

SIXFOLD SUBMISSION

“SAN GABRIEL ELEGY, STORED IN THE CLOUD”

“IF (ONLY THE PLUTONIUM PLUME...)”

“PORTMANTEAU”

“BLUE HILL”

“ALL NATURE WILL FABLE,”

San Gabriel Elegy, Stored in the Cloud

From an unknown server blinking a bright warehouse
I make my request for a map
of the mountainslope and canyons we once zoomed

in person. Dare I drag my icon to the canyon mouth?
It's a blur, an error at this distance.
When the page prompts for a destination, I can't

find a way to enter this circular desire: not to describe
the faint trail of a hawk across the blue
or the scenic skyway zags, but a cycle

like waters, drawn down deep canyons cut in basement rock,
hold me in ice and release, routed through
a transubstantiating drop, stream me back

into the crown of a limber pine, let me fall in a sheaf of snow
from a bent branch, begin the avalanche
as the hourglass empties you from memory

into flesh again: the arrow clicks north. Without moving
I circumnavigate the range,
bird's eye scanning for the spot you fell, as if

a memorial could be built on this shifting web,
as if location was still singular, as if
you hadn't spread already to sea. Some of the water

that spring contained a trace of you, some billionth
rode the wet round rocks
over ledges and wide wash, fanning out

on the floodplain where I now pan the camera left,
right, back, back again
to the warm January morning in the mountains

I recall without aid, written in light on a wafer,

your body on its litter
in the grim aluminum glitter of the meltwater

running to the lowest corner of the parking lot.

Inside your green fleece, the car keys
congealed in ice. As I drove your silver Legacy past families

packing pickup trucks with snow, carrying the mountain
down to meet the people, a billionth
of you dropped on a Gardena lawn, and a trace of your voice

in my virtual mailbox, a message I wore thin resaving
until it disappeared, or became
the ghost it was, broken back into light, leaving

space for new growth, new voices bearing your name
in memoriam, writ on the transient
medium of a father's likeness, water's resemblance to water.

If

only the plutonium plume contained less poetry
pushing it over the waters spent fuel rods stacked on the cooling tower
less anaphoric power. If only the days built a house of prayer

over the open oven of ions gone haywire language ceased being
so prone to flowering mutation. If only we could stop watching the waves, leaving
ten thousand replies to each other's poses stop pointing out

the obvious, that body can't be real Can it. The hands feel
fake, by feel I mean appear, affixed.

The Marlboro hole where the eyes keep returning

each time, the question of the corpse pupil burnt red the flash
at close-range fleshing out the conflict between ideal and
execution. Under the gamma knife the hemispheres glow

like a hillside on fire, each cell's red swell a trillion livid selves. If only
the cure was being everywhere at once we might bring ourselves
to terms. Fields fallow a thousand years still burn.

Blue Hill

It was the summer of ping-pong
as the rain increased, lobsters

clicking in the stockpot, blueberries
shaken from the bush. Of mackerel

schools like an opening hand, turning,
gone. Of the hook irrevocable

in one's mouth, the first cigarette hung
upon a wet lip. Under the bridge

the tide built a deep-troughed green-brown wave
twice a day. Twenty foot tides. The photos

show my hands and feet, remembering
as all parts do, here in lyric land,

how a detail embodies the whole.
Whirlpools angle off the paddle blade,

the river reverses, the island
disappears, the tethered dock rises—

forgive the symbols—my late father
practicing his Eskimo rolls

comes up for air in the glowing bay.
I was a fine son, filling his boat

with stones: I love you, said one, then ten
smooth fists pushed his spray-skirt under—

forgive the bathos, you would have done
better in your father-nature poem

I know, it's the one you're thinking of

beginning *The pines bend in the wind*

or with some tangible smell: woodsmoke
still in his salt and pepper hair. Don't

let me stay you, all of this is now
yours: the bay, crenellated by breeze

and revision, these pines, my pines, straight
as pilings, supporting a pier of sky.

Portmanteau

A dictionary hurtles toward you, dropped
from an unmanned drone.

Freedom's trick is to bury itself
then explode, softly: *bombllets*:

child-size munitions falling down
—lil' minibomb, lil' bomblings—
delivered by nylon, gravity-armed:

this is bloodless combat, no question
of the laser spot spreading. Napalm,

on the other hand—
easy to unpack: naphthene and

palmitate, lit fuse of leaves—
leaflets rain through the roof.

When the lowlanders were driven
to the mountains they transposed

the passes *ports*: centuries later
our army precedes its materiel with Porta
-filler, -dump, -morgue,

a trail of proprietary language
dots the valley around Camp Echo.

Aerial incendiary—is the word
phosphorous?—it's right on the tip

of the present, whose origins remain
so obscure who could describe

even if his tongue were intact
how the twin contrails recall

the beginning of a familiar letter
now blurred into a burnt swath of air

I recognize as just what I've been
trying to say this whole time.

All Nature Will Fable,

Said Thoreau, if you lack ability
to express it in language, every rock's shine
becomes a myth.

Thus armed, our father and son go fishing
a pond below the railroad cut, bright bobbers
lacquered in a green slime.

Just then, an osprey folds its wings and bombs
into the water, rising with a tremble
as a Reno-bound freight train thunders by
above, machine in the garden.

Which machine? Which Garden?
When there was no more beauty, we decided
we could worship the loss of beauty, and so
nothing was lost. Lo, how the water sparkled

under the uranium mine, clear as lucite,
and the sky a monument to ignorance.

Monofilament in the bushes along the shore,
seabirds dying of thirst. Mommy and me
saw it once. Did you see sharks? Yes, some,

I lie. And where was me? You? An egg
we carried in our pale adaptation
of a mystery. You were one
conclusion in the middle of a line,
mine story, the end of life as we knew.