

Watson and Crick with Double Helix

I'm behind the lens.
Crick says *Should we pose?*
He mocks professors with a smug grin and pointer,
while Watson plays student,
mouth agape with trepid ignorance.

They are school children on picture day;
Shirts tucked in like
mother told them to,
electric balding heads of hair,
neckties pulled a little too tight.

In their bodies, DNA is unzipping
and gathering up its other halves.
Somewhere along the twisted necklace
of their genes is that “pearl” of a paper,
the one that simply held a mirror up
and pointed it inward.

Their faces are beginning to break
into laughter right as I snap the shutter.
Oh, to be so young
And so sure you've changed the world.
To be dead right.

Creatio ex Materia

It's not the kind of thing you can just accept outright,
genesis, happening in your trashcan.
I imagine it started at the beginning.
Darkness over the stagnant water, the trash can sludge:
banana peels and coffee grounds, used tampons
and the cat's feces, liquifying together
in the neglected outdoor can until something
started growing. Something new.
Phospholipid bilayers forming at an alarming rate,
the advent of spines and skins, all happening
unnoticed, as things often are,
over the course of a week.

So when that woman, that rank smelling creature
emerged from her womb of garbage,
innocent of all but warm, putrid smells,
her thick mat of hair growing woven like a tapestry,
hips slender as a child's, body tarnished and hard
like a once golden Greek daughter of Chaos' own
how could I feel anything but awe,
even as she munched on a half eaten banana?
No, this was no daughter of a god.
She was mine. This creature--
she is what we breed when no one is watching.

I know now, that
out there, in oceanic miles
of garbage, landfills overflowing
with an abundance of new life,
a nation is rising up, born of our neglect.
The eternal matter is this moment,
giving way. *Creatio ex purgamentum*,
the gods whisper in their sleep.
We have left nothing else.

World Leaders at the Premiere

The evening has just begun. See how those
monumental men, pillars of the Earth, stroll by?
Here's Vladimir, a vision in undulant gold,
the skirt of his dress a caress,
and fox fur scarves, no one has told him they're out of fashion.
Who cares? We love you Vladimir.

Notice, even the Dali Lama has come off his mountain for the occasion.
He's chatting with Pope Benedict, takes his hand in both his own and shakes
the fragile man vigorously by the arm, disrupting his pointy hat.

And everyone's darling Barack is wearing a slick little number
in simple shimmering black, curved
to the contours of his graceful neck and back.

King Abdullah stops for an interview.
Tonight he says (he's wearing Valentino, the Fall line)
Tonight we celebrate. And maybe, we bury the hatchet for good.
Because, of course, who in his right mind
wields a hatchet
in Valentino?

They gather in the theater now,
file into neat lines of red velvet seats,
and jostle for armrests, suck in as others squeeze by.
Light flickers against their painted faces,
catches the gleam of their nails and jewels.

Elijah

In the video he's running. He stumbles in the sand,
barrel rolls back onto his feet and keeps running
and looking back and running until

he stops, his eyes and
his whole body searching the air.

For what? What ladder rolled out from the sky
is going to spirit him away from here?--
The wide Arizona desert. The car spinning its wheels in sand.
The police sirens drawing in close, closer.

Then he turns his back on the camera,
the one he must know is watching from a helicopter above.
I also want to turn away,
but I don't. I inhale and keep one breath.
I hold perfectly still.

Seconds later, there is a bullet in his brain, and he's still standing,
a broomstick on the palm of the earth.
I start to think he'll stay there and wait for that ladder after all,
or for the sky to swallow him.

Drinking Wine with your Neighbors

It is Sunday, after church.
A mammoth of a woman totters past me wearing
The most imposing yellow mu-mu I have ever seen.
She is a sun, a goddess among us.

I sit here
redefining my concept of beauty
to include this woman, her massive presence,
inelegance, my *god*, how my eye is drawn
helplessly inward and upward
to the edges of vision and reason.

And suddenly I am thinking of heat collapsing
into fall, muscadines fermenting on the vine
even before they are pressed into wine. How
can I think for even a moment that these things,
sun and grapes, streets and
this temporary home, are not the embodiment
of blessing?—

A sun, a goddess,
Reaching upward and outward—
It is well, it is well, with my soul.