

## Morning Walk

Out of the mouth of a thousand birds,  
I hear God flash and disintegrate.

This is the stuff of old poetry  
when we didn't care  
about the kind of bird  
or the weather they called beneath,  
but this morning I crawled  
through grey and mist and other  
cloth-swaddled bodies on 3rd street  
by the banks and the new  
courthouse, where the crows meet  
now, each morning, holding quorum.  
In their eyes there was something  
like me, some booze-burnt rag  
shuffling on the sidewalk,  
smiling, and squinting  
under the weight of their noise—  
squawks and caws heavy, lacking  
a way into meaning—like the sun  
groaning with explosions, infant imitations of  
  
those low, deep ripples echoing out  
from our beginning.

## **Like a Bit of Harp and a Far Off Twinkle**

I'm told it happens all the time  
in Heaven after the parades pass—our hands

sucked up into prayer, our organs  
opened or replaced. That's where

the music comes from—not harps,  
but all that living caked up inside us

cut out and torched each morning.  
The newbies enter freshly scorched,

not knowing yet that rapture means  
a careful and eternal incineration.

Even in Heaven, death is routine.  
As here, where the sun dries us out.

Where we smoke too much and  
lose our voices and our fathers

lose themselves  
one popped cell at a time

where we wrinkle and burn  
and scream and cut ourselves

out of ourselves—half wild half nothing—  
and all the knives and gas and radiation

ever do is simmer against the edges  
of each fresh day as we smolder.

## **Dinner with Friends**

The meal comes in courses:  
crab legs snapped and  
crushed, ripped  
salads, sizzled octopus  
(suckered limbs  
lingering through the chewing  
and grinding), meat buckled  
under sauce and spice—even dessert feels

bloody. In the ceiling corners  
the TVs are silent but bloody too—muted  
horror flicks to match  
our hunger, our greasy fingers  
feeding. Through the dark,  
we laugh at limbs  
sawed off or tongues cut  
and gulp beer,

smile, and throw our arms out  
towards words, numbers—corpses  
churning in our hands and bellies and  
skin—as we eat ourselves too  
in the dark  
and laughter.

## Plan of the Coliseum

Sad, to remember walking  
through it. I pushed my hands  
into everything, wanting  
some notion of dust to take root  
in a cut or abrasion. I was  
with my step-Dad then  
with the smoke  
from my first cigarette still  
soaked into my fingertips. That first feeling  
into my imagined past  
ended poorly.

There was only one entrance  
and too many tourists'  
feet, like my own,  
staunching the wounds. I sank back  
to a corner, pressed  
my hands against the stone to feel  
for screams  
or maps  
toward living.

What a marvel,  
these lines and angles and  
perfect ellipses  
with space for seating. Space  
for shouts, bets, corpses,  
mercy. Perhaps,  
like connecting dots in the night sky  
with our fingertips, looking  
in possibilities  
for the lines  
to hold our blood in, we grow—  
replicate ourselves over and over  
with incalculable deformities.

Eventually, the dotted lines  
from one bright light to another  
lose their clarity.  
We imagine our violence held  
back in a clean informational placard. Defined forms  
blur, our astigmatisms worsen. An idea  
for sound, like the groan of stars  
in empty space,

becomes the brain. An empty building  
becomes our past. Cut from our eyes  
the world softens or breaks. My hands  
lose their innocence. The Coliseum presses back.

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I still remember his laugh, his stories  
from his carnival days, how he ate  
a living goldfish after  
someone finally beat the odds  
and that's what they took instead of winnings.  
I remember the cold, wet smoke  
that clung to him. Like the past

there's no saving the present.  
At every encounter with  
the living, our memories  
hobble towards us—their zombie legs  
freshly stitched—their craving

for us the same  
as ever. Is it moral to get better?  
Could we look on things  
from some other distance  
until the gravity  
and the jokes dissolve? No more world-cut eyes, no lungs  
collapsed, no fingers left to reach  
and break—just reams of new white paper  
waiting for dust. The maps still  
unreadable—the screams  
a familiar, ignorable burn.

## **That Gong-Tormented Sea, Remembering You from Far Away**

I knew we would be friends  
when you threw yourself  
into the kitchen to smash  
that forgotten birthday  
cake against the wall.

How we'd dance down the hall  
into fractalizing black,

into that smell of char  
and mail order drugs stuck to your door.  
The flash and snap of our bodies  
sold out moment by moment into a laughing dark,  
I couldn't stop stitching us,

drunk, with ways to leave. We fed each other  
our sludging brains—taking

bets on who would cackle first  
at the bone-white gates. Our tongues  
strung up to lick whatever  
salvation had encrusted itself there  
against the bars.