

THE FLOOR A LIGHT-YEAR AWAY

This, as all the others, is a story of the mechanical flesh:
of dirt and ugliness, of sunsets before a cool night
spent hiding cigarettes from the rain.

Eventually, we are all delivered home—
our boots mud-sucked and gray,
eyes looking past the glass to crushed leaves and soggy walls.
How do we feel so much with so little?
Hearts stop; not like a storm passes, but like a knot

pulled tight then cut. These are the things we make promises with,

these figures of flesh—these fragile houses
with the windows boarded and the doors ripped off the hinges.
In the closet is a suit on a hanger and it has been to three weddings, including your own.
From that place a new house grows.
Repeating the saga, the prayer
confronts its own clumsiness.
The windows swing open.

Looking to the sky we imagine the universe scrunched into a fist, a single, crushed point
and through every telescope we fall back into ourselves at increasing speeds
into confusion, just this thickness of a globe

strangled with life—our faces, our actions
staining some passing time and place.
And on a cool night the far is unfrozen;
it seeps right through your eyes with the rain.

LITTLE BROTHER

Of bright monotony: I drink and watch the sun rise;
The news is red; I am
the little brother with his brain taped back together.
Dear sharpened light and deafening voiceless everywhere:
Do my cells complain too?
I know I am a man made of borrowed things

here, alive in the sun. I drop
like blood flowing to the lowest point
in a still life filled with too many too-crushed hearts.
Again in the hourless houses, outside the world that matters,
I pray for the sound of human blood in human veins—
for that inviolable voice choked and buried over by the dust it makes.
O bliss O world O music
 in a city of monsters, where the light won't end.

HALLELUJAH

Shipped the world over
to accost others, every angel arrives spent, shaking
on elbows like a drunk against the floor.
I listen, but I'm tired with pity.
Tired of their broken wings and wheezing breath.
Tired of the vertigo they say is truth.
Outside, emerging from the ragged past, the pear trees bloom.
It is Sunday. I stay outside
to watch the shadows we call creation;
to live in these meanings we make up.

THE WHAT OF THE MACHINE

I dreamed of genesis again but it wasn't like Genesis; saw our voices
as foaming marrow
building bones that could hold us. The image
sticks to the back of my eyes.
I smash the world flat

and call it seen. This room—books, clothes,
cats, fleas—bulges in the throat like a song
and I know it's not just mine.
I know that regardless of the density of light, it looks like now—
like this song is a book, like this book is a mouth

where the dead are swallowed
and given houses to burn down—

as bright as spinning wheels
through the teeth of a country. I drink
on the porch with the fleas, and listen
to the shriek and gospel of the world
from across the street.

I shouldn't stay awake like this,
smiling and embalmed below the buzzing light and the incinerating moths,
on this chair like a bed like a boat into dreamland where I drift with the sewage to the sea
and good morning good morning good morning good morning!
To live is to sign our names across the everything
until nothing but mess is left—
a house of ill-made images, where the sun beats.

FOOL

I watch the garbagemen outside
and sit on the edge of our bed.
Another day and it feels like church,
and like in church I'm clueless:
I don't know the words, but I sing.