

seven vignettes about nudity

for a select number of gazes.

prologue:
slack
my body
universes expanding
a gulf, a tributary
many words
an attempt to represent
the sea of gazes
i made from chrysalis
of longings

I

spooled together
like infinite diamonds,
you wove through
your eyes like
a needle, the way you looked
at me while arching
your neck - a sadness -
you wore loss
like a necklace,
dailiness taught you
to appear older
than you were

II

unveiling:
the kind of natural
phenomena dressed
in gauzy vernacular -
it will find you -

for me, it wasn't always
a wanting to be unrobed or
the secret pulsing of others -

for instance,
the first time
i saw a mountain
i was born unclothed

III

alone in a room
a set of limbs
smiling

IV

i sweat out
a stone - vulnerability
after being held
and fed water -
i was clothed
but my skin
a clothlike fabric
bare, pounding

V

when i walk into the room
to greet you, you already know
how much i've removed
and where i've put
that bleating stone
and how many breaths i'll take
before i take out my palm
and remove it
from my jaw

VI

the man in rags
bare-chested
hunger in his eyes
and i, becoming
the hunger

VII

the astral strangeness
of looking at a body:
what kind of naked
will i choose today?
i tuck the stone
into my pocket
and sew on
a layer of skin

for maria, who got placed on the wall

maria, twelve, de guatemala,
award-winner, got placed on the wall -
she hides behind books
her mouth is a syllable
she can't pronounce -
she tells me about
how she loves geometry
because someday it'll
put bread on the table -
she tells me about
older folks in guate
who travel with her
downstream to the mission
& ask when will she
come home -

maria, who won't answer back
en ingles, head shaking sadly,
observant gaze, pupil -
little pilgrim, wide-eyed
with a quiet heart
and a pocket
full of alms

you, a structure,

a set of words configured
lovely in your dailiness & you
express a certain set
of verbs & nouns
(you do, you are)
& this is what says
the you that tells
& these are the words
like pylons I borrow
to kiss you with language -
to regurgitate your selfhood -

& there you stand, visible,
arms naked, as if I could read
the soul from body in an instant
indistinct & holding in humility,
eyes skyward painted with something
beyond legibility -

& to you, then, I
lend this starry crown,
language, as a kind of ritual
offering - so we can murmur
& shake as much as various forms
we make a nest from, unity
& also the invariable solitude
of looking, feeling -

& with words, then,
I draw breath,
hoping you
becoming
in my figure
an all-aroundness -
& your breath
can be the water
to bind this soil
& your body
can hold
only the namelessness
of this silent earth

on history

carve my tremors
from minerals & clay. carve
remembrances we
shuttled to build.

impression:
a synonym of permanency.
a set of phrases i summon
from being taught to grasp.

language:
a set of rhythms
to guarantee
my entitlement
on this earth.

amnesia:
so we can forget
the unwritten.

i wrote this
on a set of minerals
assembled through
dialects of violence.
spending long
nights soaking
in guilt due to the relationship
between progress
and slavery.

the absence refers to
the way my fingers clutch
onto the cold metal scalp
of progress. it refers to
my breath when thinking of
the aristocracy of words,
making a home and living
to impress my peers,
peacock-like: meanwhile,
the land shrivels,
the rivers wither,
we are reminded, collectively,
of the possible joys and sadnesses
of living on a mortal paradise.

the absence, also,
refers to
my willful unknowing
of how to best give up
the repetitive clutching
of the self's hunger to be recognized
and cradle the ability
to walk away
from the obelisks
of empire.