

Walking to Uncle Wig's Cabin  
*Vashon Island, Washington*

Evergreen witnesses  
earnest supplication  
    neck freckle smeared  
    knees  
    sinking  
        in your native  
mud—  
    petition prayer.

    A newborn fawn  
freezes  
        her species still unknown  
        to herself  
    her snow spots distant  
        limelight  
between twin sequoias.

    She finally glides  
into a grove unseen  
leaving me to the moon  
and memories  
        of you  
    now resurrected  
        now flesh and beat  
    now wet moss breath  
        driblets wrung  
and trickling  
    down my nape.

Sizzle

Tune down rhapsodic heart; pet the cat,  
then the other, ailurophile; wrap all fingers  
in flypaper; don't speak, don't write;  
pen your poem then bake it, sweet potato;  
leave this surreptitious train hop;  
get your feet back into those shoes;  
stuff them with news clippings; fit  
your size; fit this day; fit this saddle;  
ride that woebegone horse;  
loosen finnimbrun pins from mess  
of hair; don't speak, don't write;  
suck on a talisman, rabbit foot, anything  
but hello, anything but a story  
about a woman bathing in vespertine  
sunlight; don't share it; he doesn't want it;  
be unwelcome; move along, foreigner,  
your name draws no water from a penniless  
well; your face is seen but not touched,  
gently, along the brow, kissed like lilac  
and honeybee; heal your organs;  
grab your grandmother's ghost;  
all things must live, then die;  
die daily, but save a miniature soul  
and grow again; root underground; be  
unfound; witness; know the narrow  
road of beginnings and ends; turn around,  
retrace; tar steps, blackest crows;  
hush, woman, hush.

Aloha: Islands of Response

1. There will always be words

D.H.: the Prussian officer is overtaken, repression  
bloomed with thirst, body flowering with golden leaf-  
petals. His last rest chirps with masochism, naked

in unrest, parallel with the object of untapped desire.  
What cost? Spoon me unbridled emotion, throw pennies  
down my throat and laugh at the way they clang

in descent. I too run delirious in the sunken gut  
of a mauve mountain. Shoo away the last horse—  
it's animal instinct to trot toward freedom.

2. Jealous janglings

Your shared island, far north, is bastioned  
by unknowing; my ramshackle rafts sunken  
by whittling hands, logs dismantled, drowned.

So maybe rock—maybe one skip will heat  
this shore before soot of silence catches flame,  
and the inferno erases all letters of name.

3. Painted church

I entered Star of the Sea after the transplant;  
will it again be spared from Pele's path?  
From a back pew I wished away echoes,

for your union soon tolls, and I, your forlorn habit,  
a tithe from empty pockets, am just enough distraction  
to stomach diluting memory's brushstroke.

Your turpentine became my religion.  
Save me from my objections.

4. Three legs bound to a sarcophagus

Watching our bird finally fall prey to the sunrise  
vog, jungle mist, the whiteness that will continue  
to separate and disappear in clots of snowcap.

Catch a toasted feather and wear it in your hat  
at least—can you at least do that? Let me be  
a final anything. Your nothings possess me.

I will keep tending that celestial garden  
in the star-wool shroud of night. So hum  
your jeremiad, your last notes of bloodsurge

and remembrance, as we both go on  
pillaging fields of forgetting one-handed,  
taro and cane staining folds of skin.

5. Papakolea

On sand sifted with olivine flecks, glints of gold,  
I am a damp-toed, wind-tousled creature—  
daughter of time-stamped flesh, mermaid of corporeal,

alive in the crooks of this century, catching crystals  
in dimples of cheeks. I watch the men tempt  
the goddess of bay wave, her breasts heaving,

her tendrils of salt curls sweeping them  
up and beneath like ragdolls, ocean puppets  
strung by risk and reward. One swimmer braves

the depths, and I'm sure I will bear witness,  
a sunbathing ninny, to his final aquatic dare.  
She spit him back to shore, and he washed up sideways

smiling, though I'm not persuaded he planned to  
return. What brings us back? More than will,  
steady stare of slated cliffs, chance. It's a lure

from beyond this plane, above and below  
and around the cove we close our eyes in,  
then open, squinting in the direction of home.

6. Soul bartered

I swapped this real estate long ago,  
and I can't reclaim the plats your body possesses.  
Harvest something along the edges and crevasses

of fault lines. Let the orphic memory  
of that almost miracle burst to life,  
perennial, fed by crescent shadows. You claimed

that soil before birth, and even after  
the final return, mouths muddy with silt,  
those grounds are holy—

spirit craves them. Keep them. Tend them  
in your a.m. wanderings, compose conceits  
beneath boughs, claw at the roots,

rub thumbs raw, break finger-  
nails, crumple pages into pockets,  
betrot to the embodiment of my sorrow,

and walk forward, tiptoe away, travel light,  
for the landscape is a prisoner to time,  
and we cannot wander in backward ticks.

#### 7. Hokeo

It was a sparked affair of words.  
It was the milk of beauty soaked bliss,  
even when evaporating at the bottom

of an unseen chamber. It was a legend  
half told, a mythical hybrid barely birthed,  
running free in the lungs of a scorched forest.

It was a smoke monster, sulfur-tongued,  
lapping up saline, balancing on shifting  
tectonics. It was a mantle plume, a hotspot,

a rotating ring of Pacific fire. It was and wasn't.  
It died young. It transformed the space  
between us, impassable miles, and dented

a caldera tattooed with the ichor and bones.

#### 8. Cave of cadavers

Bring orchids to the burial, plucked  
from our first garden. Tack them to paper  
bark of mulberry tree, and watch

them wilt with curiosity. Reflect as gently  
as children's breath on nights word-  
music leaks through your screen door—

a contoured lullaby. Scribble cantos  
during hours you can't escape our ebb  
of tonic, then wash your pen river-clean,

leaving language as a sacrifice—  
the only offering I too consigned to the deity

of Could-Have-Beens. The poems will rise again.

Mana leaks from wrists and fine fingers: dancers  
hula unbound, becoming rock and water, hips and hands  
in pantomime, telling a story without beginning or end.

Picnic

*All truths wait in all things.*

—Walt Whitman

Sun revolves now is the time  
to button the trench new poplin maybe  
we are old or just flowering Aprils  
we are the we who have waited  
and lived before so now  
now is the time  
to take me apart with your lips  
to pin cake batter arms against  
a bathroom mirror breathe neck deeply sigh  
*my ghost my ghost*  
dig a nail into chicken skin creases pulpy  
warm Dionysian  
unfasten red threads and pluck  
nubile bits away floss them canine  
leave marks  
follow me into every webbed corner  
tall weed dusky park  
abandon your past  
unions horrors self  
the morrow is now  
now is all  
we are

Wet Your Skin with Shadow

Let it be        somewhere        arboreal,  
where the trees        too,  
are losing themselves.

Let it be        beneath        broadleaf,  
in an under-        story  
of inflorescence—

ancestral,        shy catkins        clustered,  
waiting on        the wind.

I know the canyon—its eroded back, logjams, aroma of musk and cedar caught in circular maelstrom.

I know the alders—diaphanous greens that cannot darken.

I know the animal trail, slug stains, and I will clear the way with glow stick, light the origin, the falls unnamed,

the place we have been searching for in our sleep.

If we are—        if we are to        chisel  
rock with fury,        freed glances,  
if we are to        evince,  
manifest, conjure back        the demons,  
unfetter those        forest soldier

what has been buried. If we are to dip bare, numb flesh, conduit crystal, crawl back onto the soil, newly alive, redress our souls with starlight, let it be somewhere—

a wilderness without name

or witness.