

Apophysis

There are no rosary beads in my soul. No pumpernickel bread.
No oysters on the half shell.

There is not a scratch ticket, used or unused, in my pocket.
Or an extra pack of matches.

My soul seems opaque but if you shine a light from behind you can see
there are no paperclips, no broken

shells, no threads pulled from hem of a skirt. No ice picks. No babies.
No dreams left half or whole undone.

There are no windows in my soul, but there are doors
out back and in front. And they swing open

in the wind and sometimes chickadees get caught on their way to
the birdfeeder that hangs above my head.

I bat my eyes for their tiny hearts, small puffs offering a way out,
no laments for the ones who stay trapped inside.

There is no snow falling in my soul, still the ground is white, and cool,
and untouched, inviting me to find my mittens,

put on my winter boots, go out and make angels
before the darkness shines.

Raising a Son

He has a serious resistance to feeling his feelings. You
have to push him
first with kindness, then a little meanness, a soft
shove off the seesaw
so he loses his grip and falls back into the high grass, bottom
down, sneakers flying
up in the air. He'll feel the sting of unfairness,
of soured play,
and his eyebrows will twist and bend - the arched shock
of another betrayal,
the slant determination to hide his fear, the unbreakable bridge
to not strike back.
All that huffing and plunder will drain before he steadies
to his feet
and when you hold out your hand the water in his eyes
will tell you –
No, never! *and* What took you so long? *and* How come?

Transmission of Power

Amanda Gorman, the poet laureate who wears
sunbeam and pomegranate at Biden's Inauguration
suggests, We, each one of us, Be the Light in the World.

The young woman who could not enunciate
Right or WRong four years ago plays with sounds
like a child with bright plastic cups in the bathtub,

uninhibited, unafraid to splash puddles on the new
tile floor. She inculcates and orchestrates
with talking finger tips – and my heart climbs and falls

to her drumming beats in the brilliant frozen air.
This twenty-two year old wrote this poem to recite
before King and Kingdom, proclaims Every Thing

“... just is – Justice.” And I laugh inside, I cry. I lose
my breath and find it. Break loose. I did not expect to be carried
to the foot of this patriotic hill, to be pointed

in this upward direction. Amanda Gorman is the hungry
pencil case that rattles, she is the rustle of the empty page.
The Poem in her wakes up the Poem in me.

Jesus Action Figure

Jesus comes home from the Mercantile
in a brown paper bag with long sticks of patchouli
and a faded dragonfly sarong. She places him
on the mantle next to Audre Lorde and Sigmund
Freud, stands before his out reached hands

remembering how her feet shifted uncomfortably
under the pew, how she was bothered by
the stories, telling the lame to get up and walk,
restoring sight to the blind. Had that son asked
to be touched on the eyes?

Now she's brought Jesus into her home, placed him
on her makeshift altar of intention, where positive
thinking and perfectly placed stones might help
her child heal. But she is not sure about this plastic
god, she is not sure about this asking.

Mu·si·cal·i·ty

Notes live in his limbs,
seem never ending, rush out

in repeating patterns,
gutsy echoes pushed through

a broken hole. He exhales with purpose,
approximating song.

Not tamed by lips or tongue,
it comes from his blood,

this pulse of joy, this tickle of fate.
And he knows, he cannot whistle,

nor tie his shoes. He knows
he will never drive cars, fly

areoplanes. But it doesn't scare him
from climbing staircases,

from shout singing in the shower,
from responding to the shining sun

with the full force of his breath,
untuned, unstoppable.