

FILM SCHOOL

They were lost in the raw footage:
among the boy-fishermen
we could barely see for the trees,
the shining lake, the sand-woods
that appear on the roadsides ten miles
from the shore—those empty pools
I wanted most were gone.
And now I'm waking up in early April
seeing what I thought you'd shot,
watching from behind the fence
as you climbed onto the private grounds
to crouch there—camera held
to your face—when cameras
were large enough to brush
your lips against. You whispered
to each other, Here's a place
on which we both agree.
The yellowing calisthenics field,
the drained Olympic pool—white
at the bottom, not the hospital-blue
I would have guessed—blackened leaves
and summer hair swept to its corners.
I can climb to face you now—
leaning in, believing you'd pulled
the whole tableaux into the lens
the way a cloth is drawn into a fist
for magic. And I can take your hands away,
the way I would have never touched
your hands, lowering first from your face
the camera with the small, red light
we must have chosen to forget.

HUMAN WATER

*Childhood is a human water, a water
which comes out of the shadows.*

—Bachelard

Boy beside
a rain-barrel
curling his hand
over its edge—

his fingers yellow
in the roof-dark water
he can't see.

He places on its surface
a branch of holly
from the yard
and its reflection
breaks his own.

I'm remembering
and misremembering
and stepping through
a public field.

I am alone,
so there are three of us:
within my body,
there is also me,

but more corrective,
age-rings in my eyes,
coming down
from the house
to stay him, shouting:

what did I tell you
about playing
with visions
by the water
when I'm not watching?

His small hand
holds a wasp, a lamp,
a deer, a field,
a wall, a flame

calling for anything
he names
to be lifted over
the barrel's edge.

The field
we step through
almost cries
within its early
fallen leaves,

to let itself be known
against our feet,
and we are overwhelmed
to know it.

We walk
beneath its trees
as when I crossed into
an August evening
with my friends,

and saw their bathtub
in the yard, and listened
to their bathtub joke—

I was in love with them,
and didn't speak,
and there was one of me,
and it was empty.

STOP THINKING AND EAT SOMETHING

A cinematic eye
I should no longer trust
follows a waitress
in blue;
and the neon
gem's light
is blinking outside
at no traffic,
and blinks
on the surfaces
of her shoes.
A framed poster
gathers the heroes
and villains
of the Marvel
Universe:
they stare out
with vengeance
onto empty booths.
Elsewhere,
my child-life
is shaking its wings
at the curb,
then rises
into a late summer heat
toward the gray
monoliths
of the mall.
I must try
to pull back
from this whole
cosmology;
but then,
I am recognized—
this blue tray coming:
meatloaf
on Wonder Bread;
gravy and mashed;
green parsley atop
a thin nick of orange;
and a strawberry
milkshake:

thousands
of ice shards
climbing the sides
of its glass.

VERDURIA

New trash left
in the spring mud:
honeybun wrappers
gifted by
the season's
teenage lovers
who earn
their paramours
running each other
down and away
from school
on wet pavement.
Their litter's
nutritional information
is still intact—
you can rejoin it
with your hands.
I want to reconnect
the Red Lake 40
and swim in it
under the stars.

MOUTH TO CARTRIDGE

The 8-bit melody of an open-world game,
when submerged in his dream, takes the form
of real language once the boy is awake.
Its haunting and tinny redundancy binds
with the words and phrases of morning.
The screen-light, and its character—
who darts from task to task—are ripples now,
now that he's up and dressed as children
were once made to dress for the airlines.
He bikes to his swim-club and stands
on its diving-board, closed for the season.
Gathered leaves and dark green liquid
extracted from August pause in a corner
of the empty diving well. Snow
is beginning to rest on the light
shoulder-pads of his Sunday-school blazer
and onto its gilded buttons: their little anchors
exposed in relief. He knows there's nothing
below for him, but what better place
for a boy to seek when his game, its song
and its fever, are drowned in his head—
their maps and clues leading him here.

