,
 immaculate two things only mixed by the most devoted self-deceivers
 but then,
maybe son was faceless because Magritte wasn't good at painting portraits.

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