

SHEDDING

It was not rebirth written
Into the laboured breath
Of the sloughed skin,
But the seven doors
Of Ereshkigal's realm con-
tracting, teasing tensions into
Inanna's nakedness
I too was being stripped
And as the dust of depleted DNA
Clung to my eyebrows it
Clogged each flustered follicle
Until pustules poured the pattern
Of who I might have been
Da Vinci would have drawn me
As a shade of humanlike
Kafka's creatures courting inclusion

The physician forewarned
That my body would consume
Its own heart if I continued
This diet of penance and toxic fumes
But still I emptied
C₃H₈O by the hour onto
The face I was erasing

And as I scrubbed with cotton bud
The slurry of selves stretched
Over a frame of diverse lives
I counted the fading cadence
Of indiscernible endings recurrent

The theory of an underactive
Preorbital cortex was tattooed on
The vellum of a wasted life
Rational observers questioned:
Can't she see her own potential?
But Jocasta's brooch was in a bottle
So I bought blindness for my birthday
In splitting the perverse caduceus
Tiresias was transformed, not eye
Washing away the final barrier
With the milk-white tears of the
Snake before it slips into the new

In releasing the imprint of each
Irreplicable scale I knew
I would not have a skin beneath
To conceal the knotted muscle
In its obstinate rhythm

ASH

A flame-wrought silence
Incomparably complete
Renders my breath profane
Still I inscribe
The words of making
Written as I walk
Burning carbon in
tension
To acidic ash
Baring wind-licked bones
Blood erased and unencoded

In the lexicography of a life
Lingering
In lineaments nearer the earth
Silently reassembling servitude
From soil unseen
Dark flame flung
From a far star
Igniting imbrications
Intent on phosphorescence
And in forgetting fall from the known
Finding the
Inconvenient actuality
Of a ground gravity governed

Deciduous dendrites petrified
In sun-smelted space
Demand delirious capitulation
Upon a sky wood woven

Solid silicate slides
In plasmid motion
To extricate
Individuation
Authored by abrasion
Erasing each stratum

But still I seek
In the reign of phoenix feathers
For the reverberations
Of your living laugh
To grow as green shoots
From the mask of anonymous ash
Becoming the numinous bloom
Of light in a sunset other than this

AMERICA

Unrealized potentialities
Evaporate in the fluorine flicker
Of a synthetic sun
Whoreshipped by the shopper
As it drowns the fragile night
Of annihilated archetypes
Corporate priests preside
Over prophets predicting
The ebb and flow of the notional
Mark it
With the barcoded stigmata
Of progress
Replacing
Darkness and poetry and my
Lie nation

Inc.onstant indemnity shuns the
Other in this mass of shattered
Bone and muscle
 must sell
 must
 cell

(out)

Of a collective prison
Barred with chains of rewritten
 ^{otten} ^{ationalist} ^{merica}
R N A

Mutate the membrane
To prevent the coiling of
Constituents' chromosomatic choice
 Hypo
might, oh Chondria feeding
On Machiavellian misogynistic
Masochism
In the schism
We subverted signs
To undermine the authority
But poetic plurality was dis
solved by pandemic meaning

Momentary and untraceable
Etymological ephemerality
Authored a single social narrative
Idolized on glossy prints mass
Produced to induce the diminishing
Of thought
Subsumed Insta-gra-
tifications of bite-sized
Preruminated cognitions
Capitulating concepts to the Glow
Downloading somatic suicide
As servants to the Screen
The radical exclusion of a center
We sought to underwrite

Built the walls of the capitol castle
With words we payed for
Preyed for
Multiplicity blind to the bind
Of unprecedented semiotic stability
Achieved through the erasure
Of all signifieds
In unparalleled poetic
Iron Ne
gating dreams of difference
In 50 ~~states~~ characters or less
Tweeting micro-meanihi
listlessness

BURIED

I wish I could mourn you
With an anthracitic grief of my own
Futility, as I stare at the angry river
Beneath rusted blossoms
But my loss has been buried
In newspaper articles and flowers
Lain by strange hands, in national indignation
And the perfect plaits of the other mothers

Some of whom have children still
And many more who soon will
We don't speak of it, don't lay hands
Washed clean of the black sludge
Fed by an umbilical spring unseen
And ask, "Are you trying?"

But when your father mines my body
I grind my teeth to drown
Away the sound of the shovels
Thrust again and again into the slag
Unyielding

And as their bellies swell like the tip,
Those mothers more fit than I,
Who may yet wash small clothes
In the mouths of machines
Quickened by the coal that cost us our children
I know that I am unworthy
For maybe if I had dug faster
If I had resisted grancha
as he pulled me away
If I had stayed until I could see each bone
In my hand burnt bare by the acid that ate
The flesh I built in my womb...

We were unmade in a moment
Not worn down by the slow and gaseous years
Fingering their way through porous stone

And I pray that the silken fibres of your neck
Snapped with a grace so fine time couldn't
Register your existence

But though there is no mark of you
In this world, save the lines your loss
Branded on my brow and the carbon copy
Of your shadow on my sightless irides,
You are irreplaceable

The redemption your father seeks to excavate
Within me will not see a sunrise
For each month I take a bus to the city
Where they are illiterate to the language
That confesses my skin scarred as
One of the Mothers

And there at the clinic they smile
When I tell them I can't keep up
With the ones I've already got
And I invent names and ages and bicycle
accidents
And they swallow the unwritten lives as I
Take communion of the contaminant

It is the image of you dying alone
That wakes me in the night
Alone, not fused like a child of Llyr
To the brittle wings of the deputy headmaster,
Nor in my arms where you should have been
And with those faithless hands
I grasp at my wild and beating heart
Beneath the slag heap of my breast
Where milk will never flow again
And only black slurry remains

*For the families dissolved by the 1966 Aberfan
Mining Disaster.*

WALKING THE CONTINENTAL RIFT, 66° NORTH

North American Plate

Concealed by five hundred
Generations of moss,
An unspoken testament
To metamorphosis stilled
Is compressed by my specificity

Gravity is less severe this far north
A scent of citrus pervades
A wind to which it does not belong
Prevailing dreams of ignoble progress
From left and right converging

Continents devouring each other
In a Richter scaled ritual
Rent by breath to raise
A dialogue of at most fear
Said a menstrual stratum
Lying to mount and birth
And pull a part
ing of an inch each
Millennium in
The sabotage of separation
Undone on other borders

I walk awhile with what remains
Of a sheep bone white
In this trench not yet of tears
A flower for my living sister
And one for the other
As I bend to write the names of the dead
In the youngest rock on earth

The crowberries stain
My fingers a feast for corvids
As I carve a sand castle
From crumbled crystal cast
aways in this rift unscarred
By glacial prede lick
shun sun and stone
Feeding a sea that covers
All that time and tectonics
Cannot erase

Eurasian Plate

Two pale flowers,
One for my dead sister
And one for my live,
Broke the heather held
By moss generations deep

A smell of lemon borne on an Arctic wind
Caused me to pause as
Such singular citrine scent
Defied limits to roam,
A stark and invasive censer

A crow well-kept watched me
Death is larger and deeper here
Mimir's eyed unblinking as I lay
The effigies of children not yet born to sleep
Causing the insubstantial to stir amidst
Trails of contractions and trials of fault
Lines walked by the unseen
In mounting pressure to break beneath the wait
of a Planet breathing bright blood
To baptize bone built
Of porous progressions

I found Aurore tied below
The centuries of twisted branches
Shunning sky to grow close to earth
Listening to the magma smoldering still
I knelt to the forgotten song reverberating
In hollow spaces held by basalt
To drink that discarded breath

For I will drown
In this trough of milk, the artery
That breeds all dark and dreaming spaces
And fertilizes tectonic trenches traced to
separate, Some ocean-filled and
Some containing the gaseous mist that
Quenches scent and memory where
Drifts the dust of pollen and predation
That intermingle in the descendants
Of a monohued meteor

