

TUB RESTORATION

My father says I restored this 77 year old tub
to feel like Cleopatra but I only wanted escape
from cybernetic ecology, wanted to feel the cast

iron cool on my back in the winter and I didn't
feel like a princess or an Egyptian goddess
in this tub because I spent hours whittling

it away, Trojan horse dumped on the cracked
concrete driveway, mask allowing me to breathe
nothing from the past that I am sanding away

like corroding bones, like 77 years of memories
echoing from the drone of the sander and it took
four hours to strip the tub clean of its memories,

to peel the now elderly children's fingertips from
from the sides where they bathed in democracy,
capitalist rubber duck trying to stay afloat while

Roosevelt speaks on the radio and a Declaration
of War floats in the air like little atomies pulling
Queen Mab through the noses of men while they

sleep, memories dissipating and lost in the
atmosphere of a belt sander with each medium
grade discard, each rectangle tossed into the trash,

nationalism in a hefty bag and surely the coming
and going of women (talking of Michelangelo or
Kennedy or King) was lost in the friction as well

and I can almost see one whispering *Free at last*
Thank God Almighty we are free at last and perhaps
the mothers memorized the ceiling above the tub

while their children slept, while their husbands
slept like Jewish dolls or Vietnamese dolls and
when I finished sanding, I painted the raw canvas

(flushed of memories, history floating through
the atmosphere) with a porcelain white and now
I soak like a working class Cleopatra in a memory

pond, pruning away in the dull dust of humanity.

UTOPIA ON A PARK BENCH

An old man wrinkled with time,
wrinkled with so many days at
Goodyear Tire, constructing tires
in an assembly line, tire population

in the thousands like communists
on a conveyer belt, arms forcefully
pointed upward. His park bench
is vast like a continent. He, like

Chagall's wife in the corner of a canvas,
consumes just a fraction of the wood
and metal conglomerate, and he
is feeding the birds, feeding the birds

like God, government of birds competing
for each seed like capitalism in a park
with leaping birds, working class birds
like open leaves in the open air of every

season of every year. Equal amounts
of seed pour onto the ground and he
knows there is no solution to equalize
their earnings, to balance the scale with

Marx perched in the middle like a raven.
He knows no socialist solution in his
steel-toed boots and windbreaker
with his beard growing downward like

the droppings of his tears to paper bag.
He knows no solution, only that he
is a giving tree in a dystopian world
and he tried to throw a pile here, a pile

there, one for you, one for you, but
the birds, the birds worked for their
profit, while the man, like God, fed them.

AND VIOLETS ARE BLUE

I am tired of submitting to journals,
society, men, God, tired of watching
my dog cower under my desk
after pissing on the floor.

I am his god after all, and he
is tired of submitting to me,
tired of drooping his ears
under tables and desks.

But we are all gods here ambushed
in the center of the infinite wooden
babushka doll,

clawing and crawling
and cussing and singing

all praises, all hail
the Great Babushka.

I submit now, roll on my back,
in a wooden container like
a babushka doll under a desk,
miming and suffocating and cowering
with simple movement like a puppet.

Society, I bring you clichés now.
I bring you red roses
and blue violets.
I cower under your table,
and like a dog,
I piss on your floor.

PANDORA

*Remember, remember, this is now,
and now, and now. Live it, feel it,
cling to it.*

It is Mother's Day Sunday, and I have
read the chapter of Luke before opening
the dusty box of yours, my extinct mother.

Your journal is sealed with the emblem
of an asylum. Your name written, chiseled
into the top like a vintage museum piece.

I open your words, gloveless,
a box of evils sprouting into the world,
red, red apples thrusting into the open
air like sins, hope left in the bottom
corner next to a ball of lent.

Lately, I have been reading the journals
of Plath like a bible thinking they were you,
reading the chapters and verses and now,
and now, and now, I am finally holding
your words which are distorted,
which are incomprehensible
through a bell jar of tears.

Remember, remember the life of your smile,
the features of your face, the swampy feeling
of my cheek after your kisses.

And to see your journal lying here next to Plath's,
next to mine, juxtaposed, is erratic.

We have spoken to each other now, clung
to each other now, through written telepathy,
our journals mingling in comparable time
discussing life as two old feminists
in rocking chairs, like Emerson
and Thoreau's first words, like Eve
reaching for a red, red apple.