

## INVISIBLE

*my niece Marissa says I was being invisible in the kitchen*  
(after Helene Cixous)

I'm not possible to consume but easy to walk by  
erasing myself through confession  
no one left in my room  
a world beyond my whole history my memory  
coming around to give a difficult joy  
a secret I cannot tell her  
I cannot display my affection

how this story coagulates all substance of love  
the way all of us love to fall in love  
that human blend into otherness  
inside each man, a woman  
inside each woman, a man  
perhaps dangerous to say this

and if all is forgiven we disappear

the narrative we need keeps us exposed  
and we emerge from the story a character  
and our characters say what they have to say about the violence  
of each person's history taken for granted like a dog whose love is exhausting  
complicated threatening a dog who is relentless  
who understands our ambivalence to love so the dog loves us more

we may abandon that dog that lover our innocence we maintain  
whatever will be finally said in the last ours of that last room  
we've loved we'll say it all each story the cruelest story  
each mystery we don't know who we are  
we can only take ourselves as a bundle of nameless desires  
we know some things about our secrets  
whatever we are at the mercy of knowing  
deviances' defiance our defense and passion

knowing too much and being too intimate  
towards the depth of the most known and unknown thing  
whatever is available the dog our writing our beloved  
the delicate and the dangerous means to the infinite

and the invisible

## **The savage dark (with deep respect to Jane Hirshfield)**

In the magazine advertisement she is sitting looking out at the Golden Gate bridge  
Marin hillsides in the glow of nightfall tower orange span lights

The woman appears to me like poet Jane Hirshfield  
who lives in Marin calm and self-possessed yielding to her whims  
how she crafts on the page in the wooded hillsides deepening thought and breath

But in this advertisement for Ghirardelli Intense dark chocolate  
the woman contemplates the taste as she considers two women on the mountain  
knowledgeable hikers who knew the trails  
one took a route by day another at night both seemed to have stumbled to their death  
as reports indicate no foul play

Should she worry about falling? Does she ever hike alone?  
She has kicked off her black heels she sits back on the plush brown chair  
As the images suggest the purple night sky and chocolate allow her to savor  
that day by the beach or cocktails before dinner slender hardbound books  
of philosophy or verse on a creamy wood table

Now alone in the dark when previously she was in the company  
of friends and rivals who wanted to know her varieties of success and luxury  
how does she savor the intensity the slow melting that complex magic  
of our lives that danger that obsession with oneself we can never escape

## HER FRIEND SAID

False identity  
thoughts bathe a question of everyone  
they all understood she had come for dinner  
but never arrived  
they go to the bar in clumps  
look in the mirror  
learn distinctions  
friends give back books  
this moment she begins  
to talk about commitment  
difficult  
work through shadows  
lying in the door  
panels appear stripped  
the color of matted hair  
fields  
who is really covered  
those lines rule out exercise  
a kind of neutrality  
fingers identifying cloth

comments among the weeds  
before the loss  
family you cannot escape or accept  
her friend said  
I want to run away  
you don't want her to  
go inside and tell jokes  
that no one has ever heard before    *(continued next page)*

you can see through  
for example the twentieth century  
the meaning of the game you know very well  
recollections stated defects  
no one can find the messages  
with light there

translucent glass  
vocabulary touches  
you select some words  
out of the ability to get at the right details  
according to arrangements  
intensity  
revealed provision

fingers as if they matter  
unfamiliar faces  
earth and sea tender  
contact  
gentle flocks  
naming the impact  
love is surrender  
tremors in the air  
thick night little goldrush towns  
nestled away in forests  
everyone is blood

*Why me ? (after Phillip Levine)*

if this poem is a question as the poet described  
his grandmother grandfather mother  
the insides of them all we cannot get out  
the mystery of our parents and grandparents who want our poems  
and who don't want our poems  
and we appear as characters embarrassed  
like someone who could write like the '60's  
imagines driving around the country  
taking drugs while sitting at his mother's kitchen table  
goes for a swim in the lake after lunch

moved by the feeling of gestures  
our yearning to articulate  
and discover the words layered through family

it's not mapped out not explained  
not ordinary our routine working or cleaning what is correct  
what is expected raising children scrubbing know who is getting the news  
who is getting a lucky break  
and what are your choices here?

we avoid asking about their difficult opinions  
we find ourselves in the armpits  
    the sweat of the old world  
a childhood and adolescence they could never imagine  
and their lives we cannot understand  
we are the questions the poet asks

this uneasy relationship to language  
the faces and hands memory and imagination  
of mystics those beloved and divine  
in the form of fire or salt

some ambition that writing is a fog of advice  
what about picking up girls on the day-labor shift  
where they listen to the oldies station

yet he just falls asleep then wakes up in time for happy hour  
dances through the door and calls it a day  
rolling down the determined short sighted highway

gets off at the next light

## **FLAMES**

*after all there may or may not be such a thing as luck*

*just an attitude of randomness or reason add some fuel some more fresh fire my favorite fire  
sinking down the alley way*

Students on their way up north they've had little opportunities for academics to think of themselves in the future as college students but a campus and its town shrouded in fog and redwoods so far away from their East LA street dangers has invited them to visit and then the bus collides on the freeway with a delivery truck instantly bursts into flames....

they had been talking and singing looking out the window at the parched land and fields where they will not have to work if they can go to college

\*

Transit officers and sheriff personnel go through an open door

with firearms drawn afraid of someone in there  
an invasion of insanity  
looking whatever was taken from passengers on the train  
so assured that violence will allow them  
find stolen items

an accident or ancient appeal  
an analogue or comparison  
like a betrayal feeling abandoned waiting  
at the stop for a ride  
tossed aside any child looking out the window  
forgets her doll or toy car

the weakening gasp of late summer  
speaking a love poem  
stretching more than Derrida strategies  
a collage of intimacy deepens that earthy  
survival glitter of belief or unforgiveable  
words like dolls changed fire hurling insults  
difficult body of awareness

a kid's joke is fallible  
his reasoning is flawed a  
he might get famous playing football  
but he sees another a young man  
wearing a skirt a personal flair  
sleeping in the back of the bus where he usually sits  
takes out his lighter sets the frills afire  
makes the conversation about gender identity  
something

we all need to talk about (*continues next page*)

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before she knew it she was woman  
stopped skateboarding  
and has never told her 19 year old daughter  
who might like to know  
how she once injured her knee  
so that this sprain as she waits for the bus  
made her use crutches makes her limp  
and remember  
whatever cannot be spoken  
men die everyday for lack of what is found there  
that poetry is firecracker  
or how understanding what is lacking what is shared  
the dire connection that frightens  
enables the telling the reach of illumination  
on the bus in the bath out the door

\*

*Firefighters have extinguished a 4-alarm fire that destroyed a San Jose diner  
Saturday morning, a fire battalion chief said. The fire broke out in the kitchen area of  
Flames Coffee Shop on Hillsdale Ave around 6AM*

pull the lever and survive brilliance  
lightning volcanoes

stand around the disaster  
mudslide rescues salamanders

the yards the breasts the declarations  
wonder if a car crashed through the window

the blaze the tale of cooking  
enslavement workday determination

thought hotspots investigator  
avenues sleeping insurance

thick smoke pronounce war and flare  
grateful for the tangling when people help

resurrection and artillery factory payments  
transformation horizon blazes

sections of roof collapse under the arch  
charred bodies can only be identified by teeth

hot blooded when angered  
endurance procedure transmit the news  
keep it spreading