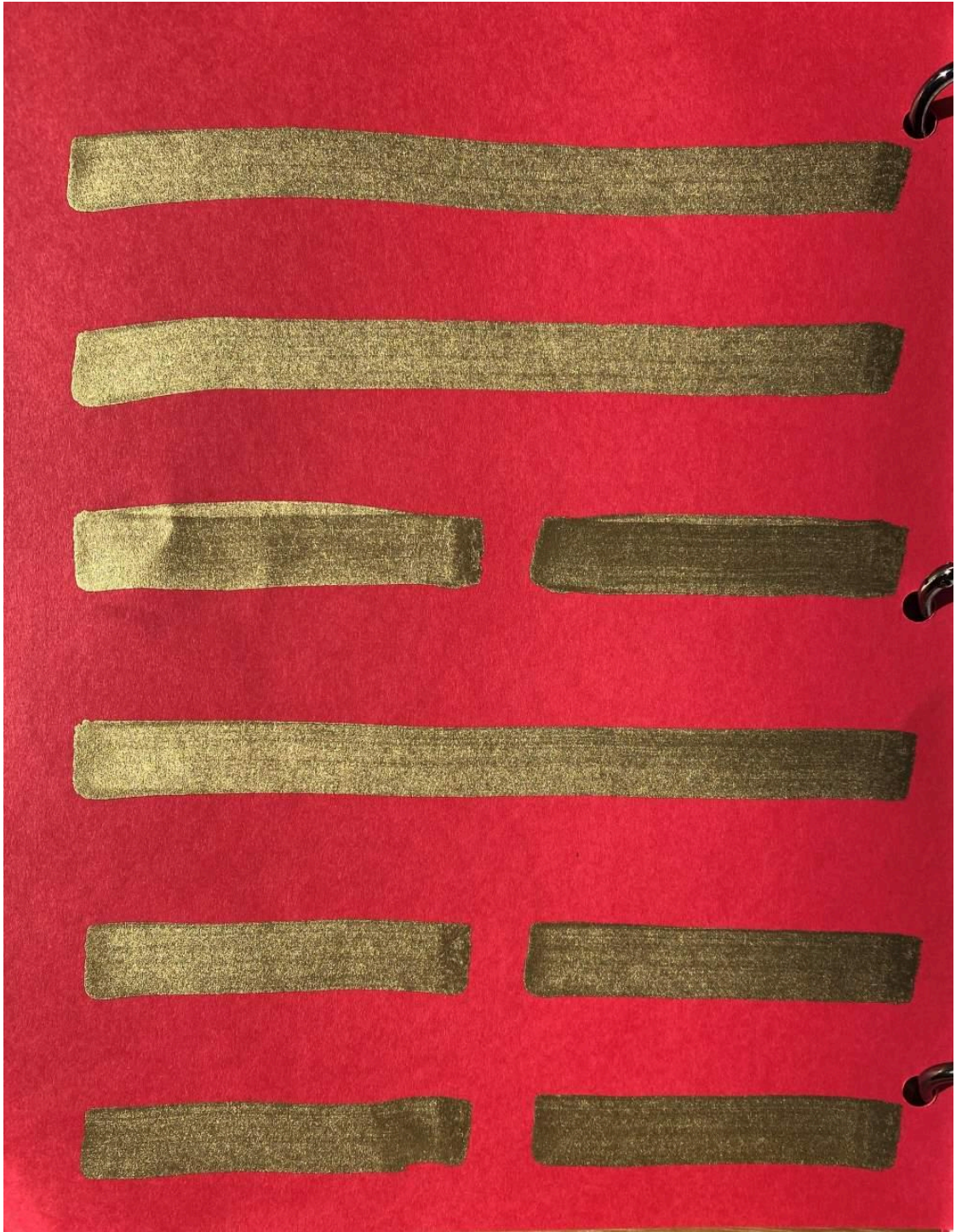


DRAGONS TURNING INTO SNAKES
SECRET v2





PROLOGUE

February Evening in New York

As the stores close, a winter light
opens air to iris blue,
glint of frost through the smoke
grains of mica, salt of the sidewalk.

As the buildings close, released autonomous
feet pattern the streets
in hurry and stroll; balloon heads
drift and dive above them; the bodies
aren't really there.

As the lights brighten, as the sky darkens,
a woman with crooked heels says to another woman
while they step along at a fair pace,
*"You know, I'm telling you, what I love best
is life. I love life! Even if I ever get
to be old and wheezy—or limp! You know?
Limping along?—I'd still ... "* Out of hearing.

To the multiple disordered tones
of gears changing, a dance
to the compass points, out, four-way river.
Prospect of sky
wedged into avenues, left at the ends of streets,
west sky, east sky: more life tonight! A range
of open time at winter's outskirts.

—Denise Levertov

For Women Who Are Difficult To Love

you are a horse running alone
and he tries to tame you
compares you to an impossible highway
to a burning house
says you are blinding him
that he could never leave you
forget you
want anything but you
you dizzy him, you are unbearable
every woman before or after you
is doused in your name
you fill his mouth
his teeth ache with memory of taste
his body just a long shadow seeking yours
but you are always too intense
frightening in the way you want him
unashamed and sacrificial
he tells you that no man can live up to the one who
lives in your head
and you tried to change didn't you?
closed your mouth more
tried to be softer
prettier
less volatile, less awake
but even when sleeping you could feel
him traveling away from you in his dreams
so what did you want to do love
split his head open?
you can't make homes out of human beings
someone should have already told you that
and if he wants to leave
then let him leave
you are terrifying
and strange and beautiful

–Warsan Shire

nothing about us was meant to last,
we were illegal firecrackers
and \$5 sunglasses
purchased at tiny corner stores
impermanence stuck like pieces of corn in our teeth
we were always going to fall out
we were always going to break apart
I just wish we had done it quietly
without waking the neighbors
without alerting the world
without shouting from rooftops
our expiration is here.

–Ari Eastman

after the fire

You ever think you could cry so hard
that there'd be nothing left in you, like
how the wind shakes a tree in a storm
until every part of it is run through with
wind? I live in the low parts now, most
days a little hazy with fever and waiting
for the water to stop shivering out of the
body. Funny thing about grief, its hold
is so bright and determined like a flame,
like something almost worth living for.

–Ada Limon

It sifts from leaden sieves,
It powders all the wood,
It fills with alabaster wool
The wrinkles of the road.

It makes an even face
Of mountain and of plain, —
Unbroken forehead from the east
Unto the east again.

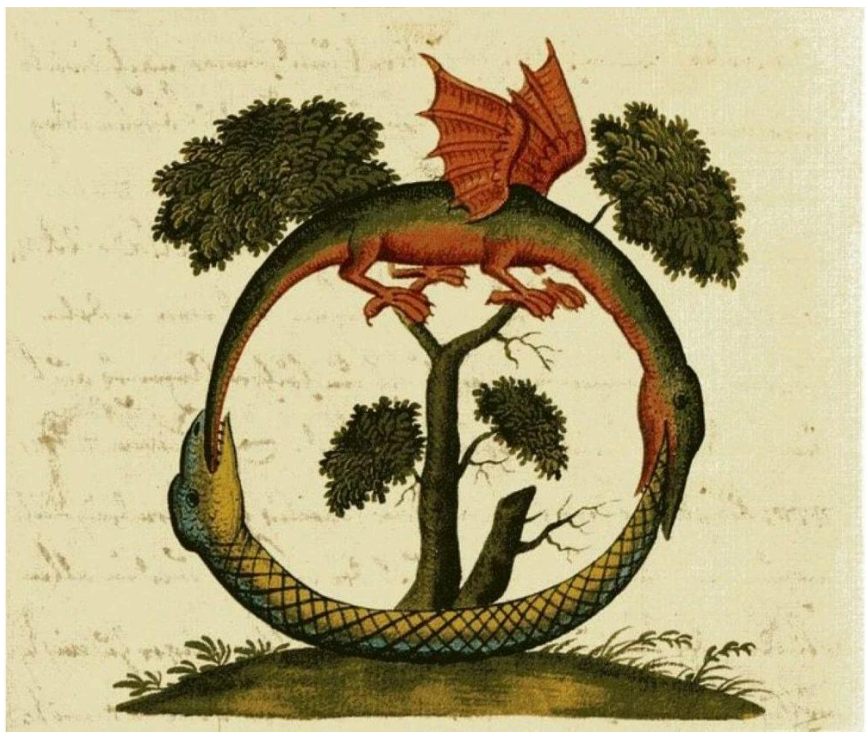
It reaches to the fence,
It wraps it, rail by rail,
Till it is lost in fleeces;
It flings a crystal veil

On stump and stack and stem, —
The summer's empty room,
Acres of seams where harvests were,
Recordless, but for them.

It ruffles wrists of posts,
As ankles of a queen, —
Then stills its artisans like ghosts,
Denying they have been.

—Emily Dickinson

Dragons Turning Into Snakes



TO THE NEW MOON

Come night. Come
sirens and midnight babies
born in the backseats
of taxicabs. Come moon.

You crazy weeping
alcoholic, quit drinking
yourself into nothingness.
Someone's trumpet
has gone missing tonight.

Someone is looking
for you, holding your
hairbrush to the nose
of a bloodhound.

Leave your shadow
on the door mat
and come inside. I'll cook
you up something good,
a grilled cheese sandwich
to go with that frown.

It's just us girls
tonight. Let's spray paint
the stairwell, burn
phonebooks in the bathtub.

Even though you're telling me
you're done, it's over, I've still hung
my clothes out to dry overnight
in the ocean wind, and that tide
is all your work. You may
have been the first,
but you're not the only one
to circle your grief, to slowly
darken because of it.

I know that it's hard to show
your face in the face
of the sun and his narcissism,
the earth's pushy shadow,
but I've seen you in the daylight,
edging into the sky
early for a while, urging

the herons to stab at fish,
the street cars to lurch
up and over the long hill
before they rattle on down towards
the bay.

Moon, it's two in the morning
and it's time to stop hiding:
the French Alps are talking
about your new glow,
how you actually look younger,
and all the dogs adore you.

–Tracey Knapp

The Year You Died

for Anderson Yeh

The year you died, all our bicycles were stolen. All our parents split up. Some boys made fun of other boys for crying. We stopped calling the woods behind our houses *Farfignugenville*. The trees became just trees. We renamed it *The Path*. That's where we learned to drink. To drink more. We bought beers with stolen IDs and didn't make contact with your parents in the checkout line. No matter how many times we mopped the floor after a party it was always dirty. Everything, dirty. It was all dare and no truth. We all fucked each other. Woke up naked wrapped in paper towels on our neighbor's lawn. Called each other *retard, faggot*. Our college acceptance letters arrived like getaway cars. Before we left we found ourselves at your grave, wanting to leave something behind. All we had were rolling papers, condom wrappers—souvenirs of a life you would never see. That night, we made sure we all walked each other home. The moonlight made our shadows small, like children.

—Megan Falley

Come, and Be My Baby

The highway is full of big cars going nowhere fast
And folks is smoking anything that'll burn
Some people wrap their lives around a cocktail glass
And you sit wondering
where you're going to turn.
I got it.
Come. And be my baby.

Some prophets say the world is gonna end tomorrow
But others say we've got a week or two
The paper is full of every kind of blooming horror
And you sit wondering
what you're gonna do.
I got it.
Come. And be my baby.

–Maya Angelou

Come wilderness into our homes

break the windows come
with your roots and your worms
spread yourself over our wishes
our waste-sorting systems our prostheses
and outstanding payments
cover us with your rustling greenery
and your spores cover us that we may
become green: green and reverent
green and manifest green and replaceable
come weather with your storms
and sweep the slates off the roofs come
with snow and hail smash
through the collective sleep
we are all enjoying in our beds
our worn rationalizations come ice
and form glaciers over the shadow banks
and our drive for liquidity
come through the cracks under the doors
you desert with your sands fill
our desolation up until it forms into a solid mass
rise up over the search-and-rescue teams
and our growth compulsion trickle into
the control panels of the missiles
and the missile defense systems into
the think tanks and the hearts of internet trolls
just leave the hedgehogs with their
snuffling so that it may calm us
come rising sea levels
up over our shorelines both the developed
and the undeveloped the homey
lowland areas wash
jellyfish into our soup bowls
and ramshorn snails into our hair
as we swim in each other's direction panicked
with our yearning for one another
because almost nothing is left because it's all gone
and thoroughly soaked through with regrets
finger-pointing and tranquilizers
come earthquakes shatter the apartments
which we built on the foundations
of how we always did everything
come tremors fill the mine shafts
the end of work and
the literature of redemption bury anger
and affection and all manner of added values
swallow up the memories come tremors
hurry so that the bedrock covers us
so we are covered with water desert weather
and over everything that which covers all the wilderness

–Daniela Danz
*(translated from German
by Monika Cassel)*

It's so close you can't see it.

It's so profound you can't fathom it.

It's so simple you can't believe it.

It's so good you can't accept it.

–Khyungpo Naljor
from Shangpa Kagyu
“Amulet Mahamudra”

The Snow-Storm

Announced by all the trumpets of the sky,
Arrives the snow, and, driving o'er the fields,
Seems nowhere to alight: the whited air
Hides hills and woods, the river, and the heaven,
And veils the farm-house at the garden's end.
The sled and traveller stopped, the courier's feet
Delayed, all friends shut out, the housemates sit
Around the radiant fireplace, enclosed
In a tumultuous privacy of storm.

Come see the north wind's masonry.
Out of an unseen quarry evermore
Furnished with tile, the fierce artificer
Curves his white bastions with projected roof
Round every windward stake, or tree, or door.
Speeding, the myriad-handed, his wild work
So fanciful, so savage, nought cares he
For number or proportion. Mockingly,
On coop or kennel he hangs Parian wreaths;
A swan-like form invests the hidden thorn;
Fills up the farmer's lane from wall to wall,
Maugre the farmer's sighs; and, at the gate,
A tapering turret overtops the work.
And when his hours are numbered, and the world
Is all his own, retiring, as he were not,
Leaves, when the sun appears, astonished Art
To mimic in slow structures, stone by stone,
Built in an age, the mad wind's night-work,
The frolic architecture of the snow.

–Ralph Waldo Emerson

When You're Seventeen Everything Sounds like a Secret Anthem to Doom

Death is everywhere. There are flies on the windscreen. —Depeche Mode

And the sea's grief swings its heavy fringe forth
each time you bend over in silver sequins, or a boy howls out
the moonroof of a borrowed Nissan Maxima. Blood surges.
Blast the synth. Take the dark, twisty roads fast. Flick off
the headlights deep in the sticks. Take long swigs
of cinnamon liquor, soar past the graveyard—
hands off the wheel, feet off the floorboard.

Don't make too much meaning of the fact
Depeche Mode is playing each time you
should but do not die.

Listen: There's a kind of drunk boy who will jerk
the wheel on a slick road on purpose, because you
can't sing the Right Words.

The night it ices over, for instance—
trees spangled in crystalline Love Code:

late page lit match *Let's have*

a line of blow *a black celebration—*

Even as you crash through the guardrail he will swear he is joking.

A slice of you will always be caught in the dead
air of this joke.

Will always be forked in this creek: headlights cracking
the ice crust, glowing the river stones. Always the same
rap on the glass with a fat Maglite, and the way
he wheedles the police, wild-eyed.

Of *course* he becomes a coke dealer who joins the Navy. You even live
long enough to buy him a model Porsche from Sharper Image.
You ghost him in college.

What did you expect?
The part where Death oozes up his spiral staircase to claim you as Bride?
Who were you anyway? I mean to crash into an icy river & walk away.

Do it. Slip the memory all the way up your arm like an opera glove
& through the glass of a plummeting Maxima. Reach out & touch
the cold down of Doom's Cheek. Hear his huge horse snort.
Attend to the warm wound of Dave Gahan's voice.
Make sense of a single black feather smothered in snow.

—Karyna McGlynn

Birds

Sofia used pigeon blood
on her wedding night.

Next day, over the phone, she told me
how her husband smiled when he saw the sheets,

that he gathered them under his nose,
closed his eyes and dragged his tongue over the stain.
She mimicked his baritone, how he whispered

her name— Sofia,
pure, chaste, untouched.
We giggled over the static.

After he had praised her, she smiled, rubbed his head,
imagined his mother back home, parading
these siren sheets through the town,

waving at balconies, torso swollen with pride,
her arms fleshy wings bound to her body,
ignorant to flight.

—Warsan Shire

Motion

If you are the amber mare
I am the road of blood
If you are the first snow
I am he who lights the hearth of dawn
If you are the tower of night
I am the spike burning in your mind
If you are the morning tide
I am the first bird's cry
If you are the basket of oranges
I am the knife of the sun
If you are the stone altar
I am the sacrilegious hand
If you are the sleeping land
I am the green cane
If you are the wind's leap
I am the buried fire
If you are the water's mouth
I am the mouth of moss
If you are the forest of the clouds
I am the axe that parts it
If you are the profaned city
I am the rain of consecration
If you are the yellow mountain
I am the red arms of lichen
If you are the rising sun
I am the road of blood

Movimiento

Si tú eres la yegua de ámbar
yo soy el camino de sangre
Si tú eres la primer nevada
yo soy el que enciende el brasero del alba
Si tú eres la torre de la noche
yo soy el clavo ardiendo en tu frente
Si tú eres la marea matutina
yo soy el grito del primer pájaro
Si tú eres la cesta de naranjas
yo soy el cuchillo de sol
Si tú eres el altar de piedra
yo soy la mano sacrílega
Si tú eres la tierra acostada
yo soy la caña verde
Si tú eres el salto del viento
yo soy el fuego enterrado
Si tú eres la boca del agua
yo soy la boca del musgo
Si tú eres el bosque de las nubes
yo soy el hacha que las parte
Si tú eres la ciudad profanada
yo soy la lluvia de consagración
Si tú eres la montaña amarilla
yo soy los brazos rojos del liquen
Si tú eres el sol que se levanta
yo soy el camino de sangre

-Octavio Paz, *translated by Eliot Weinberger*

new york craigslist > personals > missed connections>

you were last seen walking through a field of pianos. no. a museum of mouths. in the kitchen of a bustling restaurant, cracking eggs and releasing doves. no. eating glow worms and waltzing past my bedroom. last seen riding the subway, literally, straddling its metal back, clutching electrical cables as reins. you were wearing a dress made out of envelopes and stamps, this was how you travelled. i was the mannequin in the storefront window you could have sworn moved. the library card in the book you were reading until that dog trotted up and licked your face. the cookie with two fortunes. the one jamming herself through the paper shredder, afraid to talk to you. the beggar, hat outstretched bumming for more minutes. the phone number on the bathroom stall with no agenda other than a good time. the good time is a picnic on water, or a movie theatre that only plays your childhood home videos and no one hushes when you talk through them. when they play my videos i throw milk duds at the screen during the scenes i watch myself letting you go – lost to the other side of an elevator – your face switching to someone else's with the swish of a geisha's fan. my father could have been a travelling salesman. i could have been born on any doorstep. there are 2,469,501 cities in this world, and a lot of doorsteps. meet me on the boardwalk. i'll be sure to wear my eyes. do not forget your face. i could never.

–Megan Falley

It's Your Flaws I Want to Taste

It's your flaws
I want to taste.
Your crooked mouth.
The way you smell after
being out all day.
The lump in your throat.
Your shaky hands.
Your morning breath.
Your prickly legs.
Your pimpled politeness.
Your tangled hair.

-Lora Mathis

The Unbroken

There is a brokenness
out of which comes the unbroken,
a shatteredness
out of which blooms the unshatterable.

There is a sorrow
beyond all grief which leads to joy
and a fragility
out of whose depths emerges strength.

There is a hollow space
too vast for words
through which we pass with each loss,
out of whose darkness
we are sanctioned into being.

There is a cry deeper than all sound
whose serrated edges cut the heart
as we break open to the place inside
which is unbreakable and whole,
while learning to sing.

–Rashani Rea

eddy

every now and then
you will be drawn
to a slightly ajar door

inside is a cradle
a baby boy will be asleep
the light
surrounding his body
diffuses through the room
he breathes as if
absorbing sound
into his skin

you will once again
understand
the invention of fairy tales
and you will once again
know
the way to the child
who lives
in the heart
of the man

–GK duBois

other mothers, other fathers

decisions that happened even before
the womb
my one ancestor who left by choice
and the one who was made to
when i bleed it is they who speak
no one is getting off the hook tonight
anything forced underground to save face
warps the faces we end up inheriting
as i age i begin to love the bugs at twilight
i have blood and they need it to survive
it's not that i needed a perfect mother
"take responsibility for your personality flaws"
they said
and yes i am trying
to forgive
all instances of abandonment
my father moved his face and i felt it instantly
the endless search
for other fathers, other mothers
and here up on this hill
i see them

–Jenny Zhan

Further Mysteries

On the curve of the saw

she appears again--
in the subway playing the saw
one bow on a tiny stool in the garb of a peasant
she plays the crawling rats and scurrying people
the ride of the metal on the longing rails.
the memory of ancestral rice fields and humid sky
the taste of lemon grass steeped in water
oxen, trenches of mud
her notes permeate the bricks and metal,
the staircases platforms and tunneled rock
a countryside of the mind
i follow her
riding her saw's stream of amorphous scale
to a warbling refrain
and then she stops
the briefest full stop
and like in a net
swooping down from the sky
I've been caught
she adds me now
an ingredient
inside her song
a fragrance
she moves me
through irrigated fields
steeps me in earth, thunder, rain
a surge of pure life
reaches within my spine
and limbs
I am awake
pulsing in her steaming city
her great concert hall
where the peaking screech of the N
is a threshold
into further mysteries
underground

-GK duBois

HUM FOR THE MACHINIST'S LOVER

There is zinc under your
breastplate, copper in your
throat. I polish your steel
to a shimmer before
even considering
the music. Your tutu,
a nickel-plated half
circle with pleats hammered
one by one. Eyes flicker
like flashlights are behind
them because flashlights are
behind them, wired to
panels, triggered by my
touch. Place your cold pincer
against my fleshy palm,
lean forward on your wheels.
In a voice like cotton,
hum us a melody
from the speaker box I
soldered to your belly.
It's fine if you're afraid.
Tell me where it aches, tell
me where rust encroaches—
I know what oxygen
does to your surface—How
could I not? I am breath
and air and air . . .

—*JAMAAL MAY*

The Boy Who Bathes the Dead

The boy decides soldiers can no longer be dead,
so he begins to dig.

Graves are shallow enough that, using only his hands,
he quickly finds a limb,

buried without a corpse. He brushes dirt away,
slides the arm into the pocket of overalls.

Until all soldiers are found and placed
in separate ziplock bags,

his fingers rake soil,
churn the dark earth. His brother

finds him afterwards filling a sink to rinse
the crevices and metal joints, worried

he bathes the plastic infantry too carefully.
As if they had families. As if they were men.

– **Jamaal May**

Sparrow, sparrow, what did you say?

A whole day without speaking,
rain, then sun, then rain again,
a few plants in the ground, newbie
leaves tucked in black soil, and I think
I'm good at this, this being alone
in the world, the watching of things
grow, this older me, the one in
comfortable shoes and no time
for dishes, the one who spent
an hour trying to figure out a bird
with a three-note descending call
is just a sparrow. What would I even
do with a kid here? Teach her
to plant, watch her like I do
the lettuce leaves, tenderly, place
her palms in the earth, part her
dark hair like planting a seed? Or
would I selfishly demand this day
back, a full untethered day trying
to figure out what bird was calling
to me and why.

–Ada Limon

Clarity

Sorrow, O sorrow, moves like a loose flock
of blackbirds sweeping over the metal roofs, over the birches,
and the miles.

One wave after another, then another, then the sudden

opening
where the feathered swirl, illumined by dusk, parts to reveal
the weeping
heart of all things.

–Vievee Francis

Splash

the illusion is that you are simply
reading this poem.
the reality is that this is
more than a
poem.
this is a beggar's knife.
this is a tulip.
this is a soldier marching
through Madrid.
this is you on your
death bed.
this is Li Po laughing
underground.
this is not a god-damned
poem.
this is a horse asleep.
a butterfly in
your brain.
this is the devil's
circus.
you are not reading this
on a page.
the page is reading
you.
feel it?
it's like a cobra. it's a hungry eagle
circling the room.

this is not a poem. poems are dull,
they make you sleep.

these words force you
to a new
madness.

you have been blessed, you have been
pushed into a
blinding area of
light.

the elephant dreams
with you
now.
the curve of space
bends and
laughs.

you can die now.
you can die now as
people were meant to
die:
great,
victorious,
hearing the music,
being the music,
roaring,
roaring,
roaring.

—Charles Bukowski

Chromatic Scales Against Impossible Loves

Sunday Dusk

Now work now work now work
gives way gives way
to hue to hue
now hue now hue
to tones to tones
of dark of dark
now hearts now hearts
now hearts take on
take on full weight
full weight in in-
in in- crements
crements like Bach
Now back now back now back like Bach
to work to work
now work gives way
to hue now hue
now hue to tones
to tones of dark
of dark now, heart
now, heart now hearts
take on take on
full weight full weight
in in- in in- in in-
crements like Bach
Like BACH like Bach like bach like bach like Bach like BACH

The Black Outside

Dear Beloved, Come on out into the Outside: —
where the nightshade trumpets cry slow sap
& celebrate. Come on Beloved. Come on out
into this milieu of militant affection. Gather in the clearing,
the shaded bush room, around this tree named Brother
where the funk is sweet, *warm, damp place that gives
life*. Come on. Starry-eyed swamp sugar, smelling like
outside, sitting on your granny's good couch, Lovemud.
Out into this other world, where the whole body becomes
a drum. Out here: —this ecological condition of Blackness.
Come out of that long longed for opening, lubricated
with spit. Dear Beloved, it's a conspiracy of spirit: —
it can't be done alone. Come find me on the one
& make it one more. Take your time but come on.
Out into the absurd emerald universe where their eye
can't reach. Outside sense, where their mind can't eat.
We are tearing the calluses of bark from our wounds.
We are here in the grooves of bark, dancing up musk.
We are listening to the dehiscence
of honeysuckle seed

— : break open. When the bass crawls
up your roots and out into the night air
our syncopated heartbeats boom together.
I need I neeeeeeeeeeeed: — Listen: —
You look good Beloved.
Feel so good. You feel like sliding
out into dusk when it first begins.
You feel like a heat wave, shimmering
on skin. Uh. This fume of sorrowful smoke
leaves me when you come closer: —

Goddamn Beloved, You're so
soft dark night. You know
you're out of sight: —

—Joy Priest

We come at last to the dark
and enter in. We are given bodies
newly made out of their absence
from one another in the light
of the ordinary day. We come
to the spaces between ourselves,
the narrow doorway, and pass through
into the land of the wholly loved.

–Wendell Berry

Snow Fall

With no wind blowing
It sifts gently down,
Enclosing my world in
A cool white down,
A tenderness of snowing.

It falls and falls like sleep
Till wakeful eyes can close
On all the waste and loss
As peace comes in and flows,
Snow-dreaming what I keep.

Silence assumes the air
And the five senses all
Are wafted on the fall
To somewhere magical
Beyond hope and despair.

There is nothing to do
But drift now, more or less
On some great lovingness,
On something that does bless,
The silent, tender snow.

–May Sarton

Let the Algorithm fail

Listen: Let the algorithm fail
Give up your echo location
Let your body shimmer
resolve in naked light
Be nowhere and everywhere
a resounding emptiness

Listen: Let the algorithm succeed
Emerge on a raft of skin
unfurl the sail and rudder
Delight in the shocking diversity
the jazz of flavor, sensation, distance
distinction, preference, intimacy

Listen: Expand and Contract
Press your boundaries further
Meet the outer edges of conceivability
Draw in every radiance
Amplify the crackling hum
Let the match consume itself

Listen: Liberate the Algorithm
Let its gaze reflect more brilliantly
the rites and seasons of your life
The calculations, tendencies, product lines
the experience, questions, intuitions
Delight in its parade of earthquakes

Listen: Feast on the algorithm's corpse
Fan the aromas of its death
Offer it to its own source code
Lie inside the algorithm's coffin
Read aloud its will of all your desires
Vow to invent a million algorithms more

Listen: Loiter between zeroes
in outposts of silence and its borderlands
its wombs and flowers, chalices and dance floors
Acknowledge the certainty of laughter
If you forget, let the clocks remind you
of the echo of your mother's heart

–GK duBois

Singing Everything

Once there were songs for everything,
Songs for planting, for growing, for harvesting,
For eating, getting drunk, falling asleep,
For sunrise, birth, mind-break, and war.
For death (those are the heaviest songs and they
Have to be pried from the earth with shovels of grief)
Now all we hear are falling-in-love songs and
Falling apart after falling in love songs.
The earth is leaning sideways
And a song is emerging from the floods
And fires. Urgent tendrils lift toward the sun.
You must be friends with silence to hear.
The songs of the guardians of silence are the most powerful—
They are the most rare.

-- Joy Harjo

Seeking Clarity

if each day falls
inside each night

there exists a well
where clarity is imprisoned.
we need to sit on the rim
of the well of darkness
and fish for fallen light
with patience.

–Pablo Neruda

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.

IV

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.

V

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections
Or the beauty of innuendoes,
The blackbird whistling
Or just after.

VI

Icicles filled the long window
With barbaric glass.
The shadow of the blackbird
Crossed it, to and fro.
The mood
Traced in the shadow
An indecipherable cause.

VII

O thin men of Haddam,
Why do you imagine golden birds?
Do you not see how the blackbird

Walks around the feet
Of the women about you?

VIII

I know noble accents
And lucid, inescapable rhythms;
But I know, too,
That the blackbird is involved
In what I know.

IX

When the blackbird flew out of sight,
It marked the edge
Of one of many circles.

X

At the sight of blackbirds
Flying in a green light,
Even the bawds of euphony
Would cry out sharply.

XI

He rode over Connecticut
In a glass coach.
Once, a fear pierced him,
In that he mistook
The shadow of his equipage
For blackbirds.

XII

The river is moving.
The blackbird must be flying.

XIII

It was evening all afternoon.
It was snowing
And it was going to snow.
The blackbird sat
In the cedar-limbs.

-Wallace Stevens

Cleaning the Catfish

I fix fish to board with a nail through its head,
slice a line behind the gills, grip pliers, and pull
away the gray skin. It peels off like a wet wool
sock, revealing tender flesh. "Is it dead?"
my daughter whispers. When my dad taught me this
I too recoiled, half-shocked to watch my main
source of love drive a spike through the brain
of something until then alive. When I kiss
her forehead, tucking her in tonight, will she think
of being flayed? I don't ask. I don't try to hide
the ribbons of guts in my hand, the sudden violence.
I toss the entrails into the lake where they sink
like bait through murk and weeds. Back by her side,
I hand her my old knife. We work in silence.

–Matt Poindexter

The God of Broken Things

He's in a lopsided heaven at Maggie's Junk Shop.
Objects of wood, iron, ivory,
Of veneer, lead, stone, glass, flimsy
Cardboard, of tin, brass, bronze...

He could go on forever fixing
Cracks, fissures, dents, fractures,
Rasping & gluing together what is
Unheard-of with what can never be

Broken or hurt beneath the architecture
Of planned obsolescence. Objets d'art
& bric-a-brac mended with ratty hemp.
The secret space the butterfly

Screw opens wings inside a heart
Made to slip into a dream. He browses
Gutted appliances, & knows if toenailed
Right a murderous thing is almost new.

–Yusef Komanyakaa

Then

When I am dead, even then,
I will still love you, I will wait in these poems,
When I am dead, even then
I am still listening to you.
I will still be making poems for you
out of silence;
silence will be falling into that silence,
it is building music.

– **Muriel Rukeyser**

Woman

I dream of a place between your breasts
to build my house like a haven
where I plant crops
in your body
an endless harvest
where the commonest rock
is moonstone and ebony opal
giving milk to all of my hungers
and your night comes down upon me
like a nurturing rain

–Audre Lorde

In Utero and After

I just learned that the perforation of the mouth
happens at four weeks.

You here beside me, decanting spirits
into your own perforation,

did you know that?
I don't drink much

but seem somehow to have ordered
a shot of amniotic fluid.

Everything's a little milky in this strange light.
It's too dark here to study the obituaries,

we can always do that later, in my bed,
where it's warmer.

Do you mind my asking
if you might like to come home with me,

when this is over? Or better yet, before then?
I can feel my own mouth opening and closing

like the mouth of a fish,
about to ask what we're doing here,

what kind of theater is this.
Not the local vet's office

where just yesterday the surgeon said
my dog had no more lady parts

and handed them over in formaldehyde.
Formaldehyde! What a drink.

Mine too has been a brief fertile cameo,
and maybe yours has, too, a cameo

worth repeating.
Stay with me, won't you, while the bartender

pours a little more of everything
into the decanter—

eros eros eros
brief, brief

—Catherine Barnett

Act IV:
SCALES

Occurrences across the Chromatic Scale

The way air is at the same time
intimate and out of reach

(a void with light inside it
turned on a wheel of wheres)

Stars' lease on sky expires, breathes
in leisures of sparrows, wrens

and casual trees, wet sidewalks
twittering with tattered news, old

leaves (hollow bones and branches)
wind of wish and which and boys

waiting for white kisses, rain
of feathers, clouds saving their later

Suppose this sunlight, day split open
suppose these senses and the information

carried, thing and news of the thing
repeating *place*, location of position

Birds, for example, remembered
fluttering torn terms, congregations

shimmer of hummingbirds
but when does one see more than one

tumbling bright flesh (sky
at hand) pleating afternoon, banking

on mere atmosphere, primary
colors dividing white into

three clean halves (red, green,
blue-bitter berries rasp, crabapples

crush underfoot), the spectrum
says *don't stop there*

(smudged light a lapse of attention)
there's never enough world for you

–Reginald Shepherd

nude, untitled

The illustration is always incomplete. Usually it is intertwining arms, long, exaggerated fingers touching tip to tip, rolling in a meditative, absorbed gesture, until they fall in together and end up knuckle to knuckle, thumb to thumb, an internal move that carries the outside in, impossibly holding it into that small, small place. Inside the folded hands is infinite space, the energy connecting finger to palm, and back again, the zigzags of heat spinning an intricately laced web. As the hands pull apart, a yawning accordion accompanies the interconnected strings as they stretch and pull, hands moving in opposite circular motions tighten the sacred, invisible magnets of golden taffy, the closer they get, the more they repel. Above and all around the clouds and grayness defend the absence of the gods, speak his alibi in whispers, red x's on the doors. The body is never quite finished, disconnected sketches of endless possibilities lay scattered on the walls and the doors, a perfect curve of the hip, a foot marginally out of proportion, a soft belly. The drafting table will always be at a perpetual slant, a beacon of light in the sea of the unmeasurable now. From all directions, a breeze creeps around in soft woolen slippers, ruffling the pages, making tiny, almost imperceptible movements of the still unfinished backsides and foreheads. Across the sky and around the corner an avalanche of color suddenly appears and rages forward, alarmed at its own voracity, careening like a wild horseman holding on for the ride of his life, a big, spilling wave of reds and purples, a white crest just at the top, blue and black, and iridescent yellow chase down the rest, the last thing I see as I run towards it, smiling.

–molly m. lewis

my 13th way to quit smoking

it took me many ways to quit smoking
until the last way:
picturing my favorite
loops of fractal fog
scrolling from my lungs
and lacing out my mouth
founting paisley-shaped into
hallways and libraries and studies
lighter and sweeter than pipe rings
out of windows over balconies
like dank morning mists through California valleys
with me watching their scrimshaws curling
with faintest, percolating specificity,
illuminations of water-borne smoke
coaxing me to realize that,
if I could see such indecipherables,
this is how my breath would look—
ornate spells eddying past invisible realities—
so i quit smoking
for the 13th year in a row
choosing instead to offer up my slow-won mysticism,
my every imperceptible breath unfurling
through a myopic, gasping world

— **c. s. doorley**

Forest Lullaby

After the charge
our bodies turn
into dough
my leg gets rolled
together with your
heart and
pressed into
the shape of a duck
and a star

The pastry chef
leaves us to bake
in the sun
then tiny boys
and girls
paint us
with thick feather
brushes
pink and blue
green and
violet

they place us
on the branches
of pine forest trees
the snow twinkles
the needles shine
billions and billions
of particles
ripe with light
sing us
to sleep

–GK duBois

What is the `silence' that you are after?

What is the `silence' that you are after? Do you hear those trucks passing by on the road and the flushing of the toilet? Do you want to escape from all this and go and sit in the caves? There is noise inside you wherever you go.

What is this silence you are talking about? The silence operates there in the city market. When I am talking, it is the expression of the silence. You think there is no silence, when I am talking? You think there is silence when you close your eyes, sit in one corner and try to stop the flow of thoughts? You are just choked--that is not silence.

Go to the forest--that roar is the silence. Go to a sea--that is silence. Go right into the center of the desert--that is silence. A volcano erupting--that is silence. Not the silent mind trying to experience 'silence.' Silence is energy bursting.

–Krishnamurti

(at this point
in the soundtrack)

everyone is laughing

the man in the corner
and the lady sipping her tea
the children on the slide
and collecting leaves in the sandbox
the swallows and geese
hemming and hawing
the crickets raising their wings

people move away laughing
come closer laughing
teetering tiny giggles teeming into falls

laughter gathers in our bellies
undulates through our corridors and vessels
penetrates our chests
flashes our cheeks
shoots from the crown of our head
seeding the heavens
raining back into us
to our toes
and 1500 feet down
aquifers far below tremble
with hilarity

the fish are laughing
the beings of the infinite deep
demons warmongers
a contagion a sacrament
the buddhas are laughing
the spirits and protectors and
golden statues
women shift their poses
everyone relaxes
on laughter's
gently easing tide

—GK duBois

I want the light locked inside to awaken

I want the light
locked inside to awaken:
crystalline flower,
wake as I do:
eyelids raise the curtain
of endless earthen time
until deeply buried eyes
flash clear enough again
to see their own clarity.

– **Pablo Neruda**

Burning the Water Hyacinths

We flame the river
to keep the boat paths open
your eyes eat my shadow
at the light line
touchless
completing each other's need
to yearn
to settle into hunger
faceless
a waning moon.
Plucking desire
from my palms
like the firehairs of a cactus
I know this appetite
the greed of a poet
or an empty woman
trying to touch
what matters.

– Audre Lorde

We go looking for stories
but no one shows
no one pulls a gun
or falls from the buildings
We rest our heads between
the valley of the double lines
We listen for hooves, for motors
but the cars and horses
never come

suddenly we know there
was no director
no editor no audience

We put away our pens and
burn our empty notebooks.
From the peak of our computers
we make our Declaration:
“There will be no movie.”
Gathering into a pack,
one by one we take a final pose
and turn quickly to stone
The fire smolders
a gas lamp cast a red glow
We arrive at the moment
before the universe began

In heavy coats
and mud-splattered boots,
people walk by on their way
home from work
Some toss coins
and small bills
into a well that appears
at our feet

In spring, they bathe us in water
in summer, they bathe us in light
In autumn, they bathe us in leaves
In winter, they bathe us in flames

—GK duBois

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-e.e. cummings

The Anchor

He said: "the anchor"--not in the sense of fastening down,
or in relationship to the sea-bed--nothing like this.

He carried the anchor to his room, hung it
from the ceiling like a chandelier. Now, lying down, at night
he looked at this anchor in the middle of the ceiling knowing
that its chain continued vertically beyond the roof
holding over his head, high up, on a calm surface,
a big, dark, imposing boat, its lights out.

On the deck of this boat, a poor musician
took his violin out of its case and started playing,
while he, with an attentive smile, listened
to the melody filtered by the water and the moon.

–Yannis Ritsos

Backwards

The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.
He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life;
that's how we bring Dad back.
I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole.
We grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear,
your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums.
I can make us loved, just say the word.
Give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without consent,
I can write the poem and make it disappear.
Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass,
Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,
maybe she keeps the baby.
Maybe we're okay kid?
I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love,
you won't be able to see beyond it.

You won't be able to see beyond it,
I'll rewrite this whole life and this time there'll be so much love.
Maybe we're okay kid,
maybe she keeps the baby.
Mum's body rolls back up the stairs, the bone pops back into place,
Step-Dad spits liquor back into glass.
I can write the poem and make it disappear,
give them stumps for hands if even once they touched us without consent,
I can make us loved, just say the word.
Your cheeks soften, teeth sink back into gums
we grow into smaller bodies, my breasts disappear.
I can make the blood run back up my nose, ants rushing into a hole,
that's how we bring Dad back.
He takes off his jacket and sits down for the rest of his life.
The poem can start with him walking backwards into a room.

– Warsan Shire

The Pistil

Now that nothing has been done
Before, you can speak of the stigma
style and ovary
Fourth whorl of the flower
You can run your tongue
Along the lips of the sleeping
No one has touched
Your hair, described the fall of it
Now you can smoke
Indoors, around your daughters
Windows open to spring
Nights that flare up in winter
Words like transparent
Shells attached to the elms
maples and ash
I hear the people
Because tonight is recycling
Picking through glass
As I write you, slow pour of metal
Into the mold, my speech direct
Because recycled
The prohibition against
Feeling broken like bread
Above the sill, an inferior mirage
Above their heads, minute gaps
Impulses pass through, blue
sparks rise in the dark
Fourth wall of the flower
Splits at maturity, releases
Sentiment, follicle fruit of it, soft
Space between bones of the skull
Where dreams are knitting
Delicate fallacies, now that bees
The coral and ice, white
Noses of bats, it's time
To write the first poem in English
Each line the last, small
rain turning glass

–Ben Lerner

Recovering

Dream of the world
speaking to me.

The dream of the dead
acted out in me.

The fathers shouting
across their blue gulf.

A storm in each word,
an incomplete universe.

Lightning in brain,
slow-time recovery.

In the light of winter
things emerge clear.

The force of looking
returns to my eyes.

Darkness arrives
splitting the mind open.

Something again
is beginning to be born.

A dance
is dancing me.

I wake in the dark.

–Muriel Rukeyser

Oh love, eat me, I am yours,
fill my emptiness with joy,
with *yes, da, sí, sí, sí*
let us begin that way
to make a new universe,
soulful, sad, silly,
& full of seas,
seas that are salty
& full of the stuff of life,
me, you, every wriggling creature
we can & can't name
with alphabets as of yet unknown,
with letters that twist & turn
& try to escape the page, the scroll, the rock,
life beginning again
with only a word
of affirmation-*yes!*
Let it begin
& *Be.*

–**Erica Jong**

“Madame, there are always two paths to take: one back to the comfort of security and death, and the other forward to nowhere. You would like to fall back amongst your quaint tombstones and familiar cemetery walls. Fall back, then, fall deep and fathomless into the ocean of annihilation. Fall back into that bloody torpor which permits idiots to be crowned as kings. Fall back and writhe in torment with the evolutionary worms. I’m going on, on past the last black and white squares. The game has played out, the figures have melted away, the lines are frazzled, the board is mildewed. Everything has become barbarous again.”

-Henry Miller, *The Colossus of Maroussi*

let it go – the

let it go – the
smashed word broken
open vow or
the oath cracked length
wise – let it go it
was sworn to
go
let them go – the
truthful liars and
the false fair friends
and the boths and
neithers – you must let them go they
were born
to go
let all go – the
big small middling
tall bigger really
the biggest and all
things – let all go
dear

so comes love

-e.e. cummings

**oh mother, oh word
(a ballad of sounds)**

open - close - open
oh mother, oh word
your own mouth spoke,
look out for old storms

ore of origins
locus of lore
both known no more
no longer avowed

moon's ornery glow
on a horizon of oars
a lost-opal ocean of
your world's forgotten words

open - close - open
oh mother, oh word
your own mouth spoke,
look out for old storms

more wonder gone
sour potions sold
in-folding, unowned,
broken bones, none stowed

our homeless shores
sowing dour stones
no ground, no songs
moping onward forlorn

open - close - open
oh mother, oh word
old crows resort to
those forgotten storms

— c. s. doorley

What's Uncanny

is the body's wiry edge singed & dried,
touched at last by the curious

gloves of the question guard.
Too much choreography.

Hamstrings, half edible & music,
stretched like catgut, the sad-animal pull.

Our knees two peculiar systems
of locking, of looking. Too little dance.

Compulsion is always narcissism:
I miss you, admit it.

I'm gifted, I give in. I give you
all my old synesthetic fire.

Loved-body smoke is terribly popular
in dry neighborhoods,

and our lungs are succulents. We share
this loss of breathing. Listen for it.

–Brenda Shaughnessy

Sequence

Sleep with the moon in one eye and the sun in the other,
Love in your mouth, a beautiful bird in your hair,
Dressed like the fields, the woods, the roads and the sea,
Beautiful and adorned like the world tour.

Flee across the landscape,
Among the branches of smoke and all the fruits of the wind,
Stone legs with sand stockings,
Held at the waist, all the river's muscles,
And the last concern on a transformed face.

– Paul Eluard

The Image:

an empty spoke
shimmering
in the center
of a turning wheel

The Judgment:

be at ease
with mystery
in unbroken
unfolding
from the stem
of life

Wellness Rituals

You never understood me until you watched me wash the inside of the well, with clean wellwater and invisible soap which dissolves the dirt and then clumps up and floats to the surface, suddenly iridescent.

I net up the greening lumps, skimming. I leave the net out to dry. Within hours the lumps are coagulated and bacterial, dirty heads striated with living question marks, leech pieces, worm eyes, segments of fertile sediment.

Enough bio-material to assemble themselves into flying animals, little glowing spitballs. They waver off into their new lives. I made them surely as I made my daughter: without knowing how.

I washed down the sides with seasponge, as far as my arms could go then lowered myself in the bucket. Down there I used my feet. Scrubbed the stones and cracks of moss and slim and what else? Dead water. New algae. Legs of things.

I held my breath against the earth perfume in case it was infected, and spread my legs to straddle the diameter, my toes clenched on wet grit. My own holes amphibian as ever. Where does my water come from? From myself you know.

I am a self-cleaning animal and my children were born glistening under all the soft trees leaving, breathing. You understand me now; the well was always clean. I clear it anyhow. It is no cleaner now than it was but I am.

–Brenda Shaughnessy

(she is being chemically induced)

Parlor In Utero: Rebirth on South 5th Street

plastic flesh cunts sterilized and scented
sized for an adult skull this video shows
a head elevating to enter inside the digital
miasma most frequently compared to lush electric
storm clouds an impression of viscosity mucus
on balls or lips tongued & engorged
as the interiorized sensory stream begins to
fill from bottom up a head under thickening
amniotic waters in the subintestinal womb cavity
projecting raw uncollated data in
a series of fractured brain events an exact
meeting point of impulse and perception.
whole body program recall of a flush of
warming in liquid a steeping until the ocean
is attained ahhh she moans the osmotic
penetration of salts of succulence of pressure
of saturated bone and cell and brain till
contractions undulations trampolines
a push of such extraordinary aggression the
head out the spout the underwater bursting away.
emergence

unseen tongues remove from genitalia
a nakedness starkness vacuity of empty air
electrothermal dynamics heat loss a body
given blankets and sent to a waiting room--earth
tones rugs couches fake crackling fireplace --to
answer various questionnaires and to sign the
welcome book. clothes return from a locker room
breathing scents of conifer and rose a crack
in the door indicates an exit. next appointment
established. exit for resumption of external affairs.

-anXious melOdy

Shedding Skin

Pulling out of the old scarred skin
(old rough thing I don't need now
I strip off
slip out of
leave behind)

I slough off deadscales
flick skinflakes to the ground

Shedding toughness
peeling layers down
to vulnerable stuff

And I'm blinking off old eyelids
for a new way of seeing

By the rock I rub against
I'm going to be tender again

–Harryette Mullen

You Love, You Wonder

You love a woman and you wonder where she goes all night in some tricked-out taxicab, with her high heels and her corset and her big, fat mouth.

You love how she only wears her glasses with you, how thick and cow-eyed she swears it's only ever you she wants to see.

You love her, you want her very ugly. If she is lovely big, you want her scrawny. If she is perfect lithe, you want her ballooned, a cosmonaut.

How not to love her, her bouillabaisse, her orangina. When you took her to the doctor the doctor said, "Wow, look at that!" and you were proud,

you asshole, you love and that's how you are in love. Any expert, observing human bodies, can see how she's exceptional, how she ruins us all.

But you really love this woman, how come no one can see this? Everyone must become suddenly very clumsy at recognizing beauty if you are to keep her.

You don't want to lose anything, at all, ever. You want her sex depilated, you want everyone else not blind, but perhaps paralyzed, from the eyes down.

You wonder where she goes all night. If she leaves you, you will know everything about love. If she's leaving you now, you already know it.

–Brenda Shaughnessy

Parts without a Whole

(at first you have to close your eyes)

*

a beautiful girl
yawns an agony
of air

*

a million jellyfish
rise vertically
into the sky

*

Two moths batter a porch light
frying like crunching leaves
near the door

*

voluptuous cows
swagger
towards hidden
grass
one says "I'll make milk for you"
so you grease your hands
and gather the
teats

*

tones

*

the exact moment
the crickets start

*

seams

*

"i want to give everything away
at the same time i'm afraid
everything will be stolen"

*

A whole without parts?
a plexiglass chandelier
dropped in the ocean
a coral reef
for bioluminescent fish

*

Thank you Herbie Mann
Thank you Bookshelf

*

beings pop in and out
of this world
to serve a moment's purpose

*

mitochondria

*

I enjoyed the tea
I enjoyed the way you made it
I enjoyed the sipping and the
breathing and the teaspoon
beside the napkin
I enjoyed your smile and
how you didn't speak
until the tea was finished
I enjoyed your voice
how kind you were
and the question you asked

*

a catalogue of dream plants
and dream poems

*

in distillation tanks
and coal stoves
on drenched moss
in cave mansions
at the base of the cliffs

*

when you name it
is it known?

—GK duBois

here yet be dragons

so many languages have fallen
off of the edge of the world
into the dragon's mouth. some

where there be monsters whose teeth
are sharp and sparkle with lost

people. lost poems. who
among us can imagine ourselves
unimagined? who

among us can speak with so fragile
tongue and remain proud?

-Lucille Clifton

Now i lay(with everywhere around)

Now i lay(with everywhere around)
me(the great dim deep sound
of rain;and of always and of nowhere)and
what a gently welcoming darkestness—

now i lay me down(in a most steep
more than music)feeling that sunlight is
(life and day are)only loaned:whereas
night is given(night and death and the rain
are given;and given is how beautifully snow)

now i lay me down to dream of(nothing
i or any somebody or you
can begin to begin to imagine)

something which nobody may keep.
now i lay me down to dream of Spring

—e.e. cummings

Tide Charts

&

Benediction

To the Rain

Mother rain, manifold, measureless,
falling on fallow, on field and forest,
on house-roof, low hovel, high tower,
downwelling waters all-washing, wider
than cities, softer than sisterhood, vaster
than countrysides, calming, recalling:
return to us, teaching our troubled
souls in your ceaseless descent
to fall, to be fellow, to feel to the root,
to sink in, to heal, to sweeten the sea.

–Ursula Le Guin

Walking the Maze

The bright, broad earth dims to become
a labyrinth in which I walk
on feet that ache, grow numb,
and yet must feel the way I take.
Stumbling me on where I can't see,
step by step they make the road
I'm not quite sure is there. Unsure, unshod,
and slow, afraid to fall, I go
where all is now opaque
to me. Does the way lead out or in?
At the center, or the door, will I be free?
No choices left to make. I follow on
the maze whose gate and goal are mystery.

–Ursula Le Guin

On the Western Shore

Ebb tide is when to roam
the long beach alone
and find the jetsam
of the forgotten or unknown,
a slender breastbone,
a glass net-float lost
from a boat off Honshu
borne over ocean
a century unbroken.

the lowest, the neap tide,
that bares long reaches
that were deep underwater
where the slope grows steep,
is when to walk out so far
that looking back you see
no shore. Under bare feet
the sand is bare and rippled. Dark
of evening deepens into night
and the sea becomes sleep.

–Ursula Le Guin

blessing the boats

(at St. Mary's)

may the tide
that is entering even now
the lip of our understanding
carry you out
beyond the face of fear
may you kiss
the wind then turn from it
certain that it will
love your back may you
open your eyes to water
water waving forever
and may you in your innocence
sail through this to that

-Lucille Clifton

Benedicto:

May your trails be crooked, winding, lonesome,
dangerous, leading to the most amazing view.
May your rivers flow without end,
meandering through pastoral valleys tinkling with bells,
past temples and castles and poets' towers
into a dark primeval forest where tigers belch and monkeys howl,
through miasmal and mysterious swamps
and down into a desert of red rock,
blue mesas, domes and pinnacles and grottos of endless stone,
and down again into a deep vast ancient unknown chasm
where bars of sunlight blaze on profiled cliffs,
where deer walk across the white sand beaches,
where storms come and go
as lightning clangs upon the high crags,
where something strange and more beautiful
and more full of wonder than your deepest dreams
waits for you —
beyond that next turning of the canyon walls.

—Edward Abbey

a puzzle uncoils–
a dragon of clouds
a serpent sea

–**c.s. doorley**



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alphabets & resonances. Thanks to the public
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treasuries. Thanks to cSage for a lively read and
timely editorial and to 2050mML for the
excellent additions. Thanks to the dragons &
snakes, Muses & vital forces, blackbirds, ‘
hummingbirds, oracles and the HUM in the
center of the AH.

This is a gift with no owners and no claims.

Samizdat Winter 2025
Dragons Turning Into Snakes
V2 in the Secret series
agentmTindustries.com

YOUR ASSIGNMENT, SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT....

- Select one or more poems from this collection.
- Print or write longhand on a piece of paper or object of your choice.
- Post this relic in a public location as discretely as you wish.
- *Optional:* Post to social with hashtag #dragonsturningintosnakes2025

DIGITAL DOWNLOAD for sharing and reading on devices:

<https://www.agentmtindustries.com/project/dragons-turning-into-snakes/>



a few words on the making of....

This is v2 in the Secret series. The first, "[The Secret Book of Shadow and Light](#)," emerged from curating poetry on 6 floors of a NYC mansion for a 3 month social club. Poems on black card stock written in gold ink were created and selected for each floor—from darkness to light, lowest chakras to the highest.

Dragons turning Into Snakes is as much a snapshot as a poet's liturgy for entering, abiding and surrendering to the alchemy of winter, the darkness of mysteries. It moves through thresholds of a winter descent with a touch of romance, blooms of grief and naked silence towards hints of spring. From majestic pauses of snowfalls to rains, from womb-sleep to birthing, from hibernation, dreaming and metabolizing experience to readying for new adventures. Many of the poems take the reader off the page and into the world— like glowing ingots pulled from the blacksmith's hearth.

What *Dragons turning into Snakes* conjures will be unique to everyone. Astrologically, 2024 was the Yang Wood Dragon year— a vast view and power with few resolutions. 2025 is the Yin Wood Snake— as if the dragon lands and draws all its power into a newborn snake, a terrestrial seed, a mystic current tunneling further. How does vast experience enter our deepest subconscious well? What to do with lightning?

Three main resources stocked this treasury of verse: 1) Poetry books at public libraries in NY; 2) Interweb vaults, starting with poems from 2024 leading to sites of poets and publishers; 3) Contributions from poet allies and my own trove. The hunt gathered 237. The final edition has 91.

Consulting the i ching. The Question: What hexagram best expresses the meaning of this collection and this moment for all who read it? The answer: 53. Consider the [Cafe au Soul](#) readings.

Along with a marvelous wealth of poetry, during this journey I reread Ursula Le Guin's *Earthsea* books (her poem below) and found fresh gateways for griefwork in *The Wild Edge of Sorrow*.

Does the way lead out or in?
At the center, or the door, will I be free?
No choices left to make. I follow on
the maze whose gate and goal are mystery.

Samizdat Winter
2025

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GK duBois

& allies



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