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SIMULACRA

by

Mackenzie A. Connellee

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For Thomas, my love and my light

APPROVAL PAGE

This thesis written by MACKENZIE A. CONNELLEE has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____

Committee Members _____

Date of Acceptance by Committee

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
so daylight	1
I. PART I	2
moonmilk	3
hover.....	4
outline	5
the quiet	6
his point of entry	7
pastoral	8
hymn	9
meditation on land	10
diptych.....	11
labors	13
then	14
diptych.....	15
revision	16
magnificent height	17
suddenly	18
over dinner	19
II. PART II	20
the beginning	21
first	23
he.....	24
she	25
she arrives.....	26
once formed.....	27
day.....	29
away.....	30
after	31
at the tree	32
under the tree	33
then	34
while.....	35
after	36
descent.....	37
revision	38
how flawed was she	39
after	40

after	41
after	42
after	43
q & a	44
departure	45
III. PART III	46
pinned	47
post-eden pastoral	48
record of her mouth.....	49
record of his mouth	50
small events	51
before you sleep	52
diptych with other	53
story.....	55
diptych.....	56
she buys a house	57
the smallest room	58
flaw.....	59
still.....	60
harvest	61
one version	62
the pages i have not set afire.....	63
theater	64
grievances	65

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