

Weather Veins

Along the red Nile of coursing events,
these spindly canals where the life stuff flows,
flashes with activity and settles back down,
I'm not counting my vessels just yet.

For they're wont to be stranded on the riverbed
when the draught so often comes
dashed by the waves and the razor-rocks
when the storms so often come
and I'd no sooner choose which crew to join
than to mourn their ruined skeletons.

As many of my ships I've drowned,
as many I've seen antiquated-
I can carry no worth, no weight
through these weathered veins.

Pukers

Here are the glory days
of us mop-artists, wine wenches, and haggish ones
biting off our nails and spitting them
at the TV screen.

Here is our prized vision,
what we sat through lectures, half-asleep for,
us who break chair legs and shake our fists
at passersby.

Here are we who lament,
our brazen skins sprawled in neglect
collecting rug burn and the courage
to order more martinis
in that putrid place where the gussied hopefuls
make retching sounds together.

Here are we all, us pukers,
fermenting in our agitation,
tapping our feet on the dance floor sidelines,
and flipping the bird to the DJ.

And we may not ever get recognized-
at this rate, we might have to swallow it-
the jealous bile that doesn't look
as good as it tastes.

Childless Mother

Heaven hold you, my little one-
the gift I give is no mercy.
Beneath layers of scars I have earned
a selfish smile
I will not pay forward
as some defect in me has allowed,
as some warm soft thing I was forged
without.

I have dreamt of you in happy times
before the choice was mine,
the way one in love
expects the road to curve.
You have blue eyes
but they will never see,
a name your father will never speak.

And you will never hear the sound
of bottles breaking,
but if you listen close
to every word of encouragement
your mother gives to a child,
you will hear the things I meant to say
to you.

Postponed

I hurled my umbrella after him,
shoved him out the door.
From my window I watched him go,
heavy footsteps down the sidewalk,
shrinking into the sun.
I thought he must've burned up
and I didn't care.

But who could wonder after any man
with the circus in town!
Oh what a joyous distraction,
all its wheels and fancies,
colors, lights, and sounds-
set up in view of my window,
transfixed me through the glass.

Each day I'd wave and smile
at such fascinating creatures,
watched my little friends go about their business,
until with a puzzled expression I noticed them
packing.

A clown pointed up and mouthed
"storm."

I don't know how long it's been brewing
I didn't notice when it started-
but I can guess.

My circus has since departed,
though I've hardly considered it for pondering
these awful clouds;

whether tiny explosions on the sun
could've caused such rain
and how long it will last since
he's got my umbrella.

If You Burn

If you burn, I'll know.

If you walk in holding the walls up,
fixing your eyes on some trivial thing
to convince us you're not processing
all our venereal thoughts, overheard
over bottles, through headphones,
broadcasting from our stinking pores
like cheese in the sun; if you take us
as some great coagulation of pity,
some trial of patience and if you sit
in the midst of that chaos and deem
the same of each, every one of us
a caricature ripe for the designs
you'll spin, the ways we'll prove
your theories; and if you mark me
as equivalent, that the pencil wasn't
lifted when the crowd was drawn,
if your art glosses over me- let it.
I'll take you and show you later.
If you burn, I'll know.