

RAINBOW

It is true that you can eat the way the rain looks
on sidewalks near the Battery,
and you can own the slopes of the statues
with your attention and no money.
The fog blows a milky light on the stone at dusk.
Everything is crying with the sound of the pianos
and the cars hissing down Whitehall.
No one cares.
That's the first thing you must learn.
Then you can remember that everyone does care.
But no one really cares on Monday,
in the cafe that looks like all the others.
Sometimes the Spanish women sing
that old spirit back into your shirt,
and your eyes bleed tenderness,
and you say:
I will remember this. I must remember this.
Sometimes you're lifting your feet
for the vacuum in a midnight airport,
surrounded by the homeless.
Press your palms against your tired eyes
and see that the rainbow is immense.
Where you were before,
you'll be again,
to be sure.

TO ALL THE YOUNG HEROES

Your dragons will be more terrible
and more familiar than the ones
you dream of slaying.
They will be small and illusive
and they'll live within the folds
of your own gaze looking backward.
They will be the spiders in your gut
that you dig for, finding only
your own blood and bile.
They will fall down
like great blankets of confusion,
and fill your life with cruel masks.

THE IVORY VAULT

In the cruel, cruel night,
when the moon had blades for rays,
and teeth instead of breasts,
when you trembled and fought
against the iron shape of your fate,
all you believed in were
the Non-Arbitrary Divisionists,
and their tumbling cubes.
You looked into the tree and found buckets of sawdust.
You stared into the windowless rooms of heaven,
and found Nature eating herself for the cameras.
In the end, death was your first glimpse of the ineffable,
and afterwards, in the oblivious dawn,
your name hovered around the body,
like heat without temperature.

COFFIN OF LIGHT

All I want is to cook myself
in the worst I can deliver,
but I am ashamed and mortal,
awash in the waning rill of night,
with my nude legs dangling
above the unseen rust and
wreckage of the underworld.
Water snakes worm around
in the murk beneath me,
leeches confuse my flesh,
and I stare into the mouth
of Poverty's skeletal passage.
This is the only way.
I search in vain for
something easy to sacrifice,
but all the time I know,
they'll only accept
the very last thing
I'm willing to give up.

CLAY STREET LEXICON

1. COMPLICATE

Horns emerge from the wall
to crown our vignette.
Chords of black mud endanger reasoning
as I wander through
this hallway of knives.
Sheets of krill bodies scatter the light
into confetti across my armor.
Every day there is a sludge of noises.
Every day there are regrets –
is it the same for you?

2. INVESTIGATE

Dark furs nurture your breasts,
which are like two cold pearls
in a sea of mammal.
Tarred up ship planks creak into
the ancient drum of their moldy torso.
We sail through a garden of rooftops.
My giant father, hairy limbs swinging
like wrecking balls, cannot find me
in the secret room behind the small door,
hidden by the foam guts
of crusty stuffed animals.

3. INTERROGATE

Mother Fish denies us passage
at the Port Authority.
She ladles her fabric softener
into my thoughts, cradling
her brood of misgivings
in the crock pot of my skull,
pleading with tears made of chains:
-Please sit still beneath the high white columns
and tell Santa what you'd like.
I sigh into a glass made gray by the sigh.
How many licks does it take
to make a son from the slick weasel
you crapped out?

4. LIBERATE

The dawn is a curtain of paste.
Egyptian tools commit surgery
on our captor, and we are released
into the motionless wave.
I'm not a criminal, though
I've gotten used to doing chores
in the wild kingdom.
Every word staples you into
an unstoppable click track.
We'll stay invisible if we don't speak.