

On Reading

Listen.

Do you hear water?

It's not far from us, pulling
at the earth, carrying tiny flecks away with an eddying tongue.
It is hungry for us, curled here like we're in an egg.

Do you hear my lips?

I am sure that I am not staying still as we read this together.

Mouthing the words in this poem -- The air
tastes sweet near you.

I think of bees. Do you think they taste the honey anymore?

Daydreams to Other Places

I wish, I wish I were a fish
Deep beneath the sea.
In the shadows where the light is dull,
Long and violet, and seagull screams

Are left above to frighten waves –
It's in that silence where I could breathe.

I give my word, I'd be a bird.
That's what I dream at night.
Through the clouds like heavy mist,
Like I were just the wind, I'd fly.

Below, there'd be no land, no sea,
Just an expanse, an empty white.

But as a bird or fish or man
There's nothing I can do
Under the waves, on wind or land
That would let me hide from thoughts of you.

Disorder

“The moral reductionism
present in the individualism
of the antihero’s destructionism...”
The voice trails off in a dim, rolling thunder
of literary analysis. In the corner of my eye,
the white, plaster school walls are cracking,
black, broken lines appearing, veins, pulsing.
Bits of plaster fall out, holes that rustle
as bunches of glass-green leaves brush by the edges.
The whole side of the classroom has fallen away,
and misty shadows drift in between rust-colored trunks.
The reverberations of the teacher’s drone spread out,
in waves of deep, storm-cloud blue, and dart into the undergrowth
with a crack,
like panthers escaping the poacher’s trap.
In the narrow arc of the ends of my eyes,
I can see the veins of the walls
In the veins of the leaves,
And the plaster’s white hardens,
Like bone,
Until the foliage folds away,
Burning sheets of plastic,
And only skeletons, like fingertips,
Like needles, rattle.
The soft and rotting earth
Verges over tile floor
to my feet, and blind, searching roots
Wrap and compress them.
I try not to scream. The teacher’s eyes
Are like jet stones watching
Through the trembling air of his voice.
I breathe, and feel cool air,
The crisp white shell of an egg breaking
In my lungs. I turn my eyes,
Feel them roll.
The forest is gone,
The walls only ripple,

Like lake water.
In the back corner of the room,
Just out of sight, a shadow is standing
And watching me take notes.

I have learned not to make scenes
upon seeing the scenery come alive;
In the corner of my eyes,
black wires grow from the treetops
like broken threads from some huge spiderweb
covering the sky
and fluttering leaves,
just green when I'm calmer,
ripple in phosphorescent waves.
The sidewalk is paved, not with cement,
but with cracks, and in those cracks
there is dark water,
and in that water, there are tiny plants growing,
blasting from the walk like great trees on the American plains,
if the plains were black and starved,
and the trees shone like gems.
And while other feet fall on the gritty grey concrete,
I step like a giant from island to island and see the waves around me crash
against plants that hold strength against them.
If they can hold those black and frothing waves,
of course they can hold back reality.

Until I look, and it all collapses,
and all that's left is sidewalk with straight breaking lines
and swirling grit.

I see the smells on the air,
colored hazes that roll through
like fog. They dance.
They make shapes in the mist,
but what those shapes are -- I can't say.
But there are shapes.
I stay quiet, and let other people talk at me.
Because who knows if their eyes that I'm staring at,

black pupils growing and shrinking in irises
like threaded and spun ocean water,
are really there,
are not just air like bodies that I hear and feel and *know*.
So I stay quiet,
don't say a word lest that word let out my secret,
my hidden people. Because if I do,
one group or the other will attack,
and I don't know which tact is worse;
the questions or questioning glances
of those who think to want answers,
or the chances that the others will change,
that in place of smiles and chipper laughs,
I'll find shadows staring back at me.
So I say nothing.
But I am not quiet.

I often wonder:
am I diseased because you think slow?
Because my mind doesn't feel like a cancerous growth.
It's sparking and wild and free,
a jungle, and sure,
maybe sometimes the trees are too thick,
and like vines, my thoughts run too much and block out the light,
and in the dark the birds scream and the wind howls and the big cats screech and I can't see and I
can't feel and it's dark and cold and wet and loud, and loud, and loud!

Breathe.

But does that mean
that the speed, the rapidity,
the affinity that my personality has for thoughts on thoughts, on to infinity
is wrong?
Or is it because you don't feel
the sensations of the creations of my "overactive imagination"
that I am --
what is it the word that you use for me,
a scarlet letter for the crimes of my mind --
Disorganized, disruptive, disconnected, disordered?

