

Scars

If I showed you my scar
would you see it? could you
kiss it all better and let me be
as I am, free from phantom pain
fear of future scars, and all that
remains of what was removed
beneath the skin? still tender
the slightly indented white line
stains my left breast
like a translucent water mark
exposing how high the flood
waters rose over levees, broken
and storm-battered as August 2005.
these scars of surgical excision
we wear them hidden within the folds
of skin, underneath shirts tucked in,
the neck of the womb, deep
mammary tissue, a kidney,
the cost of living cancer-free
in our carcinogenic society.

For those born in the right place,
at the right time, we share
the mark of our generation
an innocuous scar of inoculation,
the ubiquitous small pox vaccine
its disfiguring imprint pressed into biceps
worn as an arm badge of medical ingenuity,
epidemiological security, privilege and age;
while on another stage, wars wage on,
beckoning with the imperative
to flex our pox-marked arms
extended across an ocean
to embrace those born in the wrong place,
at the wrong time, sisters and brothers
branded and scarred as the dark
skin worn by victims systematically
selected for ritual mutilation
unspeakable violence and violations
perpetrated with impunity, intentionally
breeding terror called *Janjaweed*
embodied in a boy-man riding high
atop a camel, horse, truck
waving Chinese arms overhead

glazed, animal eyes, dead and alive
with the fire of what's left
to burn in Darfur, the barren
landscape scarred as the women
whose screams hang in the desert air
unheard or unanswered, vacant
as the gouged out eyes of a child
stripped and deprived of childhood.

If you show me your scars
I will bear witness to what I see
our will to survive, to heal
the resilience of the human
body, the species, the spirit
I will not fear it, for your scars are mine
and ours are bound as a bind upon my heart
and between my eyes, where we see
beyond any scars that distinguish
or unite us as one being: perfect, imperfect,
and free to be as we are, living
within scarred mortal vessels
showing each other our stories
even those we have yet to write.

The Grey Zone

close at hand, yet far away,
grey lines streak the sky
silver strands highlight my hair
grey as the shaded, nondescript
faces no one sees
the sunken shadow of my scar
faded grey as soft eyes
grey as a tidal river
that flows two ways, grey
as the ground beneath snow
grey as December's dome, overcast overhead,
grey as the tread of our trespass on sand
in which we've drawn grey lines
across boundaries we've invaded
other people's lands degraded
our homeland security breached
in the grey zone of all that is
called fair in love and war
where every step we take takes us
further across grey lines
ascending uncertain stairs
or retreating along a paved grey
street that may or may not
be fair and far away.
What we call fair is simply
what we see to be so
when we say it is what it is
grey as the memory of recognition,
remembering what is already known
grey as the matter of mind
surrendered to heart, grey
as truth, inconvenient and irrefutable,
grey as the possibilities that remain
elusive, inconceivable and inevitable,
as the union that awaits us,
in some soft, grey place,
where scar shadows dissolve,
bathed in grey light on a fair street
far away, yet always close at hand.

Wild Grass Blows in the Wind

in memory of Matthew Shepard

No marker lies where you lay
dying eighteen hours, crucified
on a log fence now torn down
in the town of Laramie, Wyoming
where wild grass blows in the wind.

We disregard the passing
of time, we deny the undeniable
the irrepressible truth that we are
still here and destined to be
who we are, love whom we love, and how
we love, asking *who's left to say*
what's left unsaid? in unmarked fields
where wild grass blows in the wind.

Tell me, when will we
find the courage to follow
where the heart leads knowing
the fortitude of forbidden lovers
who dare to come out and be seen
walking hand-in-hand, along a path
where wild grass blows in the wind?

I Want A Lover

I want a lover
who will read these poems
I write and don't write
poems of train rides and rivers, flowing
like lonely hours, steamy dreams, naked
poems of exquisite longing and ardor
stripped of all armor, armed
with nothing more than what is
true, soft and fiercely vulnerable
enough to fend off fiery dragons,
send scarlet dragon flies flying away.

I want a lover
whose eyes meet mine and enter me
knowing and letting go of everything
more than seventeen reasons to leave
eclipsed by one imperative: stay.

I want a lover
whose friends know my name
and call me by no other.
I want a lover who calls me
sweet thing, little eggplant, friend,
the French name for "desired."
I want a lover
too tired to hold back or hide away
underground, in studios, behind inscrutable
screens of one artifice or another.

I want a lover
who will sing me songs
written and as yet unwritten
songs of together, tomorrow, today
songs of let's find a way.

I want a lover
who will read this poem.

Enough Space

If I could see your face, I would
offer peace and poise in this pause
between words, love, I pose for you
the question: do you have enough space
in your heart and all around you?

I do. I embrace these stretch marks
and deep grooves from growing pains
carved out of my heart, my resistance
to calcify what's left of my breasts
my elasticity, the resilient capacity
to retrace syllables in an embedded
mantra: I'm awake, I'm aware,
I'm alert, I'm alive, I'm alone.

I own this moment, this truth
enough space to stand still
whole and here, transformed and
transfixed by the surreal, healing
though ill-equipped to be as I am now
stripped unbearably bare, I am here
heart wrenchingly ripped open
raw & weary as tear ducts
drenched with unspent tears
salty, soaked and saturated
a saline drip bypassing eyes
injected directly into veins
to unclench muscles of heart, throat
choking on all that remains
unspoken, unsaid and heavy
with the weight of silence
the darkness of an imposed invisibility
cloak erasing me, my face defaced
my head hooded as the tortured
the homeless, the lost, condemned.

You have dismembered me from you
exiled intimacy from your life. As is, it is
as if we can not know what we know
what I see through these veils
the hooded cloak and unshed tears.
What you eliminate illuminates
your fear and my faith of the radiant
love's eternal incandescence

its essence inextinguishable
the anguish of a truth
I can neither deny nor suppress
I trust what my heart knows
I will not eviscerate love
the disembodied love of severed lovers
retains the memory of us in union
your body as my home
your hands, my clothing
your kiss, my sustenance
your scent, my air
your breath, my breath.

I hold this love and uphold its truth
even when apart, we still exist
as long as my heart beats
as long as my soul breathes
as long as I am here
I have found enough space
in my heart and all around
enough space to grieve and give
to forgive yesterday, forego tomorrow
enough space to live today
enough space to love
in my heart and all around.