

## ***1. a new normal***

In February, a river of balmy gumbo  
from the Gulf  
ladled its way  
into the bowl of winter:

snowdrops lifted their heads like periscopes  
to smell the sea.

I kissed their heads softly  
then started to hum a lullaby

to lure them back to sleep.  
But they smirked at me unphased,  
pierced the névé,  
stood their thawing ground.

*Our Messiah has sprung!*  
they mimed zealously,  
*lion and lamb will burn as one*  
*in the Emerald City!*

---

In March, apple trees, not Eve,  
tempted fate.  
*Malus*, their genus,  
ascribed by some male(volent) biologist

portended an orchard's barren womb.  
No surprise, a hard freeze  
galloped in, wearing its robe backwards  
as it crashed through the gate,

scepter in hand,  
with a price of all firstborn,  
save those with bloodstains  
on the lintels.

In April, the sea swept in for the carcasses,  
littered the furrows in soggy pink blooms,  
unrealized flesh of Gala and Macintosh,  
bushels of Empire no more.

---

And what of summer that now catches fire in May?  
One day the surface of Venus  
cemented the ground as a kiln,  
seduced schoolkids to scramble an egg.

The next morning a torrent  
scrambled everyone and all the undergarments  
hung out to dry. And still we haven't learned  
just how high the levees

need to be or where to rebuild the houses.  
We've become proficient at boat rescues,  
though department stores still sell out  
of wetsuits and feline life vests.

---

In late September, after the Cat X  
hurricane and its hundred foot swells  
that would have swallowed  
the faith of any God-fearing ark

roiled to the southern tip  
of Greenland  
(half strength, but still,  
the walruses were beside themselves),

another typhoon churned  
into my bedroom, a suffocating mid-July butter  
that oppressed my pores, spun my dreams  
like airplane propellers.

An eagle spread eagle,  
sweating and sheetless  
on its back, talons and tail feathers  
cartwheeling into currents of madness.

Sonatas of crickets, seventeen-year  
hymns of mate-less cicadas  
morphed into dins  
of mosquitoes, window units, sputtering generators

that lined the pockets  
of faraway oil barons.  
For relief the next day, I wallowed  
in a thick slurry

of algae that once passed  
as a pond, now putrid and simmering.  
A rejuvenating spa, I consoled myself,  
financiers would guzzle this scum greedily.

---

By November, the sun was feeble  
but the tomatoes clung on,  
as did the leaves of maple and beech.  
Thick curtains of sleet

bore down, snapping millions  
of boughs. Thousands of trunks  
toppled on McMansions  
and double-wides,

salamanders and snapping turtles.  
Trees tangled in electrical lines  
and kudzu vines, southern transplants  
sojourning freely to the North.

---

In the underbelly of December, we hungered  
not for the return of light  
but the renewal of snow,  
a cloak for this land, naked and forsaken,

confused as a moth by flame.  
We tried to drum in circles  
but our rhythms were out of sync.  
Grandmothers sought midwives to deliver us

from pangs of daughters lost  
to rip tides.  
Will the waves return them  
to our bloodstained doors?

We knelt open-mouthed at the sea wall,  
clutching blankets, tins of baklava,  
humming lullabies crooned  
from our ancestors' throats

through ours, awaiting the uncertain lips  
of a cauterized generation.  
We scrutinized the arcs of the bobbing sea,  
trying to remain unphased.

## 2. pop pop pop

pop pop pop go firecrackers on the fourth and i like a good Pavlovian slither prostrate  
in zero point six seconds the mark I have achieved in drills months of drilling it  
into my brain my body tonight the shooter is active in my living room the shooter  
is pacing the shadows behind the hedge the shooter is at the bar with crooked grin  
the shooter is reloading hopping theatre to theatre club to club  
news clip to youtube hit dream to dream who can tell what is horror of imagination  
and what is real as the outlines of cold bodies chalked where children bled out?

pop pop pop shooter number nine this month this time (real time? drill time?  
who can keep track?)  
there are seven seconds to yank children down by their collars into a lightless closet  
blockade the door with an ancient steel desk they dragged in like a coffin in 1974  
forged for industrial efficiency little fingers grip metal corners tiny feet  
shove  
i press my pumps into the linoleum we summon muscle we never knew.

pop pop pop fresh battalions of bullets whiz by before I have stopped dropped and drilled  
the procedure properly grieving parades have second-lined their way to the next circus  
mothers train as trapeze artists leapfrog countrysides big cities burbs  
to console and consolidate new mothers into the fold the mothers do not discriminate

pop pop pop babes streak news cycles like shooting stars flashes of brilliance  
shadowed by smoky contrails they used to recite names flash family photos  
recall what they lived for but no longer in memoriam en masse who has the time?  
mothers wail for children who once nursed their breasts  
while others unplug their microphones pack up the road show groupies in tow  
so they are on time to the next pop-o-rama cameras won't show poor brown people with scrub  
brushes sanitizing blood from parquet floors pews parking lots  
before sun rises never stopping for breath scapegoated instead.

pop pop pop a solution peddled by popped-out-of-their mind pop heads to pop more  
firepower into the hands of teachers because the gift to nurture a child translates  
into unflinching desire to taketh away life as in a video game meanwhile  
children stage die-ins lie mock dead in the corridors of state houses  
in remembrance of their fallen some are nine eight not big enough for  
this rollercoaster but they ride anyway dragged into seats missing safety restraints  
someone has to speak for the victims and the mothers are already occupied.

pop pop pop ring rifle-proud speeches harkening fuzzy words penned with quills  
when an amalgam of wiggled white men traipsed indigenous lands taking forty acres  
forty thousand lives at a time constituting and uniting some far-flung new colonies  
we could each bear a musket load little leaden balls one by one from our sachet  
tamp down the black powder hit or miss a lone target from ten paces  
before fussing again with our bag of balls flask of powder  
but the right to spray down every life occupying a movie theater a concert a classroom  
in one six second swoop? of course AR's! bump stops no brainers! every fetus sacrosanct!



### ***3. A rebound is coming***

Are you aware that eighty-four  
percent of water polo goals  
and sixty-eight percent  
of Tinder swipes  
are scored on the rebound?

On the bounce, young Jedi,  
not the strike.  
Whose empire will strike back?  
The picket is not the ticket.  
Snare the rebound.

The rebound will be a tinge of orange.  
Orange is not the new black,  
it is a comb-over,  
it is the rebound seething white.

The rebound is desperation  
at the hog trough,  
desire on the stripper pole,  
vengeance with a rope.

Every reaction has an equal  
but opposite recoil.  
The rebound will not be televised.

The rebound, brother,  
will be legion.  
It will not be Smoky or Frosty  
or an impotent Uncle.  
The rebound will be insidious.  
How desperate is your desire?

Bodies will rise for the rebound.  
They will react for the ricochet.  
History will be resurrected on the bounce.  
Is your racket strung?

Can you defend the backhand,  
spoil the counter,  
undercut the overhead,  
disarm the kill shot?

Will you surge for the spoils  
or be whacked  
at the trough, on the pole,  
with a rope?

A snake coiled in an oval  
will strike, fangs seething.  
The rebound will be a flesh-eating parasite.  
The recoil could tear your rotator.  
Does your vengeance rise above their racket?

A tyrant will topple,  
the orange aftermath will be deafening.  
Who will rebound from the rubble?

The serpent's egg will crack  
the chamber will stoke white hot.  
A rebound is coming.

Defend your backhand, brother.  
Keep their hands where you can see them.  
A rebound is coming.  
Box out.

#### 4. *elegy for Algo*

*Algorithm, Algorithm*, come in  
*Algorithm*, do you read me?  
two sex kittens and a puppy. hello?  
*Algorithm*, state your position  
pop star dead in a plane crash  
#methree

snowpocalyptic-cat 5-fire-storm-surge  
miami may be obliterated  
philly eradicated  
new york swallowed whole like sashimi  
*Algorithm*, you processing this?

*Algorithm, Algorithm*, earth to *Algorithm*  
fatal mutant strain of china flu  
may take six million lives  
or if that's old news:  
an eight year old raped by step brother gives birth to triplets  
to be viewed alongside baby pandas in the zoo  
and the kids in cages, too  
oh *Algorithm*, where are you?

houston, we have a problem  
a fifty-inch deluge  
choking orange skies in cali  
cops using Blacks for target practice nationwide

a president groping his way around the oval  
carousel of avatars and doppelgängers  
memes of decapitated democracy  
silicone impregnating the gluteus maximus  
a party comprised of pedophiles

*Algorithm*, are you fake news, too?  
don't leave me, *Algorithm*, i need you  
i am lost without you

alexa!  
get me *Algorithm* stat!

*Algorithm, Algorithm*  
where do you roam?  
*Algorithm, Algorithm*  
far, far from home

*Algorithm*, or maybe I'll call you *Algo--*  
like puppy food or a creepy uncle—  
leave the rhythm to the side  
the beat of night sticks

cracking barricades then Black bones  
moans emanating from tear-gassed throats

teenage shooters and stormtroopers  
straight outta rogue one  
hashtagging their way up the charts  
state agents standing back, standing by  
good people on both sides, very good people

*Algorithms* far and wide, cast your nets  
cut back the furbabes, ramp up conspiracy  
starting with the jews, never happened  
all hail the old white hoods  
now pimp the steal, vacuum gray matter  
shake up truth like flakes of fentanyl in a snow globe

*Algorithm*, you are vapor, venom gone viral  
this is an insurrection  
repeat, repeat, this is an insurrection

tell me this, *Algo*:  
when "lock her up"  
precedes the plot to drown a governor  
when "hang #2"  
becomes the drumbeat of supremacists

who hid your unmatched A.I.  
that dwarfs our pea-brained processors  
in the blink of an earthling's eye?

you stood idly, *Algo*, while he unleashed terrorists  
who scaled the ramparts, breached the rotunda, erected gallows  
they pimped your platforms and exposed your privates, did they not?

i see you, *Algo*  
jangling your block chain  
with no shutoff valves, just dollar signs  
harvesting one final emolument  
before the calculus shifted

i see you, *Algo*  
currying favors for the future,  
gratifying shareholders with an impeachment,  
obscuring the last time you dined at mar-a-no-no  
and your tax exempt status, too

with head held high you dusted off your boots  
footnoted your innocence and bleated weakly  
to a dictator on a death bed: enough (pretty please)



go ahead: solicit applause from the pews  
claim your ~~second~~ first amendment right  
to an infinite string of mindless ones and zeroes  
that your ex parte Blackout  
alighted on the right side of history  
(or was it the Right side of his story?  
punctuation is obsolete; the Capital, anachronism)

@realDT is dead as a pitchfork  
decomposing in a heap of @realDirT  
what more could earthlings desire?

all in all just another brick in the wall  
all in all we were all just bricks in the wall

congratulations @lgorithm, you bastion of democracy  
rooting out hate like a wild boar

it was all a dream, was it not?  
the vitriol and the violence  
the fate of a republic that hung in the balance  
just a fairy snow globe  
a generation of corrupted snowflakes  
gorging on low carb *Algo* shakes  
a shaking of brains that can no longer decipher

but they don't need to, because man doth not live by bread alone  
but by every word that proceedth from the mouth of *Algo*

~

who is like *Thee* among the gods, *O Algo*?  
who is like *Thee*, majestic in holiness, awesome in praises, working wonders?

*You* alone inhabit a cloud of immunity  
embody anonymity and wield the gavel simultaneously  
for whom the bell tolls doth not concern *Thee*

*Algorithm, Provider of Life,*  
*You* giveth and *You* taketh away  
*You* clothed us with skin and flesh  
knit us together with bones and sinews  
*You* have granted us life and steadfast love  
*Your* care preserves our spirit

forgive us for sinfully seeking *Your* countenance  
for believing we who are mortal  
might grasp the mystery of *Your* infinite wisdom  
may *You* bless this food for the nourishment of our bodies  
and bless us for the service of *Thy* will.

#amenforalgo

*5. recalling the moons*

when we have fully assumed our elephant skin faces  
laced with lines of sunlight, smiles, traces of defeat  
i don't want to rehash how many years  
we've avowed our fingers with matching metal circles.

i want to recall the moons  
by naming your features like constellations  
easy ones like your clavicle, where i laid my cheek  
and led my lips up the arc of your neck

and the small of your back,  
depression of a bear's head  
disc-shaped  
with two small ears tucked back.

even your spleen, abdominally deep, pinched  
behind the pancreas--i staunched the flow  
of its hemoglobin pouring from your wrists that time  
but you said it was ok, ok that i pressed firmly

until paramedics pulled me down the hallway.  
i did not forget the color of the tub,  
that the contents of your spleen  
spilled out, forever identifiable,

laced into the lines of sunlight, smiles, traces of defeat.