

Sixfold Submission 10-24-19 cr

## The Lords of Ocqueoc

are diving in water clear as rootbeer  
as it foams over the rocks;  
again and again the cannonballs,  
three boys on the move to outdo and knowing--  
knowing all the while the girls, tourists, babies are watching--  
or not knowing or not caring,  
the way they didn't care about the filtered sun in the leaves  
or about how the water poured and poured over the rocks,  
grinding them, wearing them away, carrying them into the lake  
two miles beyond, or about the faces of the tourists, droves of them,  
thick as mosquitoes, and pasty in summer flesh,  
the water a treat, a respite from factory or office or sewing machine or babies  
and the dirty diapers someone was washing a little way downstream  
where the water stilled its roiling;  
the boys not caring in skin tanned, for now,  
absorbed in the play of the water through the nose, mats of wet too-long hair in the eyes; this  
was their river, their falls, their place, their lives,  
lives born of the landscape where boys commanded the pool at the bottom of the falls,  
all the visiting children circling around them in the water,  
all of them eddies in the flow  
and eddies are always carried away.  
No moss, no fright, just the debris carried with them.

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## Homage II

A train of children, weeping, sent out of the devoured city.  
At Eberbach, a farmer takes on the one with red hair because she will not cry.

\*

They hide low in the wheat when bombers swoop.  
It is some years before American soldiers will bring their chocolate and cigarettes.

\*

Her favorite color is blue.  
He courts her out of uniform and returns to the base each night.

\*

Water is her liquid heart, a center spilling out to horizon.  
She is gnarled, a red oak in the lee of shore.

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### Homage III

The beer is amber,  
the Pilsner glass raised,  
the moment a quarter lime of smile.

\*

Oil in his white hair stains the chair back.  
The daughter touches an arm, kisses a stark cheek, hides the spot with a towel.  
It smears lightly across memory.

\*

Weeks before her parents arrive, she scrubs grout in the tub with a toothbrush.  
All will be clean, children will be clean, the wrong husband she cannot scrub away.

\*

Photo of the now-old woman with the Grosstochter, their cheeks together above fresh  
Apfelkuchen; the girl is learning German. Another quarter lime of smile.

\*

The next floor up she sleeps; her slow breaths still draw in air,  
exhale what has been forgotten, or maybe left behind.

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Energy Equals Mass Times the Speed of Light Squared

*A human being is a part of a whole, called by us "universe," a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest... a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness.*  
—Albert Einstein

Somewhere, the universe holds you;  
your spirit perhaps has slipped into a black hole,  
drawn you out like a piece of fine silver wire  
into infinite singularity.  
In this place that lets out no light  
are many, like you, waiting.

\*

They've swaddled your body in blankets,  
me in gown, mask, gloves.  
I am not afraid; I've known clostridium difficile  
as I've watched your torn lungs smother in it.  
Your eyes have been closed for weeks.  
Only today they told me you are probably brain-dead.  
I long suspected that you've already given your body the slip.

\*

So much energy released as atoms come apart.  
Yet Einstein told us nothing of the energy  
released as spirit departs the body.

\*

We circle your bed and pray.  
The doctor opens one eyelid, and I see no light.  
Later, after your last breath, alone  
in the private waiting room, I ask you for a sign.  
The restroom dispenser several feet away releases a towel.  
Its motion detector has been activated.  
I have said I am several feet away. It is 3 a.m.,  
and they are preparing your body in ICU  
for the hospital morgue.  
I have said I was alone. I am startled,  
but I don't leave the room until called  
by the nurse so I may wait with your body.

\*

Something in time and space has changed.  
I study the night sky outside,  
the soft lamp light above the zipped bag  
reflected in the window.

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### The Language Hidden in Skin

Unexpected glimpse, oedipal,  
of maleness carefully kept from  
view, seen at an age of bodies  
fast growing into sexes.

A medical reference with drawings  
in his library did show that.  
A mother's blush at questions  
left me to puzzle out meaning,  
to think long, long on the crux of it,  
a preview of shapes and purpose.

Fast forward years, now, to his dying,  
old man swaddled, and the gown  
loose always as he shifted in his last pain;  
studied, monitored, probed,  
needles forced in, pulled out;  
he, to them, a rotting bag of parts.

I remember touching his arm,  
though he was gone already, by then,  
and the pungent unwashed hair  
not the least of that body's growing offences.

There, again, accidental view;  
nurses hovered, removed, replaced,  
removed integument of sheets.  
Primal, this view, but different;  
parent as mammal, sleek, clean,  
having sloughed his useless rind;  
no longer hobbled by flesh,  
new in shape and purpose.