

**breaking a thing**

in the time between caterpillar  
and blooming lepidoptera  
there is only goop.

nothing but potential energy  
and instinct, all soupy and  
stewed together inside a chrysalis.

now, in the times when I cry  
standing in front of the  
supermarket Hanukkah display,

when nighttime scoops out my  
coping mechanisms with a  
plastic serving spoon,

I'm reminded of the four square inches  
of wood paneling on the garage  
that welcomes back a luna moth each year.

Somehow through generations, through the  
process of liquifying one's entire existence,  
there's the promise of wings when the chrysalis breaks.

**VACANCY**

the mouth wears a neon vacancy sign. it is less an invitation for occupants, and more  
 a proclamation of self. sleep is suggested by the incessant buzzing of the neon tubes  
 but there is no one to occupy the beds. the body is a place for things to visit, but  
 never stay. the groundskeeper is home sick for days at a time. beds stay unmade  
 lights stay out lungs are boarded shut. the missing guests speculate the  
 secrets hidden in the sternum. someone buried the bones beneath the floorboards long  
 ago and the dust calls for someone else to unearth them. behind the teeth of heavy  
 curtains lies the disgusted truthfulness of solitude. sun-faded and crying, the  
 NO TRESPASSING sign wishes for someone to disobey it and  
 break the curse of lonesome. through the cracks in the skin of the parking lot  
 the ferns arrive and die. the melancholy of this place is housed in everything avoided,  
 untouched, and forgotten. a house for anyone but a home for no one too  
 much charity has made this place decrepit has left this body empty.  
 VACANCY screams the buzzing, but the body  
 chases away the guests.

## Effigy

I built an effigy of myself. She looms,  
stares with expectant eyes. When I'm quiet she talks to me,  
asks all the impossible questions.

I built it so long ago I don't recognize her as myself.  
I tell her my accomplishments and she doesn't respond.  
I ask her for providence and she stands, unwavering.

I pull out her teeth with vengeful fingers  
I have to see if she bleeds like me,  
if we have congruent nightmares,  
if her tongue is the strongest muscle in her body.

When the house was bigger I kept an altar for her.  
In the confines of the insect-ridden apartment,  
I trip over her feet,  
scrape my knees for her.  
By now I have forgotten every prayer I wrote in her name.

At night, her silhouette commands the dark.  
Her questions are persistent.  
My prayers are forgotten, and in their place a mantra.  
*Burn her, burn her, burn her.*

I make my partner hide the matches again.

## Idolatry

the receptionist here calls me “girlfriend”  
because (I’m guessing) the tits give something away  
that the hairy legs and monstrosity couldn’t obscure.  
this thought makes my brain convulse,  
thrash about and throw the sweaty sheets  
off me as I untangle myself from nightmares and diction.  
Each morning is a new day for penance, castigation  
through repeated dressing and undressing, interactions with  
coffee shop clerks, and of course,  
the unceasing venture of existing as myself.

I’m ready to return now  
to the place of femicide and covered mirrors  
and erect a monument there.  
Something unmistakably androgyne  
shapely and formless, called by every name  
and known only by one, representative of  
all bodies and absolutely nothing at all. I’m  
ready to call out now  
to every aura and entity as yet unseen  
and aid them in pilgrimage to our Idol.  
Laughing and rolling and dancing in  
reverence of these bodies, in defiance  
of our old names, in celebration of  
our survival.

I’m ready to be born again,  
now as myself. Authentic human form,  
loyal only to love and the principles of  
sex, drugs, and rock & roll,  
screaming, naked, joyous, disgusting,  
whatever, really. I am.

**not the magnum opus**

The proverbial “they” have ordered us inside.  
I think there is more to it.  
Nothing conspiratorial,  
    no second coming of Christ  
    or dumping microchips in the water supply  
    just  
whispered anxieties over breakfast.

The proverbial “they” say that if  
you leave a monkey with a typewriter for long enough,  
it’ll write Shakespeare.  
I, defective specimen, stare at my typewriter  
until it rusts. I could be left alone until  
fists become stones  
bones become anchors  
teeth become leaves.  
    Still, I won’t write the next miracle into existence.

The proverbial “they” has kept me confined and called it Eden.  
No thanks to them, I say.  
What good have they done me? I say.  
I, experimental failure, stare at the apples  
until the forbidden fruit shrivels away with age.  
I could be left alone until  
    the next paper pandemic  
    the next coming of “they”  
    the next birth of a world.  
Still, I wouldn’t eat from that tree.

    Still, I won’t write anyone’s scripture.