

Ars Primavera

The sky belched out a wet snow today,
heavy
white flakes,
not enough to disguise early spring
as old winter.
Enough to know
it's spring in Colorado.

Thousands, millions of snowflakes
will spit-shine the pavement
before I leave
the house.
I'd like to dream the future
under all this
soft drizzle,

dazzle the trees with the gift of
their children
before a distant car horn
calls me back up
to remember departure, remember
restlessness,
impermanence.

I didn't expect to dress my hard skin
in golden compost, but
I suppose if I am becoming
the cultivated earth
then I had better look
the part.
I haven't smelled like myself since

the tilling.
What comes of grieving former youth
instead of growing into new—
what comes of carpet bags filled with brass
knobs and cold, dim rooms
where people used to dance.

Forgetting to bleed like autumn and cauterize like summer.

People have been throwing pennies down my throat
for as long as I can remember:

*cut down the stem of the brain and build a raft,
drag its pitiful roots right out of the spine.*

*Put your lips together and blow a song
through the empty reeds,
sing something that can rebuild a house,*

can wield brick and mortar.

*Sing something that will
return our fathers to us,
remember slavery and the Khmer Rouge,
give Jesus back his russet eyes.*

*Forget about the snow
and the trees and their new children.*

But I cannot sing another's song,
tap roots that aren't mine, or
build something out of what I do not have.

I am not a prophet of the past.

I like when it stays cold enough to snow in spring
so that is the wish I will grant,
that is the raft I will sail.

I'll put
my hand to
the back
of my neck
and know
when it is
warm again.

Dyke

I was sixteen the first time
someone called me a dyke
& I liked the way it felt,
sharp & curved
like the hammer's claw,
like a scythe reaping dead things from under
my skin, tearing
them out by their bony
roots,
detoxifying soil
that had yet to be
plowed.

It snapped against my tongue like sour
candy, ringing against my
teeth, razing the pink
puckered flesh until the air tasted
like fire. I was sixteen & I knew
an unwhet bowie knife had sheathed
itself between my breasts.

The blood-chested bullfinch
perched on a rib
calling out with its one-noted voice
for something that might answer
in a familiar tongue.

I was sixteen & it cut
like a blue bite to the neck, sucked dry
of all my innocence in that moment,
unable to mimic the alien syllable, so
I sing it out into the world
with smoke in my throat,
blood welling up like groundwater
where the blade has culled
its fill,
& hope
that somewhere an echo
will return to fill my aching troughs.

medusa with the head of perseus

I see a girl-beast staring out at me through
stone eyes that look on the verge of tears,

rain-slicked serpent tendrils dangling down
her left shoulder,

fluted ribs arched gothic towards cascading
river canyon sternum.

I see a woman standing still, hips
canting to one side, her curves carved raw

from the heft of her grief. Hips
cradling something too black to be seen by the

naked eye. Pallas Athena knew what she was doing
when she granted her the gift of breathless beauty.

A stoned woman whose flesh is unmarked,
whose flesh is not choked with demons but who *is*

the demon. From the Greek *daimōn*, meaning deity,
guardian, genius. Unexorcisable.

Her abdomen is an urn full of ashes,
telling a story of how she was cursed and hunted

down like an animal, like an abomination.
She could never have unwritten those scars without

something alive and pure as fire inside. I see
her wrath, a clean blade cutting through silence.

To feel conquered by her, I walk around
until I am standing directly behind her.

It's worth it to see her back muscles straining
from the weight of scimitar and severed head.

a retelling of the Genesis story (not in a garden but a house, and at the end of the world, not the beginning)

a boy without wings / a girl without wings

a house that hasn't felt a sigh

since—

arms bruised purple-brown, apple-shade—

fallen from black branches painted into the sky-white ceiling

long ago, faded

sour breasts / flaccid penis

all else forgotten

postlude / tarnished metals

naked legs, tight skin smeared over ankle bones

that whisper to broken heels (dipped almost all the way into the river

but not quite enough to forget pain, not enough to

know memory)

mythless—

the silver cup is cloudy, overflowing with rust—

the bed sags under their bodies, making no sound, breathlessly cold

too small

warm thighs / hot hands

all else forgotten

a girl with trauma / a boy with hope

a house that hasn't felt the loving trace of fingers

along its inner walls

since—

their hands meet in the middle

smiling portrait of a widow and her child—

snow flickers down through the roof's splintered ribs showing how long it takes

for something to

really pass

thin walls / hard chest
sometimes it's hard to feel translatable

a retelling / unstoried

lonely as sin

I used to be a garden, cradling bones and ineffable soils

candied with sweet fruits and flowers that opened up wet and lusting for air

before they took out the bones and built

in their place

a house of—

bruises gone, no wicked brand of abandonment—

at the end of it all, when the sky clears and the pallid city stops bleeding

hope always remains at

the bottom of the jar

the girl feels / his hand at her back

a flutter there

Late Poppies

for Sylvia Plath

Your daddy points out the car window. You don't
Have to look, you smell them blooming
Bright red and early, or late, depending on how you think of time.

You've been here before. This place needs
No open-eyed gaze from you
To be real. It sits between sunrise and sunset, wavering

Like a mirage, or a metronome. A memory
Burning like the sweet blood of blackberries on your
Tongue.

There's a hole in your head. Steam shrills out of it like a
Boiling kettle, singing
Louder than an ocean, louder than your memories.

You think to stick a needle in your daddy's eye
To see if it would burst open the way his heart used to do.
But the poppies have made your hands heavy. They sink into your chest

As you sink into the passenger seat. You never used to believe in heaven
You've confessed this many times, in as many ways as it's
Passed you by. This might be it: your daddy says so it must be true.

The car has stopped, pulled up to the edge
Of the orange-faced cliffs. The ineffable smiths haven't
Broken for sleep; their hammering wakes you.

Too early; the morning hasn't yet seized
The earth with its molten fist. The breaking dawn has
Only just begun to catch the falling pieces of itself.

The sun spreads over the glowing green fields
Like a lion's mane, yellow and insane.
Sylvia.

You've made your body an immortal work of art,
Captive in stone, sung down like a legend,
Upended and stolen by a silent angel whose face is

The rounded smoothness of an egg. When they try
To pry your fingers apart,
You can be certain that they will break.

We shall never get you put together entirely,
Pieces shuffled, recombined, shattered again into atoms.
Girl that was the shape of a blue, unbroken egg,

Girl that could not be told
When to stay and when to go
And when to leave out food and milk for her babies

For when they wake to find mommy
Has gone on a long, strange trip with her daddy.
Sylvia.

Sylvia.
Don't you know it's not a dream
This time?