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SIMULACRA

by

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Approved by

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For Thomas, my love and my light

APPROVAL PAGE

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At the end of the day there remains what remained yesterday and what will remain tomorrow: the insatiable, unquantifiable longing to be both the same and other.

- Fernando Pessoa, *The Book of Disquiet*

so daylight

is not monogamous  
and they know this detail

and the frill of his overcoat  
and her frail suede arms

they are still waiting for the lamplight  
to resolve itself

she is still in the quiet pouncing  
and fanning her eyes

he is still extracting the theater of it  
still reciting *flesh of my flesh*

clouds cackle overhead  
at the speed of a man swimming

the sky behind them orange  
and very small

she shows him the bottom of the cup

their faces like flat gold coins  
do not flicker or shape

he says *yes it is quite empty*

PART I

**moonmilk**

when my life is arid or frugal  
i take the cave wall for the whole cave

i take my rings    my arms off  
and feel unmarried

outside the ants are transparent  
and soundless    they move in floods  
and up through the sprawled hands of trees  
    which are also very sad in their bodies

if i allow for all means of ruin  
the cave collapses    if i allow for all walls  
crippled    to stop covering

and the trees do not wince  
and the paintings    red and bleary  
are not    do not even  
resemble hooks

**hover**

some days i carry my basket of swans  
to a lake and drown them

the feathers do not float    no  
the feathers will not stop floating

by afternoon they have made islands  
of cotton

like ice turning cotton in his glass  
and he keeps touching the rim

i keep carrying this basket  
and the lake is drowsy with feathers

he swirls the glass and the cotton  
of a thousand birds

in each room there are small wet rings  
when he lifts his glass they appear

swan eyes blink from the water  
everything is very still on its surface

his neck is not long or white  
when i touch them everything goes limp

## outline

he is a little coal in my mouth,  
smoking and burning. i draw  
his soot off of him, i make him  
drain the soot from himself.

smaller, the sky will not rain.  
he cleans his body and the bloated  
room does not shimmer.  
and summer, was there a place

with a roof that was your  
startling home, or would you  
ask to be made stray and  
vernal, pre-heat. something glows

and it isn't his mouth.  
and i don't imagine him as weather  
i can keep close. and worn  
down, and haggard.

the clinging i hate,  
the sweltering hands, i mouth  
the wrong words in correct  
language. is he cloud, is he

angry, is this a frame in which  
i am standing, will there be  
an island, is my tongue black,  
how singed, how stormy, the inside?

**the quiet**

we met in the city  
and as he spoke he tied a rope  
over and over again in his hands

speaking to him invoked the feeling  
of wearing only a towel and opening dresser drawers

speaking to him words were such papered hats

he spoke of lying down  
in empty pews in  
empty churches. then  
waking with patches of  
light on the wall, then  
never awakening, then  
awakening, briefly,  
to darkness, but not  
saying it

at what point did he want to care for me  
the way leaves snag in gutters

i do not want the words of my forefathers

**his point of entry**

last night silk-strings of corn  
    pulled off, white and delicate  
like fingers, strips of moon.  
a blank light she wrote:  
    *no screaming,*  
*my dear one, my strong*  
*pulse.* slipped through the door  
to survey the land. off of a ship,  
bloody with waves. she carried  
    a sack to me  
with something like violets  
but less purple. i couldn't  
    differentiate. suppose  
the whole world was a flock  
    not of sheep, but geese. crawling upriver,  
laying eggs. i see her  
    and i know the way  
her arms will cup themselves  
the way she will dismount a bike.  
    and in the prism  
of the outdoors  
    where we stand, not knowing  
the type of brick, what comes  
of kernels, the wool.

pastoral

once a silk tree was cradled in the arms of an oak  
then a man wound his hatchet around the trunk

*who is the silk tree in this scenario*

once a cut in the tree began to breathe  
and the buds like pink veins tore from a body

*they are more like hands of clocks  
not spinning slowly fanning the air*

once the oak grew larger and larger  
its roots carved into houses

*in the sense that they can be set afire  
the roots become houses*

once the silk recalled its beginning as dew  
as seed as thumb

*bright hardly floral it begins to rot*

and the oak was a house by a river

*somehow still waving almost weeping*

and you were unable to change

*leaves flying from thing to thing*

but you loved me

*as flowers touch water  
yes as flowers touching the water*

## hymn

i was baptized for my mother  
in a lake on a day in june when  
the cedars bent into the sky  
and could not straighten.  
i did not come up for air.  
water impure, water flat  
like the face of a clock,  
water that spilled and then  
spilled over my hair,  
couldn't see through my  
cloak the water a blackened  
bruise. something  
was said to me, later asked  
of me, and the water kept  
spilling because it was not  
a color i could keep  
and a man was not a tide  
that kept pulling the moon  
toward us. he said *faith like  
someone else's clothes.*  
yes, i was born and the clothes  
were too big suddenly, the water  
stretched them around me.

**meditation on land**

today when i speak to her my mouth becomes bruised

and alights on a low decibel akin to humming.

stones that i leave her are prisms, black shells in my hand.

in the water a moccasin with its face like a swan, gloating.

she turns to me and i have no knowledge of country or warmth.

but yesterday, a bird in a coat like a renaissance painting

was not cold. so i stumbled, finding a curtain of ice.

there were shivering eyes in the concrete.

swollen trees, swollen grey bones puncture the sky.

## diptych

a man pouched and pricked  
by the room of a window.  
she asks for the floor  
not to collapse  
beneath him.  
and the grey etching  
of trees mirrors  
his teeth, counting  
his sucked breath,  
counting his ears full of salt

\*\*

a man in the yard  
and she kneels in the house.  
a man splitting pipes of wood.  
she knows to cover  
her ears for the sound  
as the logs roll away  
like children

\*\*

here she is shaving, missing  
the hair on her knees.  
a man pried open. a man  
fumbling through shoulders  
and backs. she is at the edge  
of the fountain, feeling around

\*\*

a man moving a page of text  
from one desk to another as if  
the text could travel. or sleeping  
on a crowded train where  
her knees peer out  
of their sockets

\*\*

a man persisting.  
a man with eyes like  
bulletin boards. a man  
soft-shoeing  
near his tonsils  
as she draws a bath for  
his tongue. a man  
hunched over maps  
loose-lipped

\*\*

a man darkening the door  
with blue paint, her  
night sky blue. she tells  
no one,  
dreams no earth

## labors

i audit her blank moods and they are fashionable  
or they are foul because there is nothing to them  
because the shower is suffocating because the pillow  
never saves prints of the head

what does she do to the weather which becomes  
a silver bowl to spit in or what does she mean  
when the dough will not swell or the grass does not  
rise up to touch her earlobes

i try many ways of phrasing or holding her hair back  
and she cinches the waist of her dress asks me  
to take off my hat i think of putting my fist  
through the glass door or forming a circle around  
and squeezing

**then**

in my memory the sky is blown  
white the skirt i wear white

a headache becomes my bare shoulders  
becomes milk thistle  
and he muffles its spine does not shelter me

the trees lean away from us  
and are furrowed in their breathing

days after he calls it  
*the spoils of morning*  
or he says *collecting coins of dew*

as i comb through another head of hair  
another on the same carpeted grass

didn't i take delight in my pain  
which was the color of dirt

now he is off in a bright country  
which could be the country of his body  
that once pricked my arms

but handsome and well-fed  
and not wed to me

## diptych

- w: do you remember the drowsy  
pebble of morning
- m: there were buildings  
full of shapes soft and visible  
even without windows  
and i sweated through all of them
- w: you were in the street miming something  
only the vowels of which were recognizable
- m: the light was not right in that room  
don't you know when the light  
is right in a room
- w: what if they wanted to have me what if  
they wanted to murder me
- m: sometimes i have called your name  
with the mouth of a river
- w: i am brewing you large and strange  
as an aviary
- m: panicking the paint of the room
- w: everything was leaking out then  
or thrown out
- m: i was smothered with them flying  
through the hilt of a train  
wincing at each overpass
- w: your arms have left small wet rings  
on the table
- m: say more about it
- w: many small wet rings

**revision**

i discover her as if changed as if  
now to say a morning glory is blooming  
is still an appropriate way to talk

about the world as if in sweeping the floor  
she digs ditches draws caves on the cave  
wall is unnecessarily arrowed with light

as if the mountain rolling sudden and sad  
is not common to her does not even appear  
in versions of memory as if she could

slip on ice and emerge in a red room  
with no distortion with no heat as if  
her mouth instructing her hands is not

an act of mercy is not a partial complaint  
as if she could hear footsteps in the other  
house and not go to them

## magnificent height

here in the non-light of evening  
i am not able-bodied or stiff or blue

like a sliver no sentiment arrives  
and the ceiling one magnificent height

and the man at the restaurant says  
he will buy me all 62 of saturn's moons

to get away with something like lightning  
as god must/does

to be tugged along so enamored i keep  
scuffing my feet

i try to see everything little beads of salt  
matted white cream the man with the mooned brow

so enamored he keeps turning the sky  
with his mouth

later we will all arrive in a similar order  
in different fashion anvils nuzzling our spines

so we go out down roads we purchase tickets  
we tie our own arms like strings

and a weight falls down on our backs  
and he touches the knife

**suddenly**

today as most days  
frightened  
by the strange desire  
for touch:  
lengthened  
carrying one mirror  
through  
forests of moss

the wind  
not dangling  
or the fist  
not spitting back  
or the mouth  
not closing over  
the eye

**over dinner**

i say you have put flowers on the table  
but no food

and she says there are  
mirrors in the bedroom mirrors

we are floating in the field  
where she once tried to live alone  
our heels grazing specific blades of grass

i say when roots cover my eyes  
she too many thin dark lines  
she abandoned clocks  
she taupe rings in a glass

i say living between white doors  
what could you expect she what shrill  
voice you have

the field goes unnamed and wears  
no blossoms only a few trees close to the horizon  
that turn slowly are heads turning to hear us

PART II

## the beginning

a stream on a hill  
and a house beneath the stream:  
stout, square. that was  
the first day. he went out.

then a periphery of moonlight.  
the house blown over. the second  
day. and evening like hands  
over the eyes.

and a hundred grains of sand.  
and smooth rock. not yet trees  
or plains but his body, plain  
in the unlit room.

then another engulfed in  
extravagant light. the eggs  
in their styrofoam bowls,  
aghast at their whiteness.

his palm near the flame who was  
woman. and the third day,  
everything warm, the mouth plumbed  
without thought. forests finally

sent out over the ground.  
beaches thick with moths  
and pearls on the neck and coats  
buttoned to the collar: the fourth day.

then their arms stuck in fissures  
where stars spread and filled  
the sink. that was the fifth day.  
and when the sun rose

round in the stream it was not  
good or it was too good to be true  
and it was not true so the sixth day  
they went out into the land and wept.

and the seventh day they slept  
apart on bedless floors with cracked shells  
and someone called it good  
but they did not know whom.

**first**

the maker places trees pleasing  
to the eye then says  
pick a creature as a salve

i warble through give  
them parts of my throat  
they are still they are moving  
in clumps their hooves poke holes  
in the dirt it is good to want  
for nothing  
as light beads over  
the blue falls as i notice  
each crawling one each cattle  
no herbs yet the winged fowl

the maker puts up signs days  
and years separate steam  
rises over plants yielding  
seeds i am expanding into rooms  
of mist navigating tree trunks  
the spread see

**he**

i wanted to wake as  
a spike was pulled  
out of me as a frame  
a frame  
call it good call her  
most good most enviable  
when i wore shoulders  
and branched bravely  
swallowed the earth  
she is no bride she  
braids her hair  
i let the plants grow  
long she purrs  
around stretches  
her legs touches  
the striped creatures  
draws stripes on herself  
with berries i try  
to feed her new names  
in the river in the forest  
of lace her eyes  
pronged with clover

she

maybe skin formed  
maybe he cried out and i rose  
but my eyes clear did not  
know to close and grew  
wet then closed

something plump pushes  
around my mouth something  
so tender it collects water  
and feels the touches of fruit

the maker standing up says  
don't eat what can fill your palm

i eat of it want to eat of  
my husband my flesh  
delight to the eyes

dome sky these birds here

older strands of grass  
stand higher stick out

the maker studies bees in a box

still a pecan tree has the pieces  
and parts of a fawn

she arrives

long-limbed    damp with brine

already she is tapping from the end  
of a string    delighting in ribbons

shadows lie dead on front yards

we understand now she will damn herself

until only her tongue is left  
taking your hands    saying  
only my tongue is left

and the open door spread  
like a village  
the open door spread like a woman

**once formed**

he wakes to a forest says yes  
a river is lonely says you are  
lonely are you a river

says when the sun warms me i am  
warm warmed  
and the mouth like a wrinkle  
that bends and bends

when arms falling to the ground  
clatter

trilling he says tilling the earth  
picking apples holding  
the stray hands of ferns

she wanders and upends  
the dew loses her memory  
of moving startled her limbs  
a green tree lake with its tents  
she sees all of it

he no longer large without  
her for the first time touches  
leaves thinks of gravel umbrellas

extravagantly fall very clear pebble  
jade hat each sprig is a stain  
bulbed white flowers

when they go out will there  
be a sign what will they  
see the maker on a roof  
waves them on

umbrella magnolia perhaps  
in a forest where i began  
beginning to breathe

don't you remember the sky  
before it was a word when it was  
just a flourish

day

the reeds there are a beginning for red  
doors sky in full color shedding itself  
cloud poor of rain leaf poor of dew

i reach for persimmons to cotton my mouth

we are bodies this much i know  
as animals spool by fat with themselves  
and my hair sculpted in winds

nearby i watch him under dull sun  
thawing by the river lowering his feet

certain hours i am with him i wish  
i was without him or without bones

away

one is large-leaved  
flayed ribboned with apples  
and another yellow drips  
to the soil and the dark shrubs  
curled with berries

birds flit into view birds  
empty of brow we scatter them  
with trees she moves out of view  
i savor the empty room

**after**

in the morning i walk toward  
the forest its trees effused  
with fog

where he is on the dark strange edge of a plain

i am at the end of the itch of it  
with no one to wake  
me out

suddenly a beetle moves like  
a flat fist

and winter that broken heat

**at the tree**

stirring in the soil  
something new something  
she has seen before  
even before she sprang feathered  
with dust  
slopes into view  
softening the inches with its—

    this something says  
i raise you your own  
    curiosity to which she  
says where are the cattle  
    the birds exploding  
    out of shrubs did you  
put them somewhere

    a hissing rises like  
rushing water  
it widens her jaw  
    tears her coiled hair  
this creeping thing  
scallops away or presses  
the issue

**under the tree**

yes it tells her and notice  
the fragile leaves  
how they are upside-down bowls  
and on every branch this  
mild color

she deflects i think the circle is much too small  
and round  
to capture my attention

dominion my master  
dome my house

it drones on twigs drop  
into her hair

indeed indeed the opened eyes  
are beneficial

to enjoy

above she notices  
crows of ash

**then**

it calls her back down  
    have you forgotten me  
already   your draped limb  
        your opened mouth

sky an older shade of blue

    she says      if   we shall  
        it says   surely  
will not

she thinks   here is the place  
my body drops like a string  
    underneath this cupped palm

        she tastes   flesh is not  
sweet   leaks down her arm  
    her breast   hints of softness

it begins to hum   the humming  
    swallows the wind  
her hair  
    the sky   leaking

**while**

where did he trudge away she wants  
to know  
feet through pebbles through water  
over fine grasses  
hand holding wet fruit  
to give him to say yes a taste pleasing  
and knowledge of this body  
i have been made whole again these ribs

he is by the river watching fish  
streaks of grey holds out the fin  
of his hand tastes the new color  
his eyes sharp her eyes wide

they move together to collect leaves  
she weaves a gown a belt  
face turning a blush-pink  
no words arms pale in the forest

after

the maker moves through the forest  
speaking where are you  
who told you have you

two say i was and  
i hid

the maker who who  
the maker you have done

he you gave me  
she i ate i swallowed i held out my hand  
she deceived by the greenest vine

the maker putting up walls  
the maker bitter roots between you  
the maker bruised head bruised heel

**descent**

light not delicate splits the tree in half  
sky delicate not blue thin as a mist

leaves no longer blend  
into floors gold skinned sprayed  
with red flushes crumple to paper

not touching the grass in arrows that sift  
and spin collect in piles raise  
in winds scattering

weight in the air lifts darkens splices

something white begins  
to glow dresses the earth  
enormous

**revision**

if this time she restores  
the memory of him voice  
pulled taut against a drum  
saying knotted strands of wood  
twisted to ash

if he is a gourd fat  
with the mountain of her if he straightens  
the pleasant open field

if she chooses her river her  
water-ache

the long tongue beating through glass

it will say taste and she will  
learn the word for fire tree  
of orange tree a bloody house

she will see through flames  
the sky barely chalked with cloud

**how flawed was she**

on a blue day maybe i drove her to it  
being born not as a sprout but with such height

she would gather between leaves and stand  
and hold out her hands

i would show her beyond the small trees  
a water that trickled through ground

so the blue echoing long as a ribbon  
was flat blue with a blue floor of flat animals

when i showed her she stepped her flat blue foot  
and drifted

her feeling quiet as stones in mud

**after**

he arrives does not want  
my body no use in needing  
the hips the stomach  
vouchsafed

the body alone body  
of stone speaks in sticks  
as a forest shudders  
and the tongue mystified  
strikes no one

in the evening there  
in the particularly yellowed light  
turning he met my eyes is this  
an anger he said anger is it

and the eyes the lips the hands  
crease and churn underfoot  
as the body this horror  
rounds to earth

**after**

i am found and she spins  
loosely around me and she  
spins dizzy with rage

yes i have been led astray  
or yes i have chosen  
to be led but her body rose  
around me like water  
and was far-flung and was  
after a carcass something  
shelled

but i am still  
trying to hold her

**after**

i wander the length of her spine  
which before was upright    another tree  
and she glowed like a bulb  
in the sky

now skin foreign to me as new grass  
cuts up my eye  
or she catches on a mirror and my body  
blown with air

after

in all the strangely technicolored violences  
he never calls out the man  
never

and yes he is a thousand years long  
longer in light

the oar takes hours to glide through him

i asked him once briefly  
if the thought was too much:  
i have hated and hated to tell the truth

the phone ticking like a clock  
hand at the wheel winding  
the wheel

but he never calls out the man  
never calls

i have tried to understand the terrible weight  
of the body

[ somehow the mark is everywhere  
at once even before their bodies are splayed ]

q & a

she: i try stroking a hummingbird  
and prune the air

he: it's loud back there in lightning  
where the master composes a yellow wind

she: or says to rim the grass with mouth  
-fuls  
to choose other places to feed

he: why are you speaking again of bone

she: please i am not myself  
not this round room of trees

he: early on when the water dried on a leaf  
i felt my own tightened fist

she: but how did you exit the clay

he: i was a child of mud and the master  
kept me from drowning there

she: will we always need so much  
to stay afloat

he: when i needed you you were pulled  
like a ripe fruit

she: when i wanted to know i was given  
a thorn in my ear

he: you were given being

she: whatever a want was it was not that

## departure

again they enter the garden  
for the first time which is  
the last time

he carries a bent shovel  
she carries a crown of ivy

they dig each other's graves  
to bury themselves but then  
they chew each leaf and flower

they tear roots drag goats by their hooves

people say from somewhere across  
the generations why do this?

how could they live elsewhere  
knowing their home lay here  
perfect and immense fruit plump  
pinched blooms field of grazing animals

how could they lie in their beds  
at night pretending to touch  
or reach into a gutted sky

when the leaves sway here  
in vivid orange

when a tree that is not a house  
is not silent when the maker  
imagines his hands

PART III

## pinned

begat when i place the limb on a nail  
in the door. *begat*, something like fog  
in a snowstorm. buried in too much  
white light. i'm telling him nothing is  
shielded by its own volition. yet  
i see the shriveled petals of moonflower.  
yet i am a product of flotation.

he found me and i was braised in steam  
then buried as a pig cooked underground  
is buried, then pulled up by its screw.

or unabridged as a car over a moat  
must be buried, unevenly, after nothing  
collapses.

then to begin again with himself gathered  
underwater, the brave parish of my lover  
who forgets and does not make, covers  
and does not hold.

## post-eden pastoral

an arm, a brushstroke, a woman draws  
the dress around herself. i find her  
lying on her side. somewhere else,  
a deer in the woods snaps like a twig.  
the woman aches as she has for years.  
i find her leaning from a window, looking  
for a meadow, describing different breeds  
of grass: *fescue, rye, st. augustine*. no one knows  
what she's getting at: green tufts, daises?  
or something below it, water? she wears purple  
and moves to the door, undresses  
the door. outside, she is a figure  
in a landscape, nearly standing still, watching  
as a deer burns the forest down. the grass  
turned to bright orange, then dark clumps.  
i find her lying down beside what's left.  
*the meadow*, she says, *no longer underfoot*.  
all this and fabric stretched over trees  
becomes a sort of roof. looking up,  
a paper shell.

**record of her mouth**

lately i am a bird of sleep    blurry  
and imaginary    pulling out my hair  
playing in the gutter    singing for my dinner:  
*throw me a bone    a long one*  
*with a spike at the end of it*

i watch as a bicycle swings shut    egg  
dries in a dish    a slug paints its long grey line

my eyes ricochet through telephone towers  
as underneath    waving    a train approaches

*where have you hidden the vases    crooning    did you*  
*break shards of them into the compost*  
peering through staggered cars    what light

### record of his mouth

i throw her bones, piles and piles  
of bones until the residue on the carpet  
is bone and her own eye becomes  
bone. shifting to autumn, she topples  
around on stilts, being made of bones,  
and i will not carry her. if she speaks  
in the language of bones, i ask: what about  
my white sail tearing in half, what about  
the woman standing like a scarecrow  
at the back of my throat, what about  
my own need to sleep without hands in my hair.  
so she wallows at the refrigerator door,  
near the cold meats. so i have to beg her  
to be one thing. so i keep flinging her farther  
and farther away, into piles of leaves,  
and she never grows fur.

## small events

mailman, did you find  
the letters that fell out of the box when  
i was away, they were beige squares  
over the grass, they were cut up floor plans  
of a house. did you hear a sound coming  
from the window, it was muffled, i was inside,  
drawing lines of tape between us in the kitchen,  
i was saying to him *don't touch my face like that  
like you would touch a child's face*. he was saying  
*don't bleed and bore yourself around a room  
around a man, fucking him like a mane to wear  
or a lozenge*. and the radiator cut loose let heat  
reverse into the backyard slipping out like scarves  
beneath the door. i wanted to tear him up  
to paper. little box, bloody dangling arm, a man  
calling a woman calling her past injuries forward.  
could you see me wanting to fight him as an animal  
tastes food before even pouncing. but a clanging  
and you left a magazine for days that i did not touch  
or unfasten.

## **before you sleep**

i think in blue because it is the only bother to my body: a tinged rocking, a heat for heat. i gather you up like a stain, lifting the color. i think myself to pieces so each thought is chewed as if by a dog. and above the roof there must be bats navy with dusk. and beyond that, above the reaches of a sycamore, please don't fall asleep just yet. from our bedroom floor i hear crickets hitting the window, their small bodies springing toward an egg in the sky. the sink dripping its clear drips. mice rolling over and over in the walls. i turn toward you and your hue touches all of it, your body smooth with it. i know your eyes are closing as mine blink faster and my ears hear the clicks, hear a nest losing balance.

**diptych with other**

*tell me about the problem*

m: we are marooned we sit with  
knives in our pockets

w: what is wrong with maroon  
and weren't the walls a shade of dark red

*alright, let's take a step back*

m: her fingers her garters  
they were impossible

w: why are you tugging that up now

m: i am something of a boat

*hang on*

w: he begins always with such little grief

m: what are you stacking hourglasses again

w: the point here is the clanging  
cymbal of his mouth

*i'm sensing an attentiveness to sound*

m: when i speak to her she buttons  
her coat and refuses  
her greed

w: i try to hear you without hearing all of it

m: you can't blame the bees in their jackets

w: how still the trees become in winter

*yes, let's take a moment to speak of the setting*

m: as if the sunrise had been whittled  
away with picks

w: as if caves could not echo back

*so they were silent*

w: no they were caves

m: you are twisting words again  
tying clove knots

w: i am not everything like  
the leaves are everything  
like the eyes are everything

m: i know

*he knows*

w: startled and unfettered

m: perhaps

*how are you getting along now*

m: sliding a bead on its string

w:

w: small canyons i keep  
finding in the house fabric  
desiring needle

story

there was that day a woman whose tongue could unstitch  
any vista and i knew to cross a river meant the whole scrim  
would dissolve or become sullied

pondering heat   pondering damage   i paused and then  
mounted the banks toward her without a shield

she was not violent but she was not a submarine  
and her teeth like flags or pearls dropped into a ditch  
where my words would fall in and become buried

and i wanted to stay for a time   entranced by her  
anger by her exquisite fervor   but i couldn't speak  
without shrieking above wind wailing through forests

if i left her   my tigress   my dagger  
and now this small white bird

## diptych

man beautiful  
with a mouth of plums

she will marry him again  
and again  
as a priest to light

\*\*

and she is washing a dish  
wrist sketching round  
circles of glass

\*\*

here he is a drawn curtain  
casting no shadow  
and then a blue tire  
by a street and then he  
billows to air

\*\*

shadow of a man she slips  
into him with teeth that are bridge  
or that harden to concrete

\*\*

he breaches morning on a fire escape  
each cigarette blinking

\*\*

now and then she stands  
like an artery sometimes  
filled with blood

**she buys a house**

and it's blue and it is a blue thread in her eye  
and the man she doesn't want is flat maple  
is a table covered in lace that floats through  
a church where she was christened lover of  
shoulders lover of feasts lover of the interior

and the man wakes into great doubt where  
his hands are tied up with highway in a figure  
eight and he watches the car lenses advance  
and depart the way an iron pearl hangs and swings  
toward a house with teeth of broken windows

and she sees his mouth with its tongue like a hand  
on a clock renouncing its tell and she knows  
he will move with four legs onto the road  
as an act of desertion though she was the desert  
and he carried no dust and the house fell

**the smallest room**

suppose i never want children  
and becoming too gorgeous to lie about it  
i let my hair coat the shoulders the arms  
or the ancestry its own bed  
carried away the dark blonde of it

suppose i tell him he'll say  
*there are more dimensions*  
and *hard to manage* and *small-eyed*  
but enough to see from the window  
spinning into the yards

but i have not starved for a truth in years  
neglecting that wooden room  
so the sight is of hyacinth and accident  
and i never imagine them

**flaw**

somehow full of kites  
i cannot clutch you any  
longer beautiful winged  
woman your eyes are too  
generous and will keep  
seeing me even when i try  
to slice you with knives  
even when i have called you  
weak-boned and flat-tongued  
i cannot any longer pretend  
to have swept you over  
oceans on a wooden raft  
if you will not be the sail  
if your blonde hair waving  
is not a banner and if your claw  
presses down i cannot see you  
under the sun or the blue sky  
where i hold out my arms  
to you and you call it flight

still

1

and so      balancing on two spires of ice  
the spring ends      the spring  
of my silence continues and shrugs  
as a coat thrown onto a mattress over  
and over again

so in evening dice are hurled at the wall  
and not counted

and returning      unable to touch the seam  
of the window  
but shattering the glass

2

never am i wanting for a kind of  
seafoam summer on a pendulum

opening my purse to straws  
white strands      their long coats

then wearing a towel into another  
apartment where his hands are  
on me his hands are off me

yes      disrobed i am still a room quiet

## harvest

sky stretched so the blue is less blue in places where it has been pulled taut pulled so it is frantic and green suggestion of woodwind a crabapple he poses beneath the branches with a small book she undoes her eyes when they move closer they are double reeds blank down the center the sky could not have been nearly so wide vibrating ribbons of corn a bird stringing spirals of air they are statues in a fountain in a circle they are older than that he wipes down the chairs with new rain she doesn't sit but the trees are much taller *where are we going now without clothes or water* he reads aloud to her wind in a branch they stretch and carry they hear something drop and it could be the husks or otherwise

**one version**

he says i notice you making  
your exit      she says  
i am just closing the door  
behind me just letting it  
fold into itself

    he says you have folded  
into yourself    those are  
chairs she says

you are excluding information  
he says you have left  
out the point of the river

    this is no reflection she says  
this is no interior

        this is a legion  
he says ammunition he says  
a floor of arrows

she says your eyes flatter  
than harps      he says down  
in the bottoms of barrels

    she says what kind of down  
she says what kind of barrel  
        where is the sky he says  
nothing like silk

**the pages i have not set afire**

we were so long soiled with water  
that returning we could not  
be clean again

we knew it    we had jars  
and jars of it            we dipped  
the tips of our fingers into it

we could not enter our houses  
with the rouge of it  
do you understand    the blue of it

and the color of our eyes  
like gold rings  
and impatient and rich

i know i know you are thinking  
that free will is a volume  
and it is gargantuan

**theater**

w: *(voice like the mumbling of bees)*

i want him to hold me the way he holds  
the pocket knife      the avalanche

m:      for what it is, everything  
          is so lonely. i drink the rest of the wine  
          and its wolf out of the bottle, saying  
          *(holds bottle at eye level)*

“wine, imagine my pain  
is something to ravage”

but the bottle barks and slumps *(pause for audience laughter)*

*(lights down, end scene)*

**grievances**

because i could not yet feed myself,  
he said *don't bring me the whole  
thing*

i fetched the whole copia,  
because my hands were harbors

but didn't i churn into seeds, plant myself  
all over the floor

and didn't the body swell from liquor or lice

didn't he say *imagine a palindrome  
in place of a mouth*

didn't i dream blank dreams in which  
we were painted white, holding our white fists,  
pointing at white clouds

weren't there others clotted with rain  
weren't there others with sleeves and sleeves

couldn't i walk backwards into the room