

Hamlet

Daily I think of my father:
broken threads;
his double-woven heart.

I did not expect last night
he would speak of it:
his memory gullied out –
asking in dark
that I seek its sediments –

stand with him
in ravine, forest –
me, his echo,
raving for us
to weary hills
against this slow ravelling.

The Last Aspen Stand

Aspen share a common root system, resulting in stands that are genetically a single tree. One such aspen stand in Utah is 80,000 years old – the largest and oldest living organism.

The best of us
is at the root,
away from light,
probing for good
in dark. We are
a single tree,
divided
above and below,
every part devotion
to a whole.

In each breath
live a hundred generations
of mastadons,
elk and nuthatch.
Out of what heart wood
do we worship the wind
with leaves like shimmering hands?
How many winters
have strengthened our fiber?
How many fires do we bear,
Or saplings strangle in our shadow?

We feel our killers' footsteps
fall among us,
and we weep:
for our likeness;
our mutual need;
our sense of selves;
our awe
of the other's strangeness;

your weak grasp on what you saw;
your blind visions and divisions
both within and without.

Even
as we die, you forget
that the core of all of us
is a heart woven of two fibers:

- one to heal,
- and one to harm.

The Hole in the Poem

It was termites, I think,
that bored out the heart
of this poem. Yet
the poem still asks: why
is the hole in the poem
its heart? Less

is more for a poem, but imagine
if a magician's sleeve eclipsed the center of
the moon: a lacuna cratering out the lunar
heart, a coreless moon would now climb
the black leaves of trees –
only a peephole to

Cygnus,
Cat's Eye
Nebula, Lyra
and Vega
C.

No memory, no feeling, no minding
its leave, just our sadness watching the heart
of the moon fall in the wordless sea. Less

is less for the moon. More or less.
Or let me put it like this:
When the hole fell
from this poem
I stuffed it lumpy with words for grief and love
until, luminous with grief or love, it sank in that sea
like a moonstone.
Pull it
up by the stuffing
and the hole returns.
In the hole

waves the green flaglet
of something new.

Honeysuckle and Flaming Creeper

On reading Terrance Hayes

As you said, there never was a black male hysteria.
It is a wonder to ponder the spent lifetimes
Stacked under a lineage of goons
In Money Mississippi. Or lying scattered
Like bone bits in other not much better places
And still not mirror the madness in the faces.
Imagine instead planting your good feet in dirt
And letting the sprouts spread out for miles.
Many may be pulled up, or frisked by the cops,
But still they tendrils, lancing hearts,
Doubling back on themselves, entwining,
Alive but speaking for the weary dead.
You should see them, all these strong green ropes,
Wrapping a restless house in fiery hopes.

Different Kinds of Mud

I am mud.
My body is made
of spit and promises.
I arose from a bog.

My minds are many
heaps of fallen rose petals
in different shades of brown.
My one heart, disguised
coal black,
pumps mud-thick blood.

I read forgotten poets
whose bones degraded to dirt.
They show me the grit
and gradations of mud,
what it thinks it knows
and how it hides
from itself.

I would settle in lowness
and let the swamp grass root in me.
But there is nowhere
for me to root myself –
even the dying grass
has magnificent chemistries
that lift up and even me.

I've become old mud,
so caked like blood on these boots
that mud and boots are one.
I trample in mud,

and the mud cries out.
That's what kind of mud I am.
What kind of mud are you?