

MILD DAYS

1. NOLA, 2006
2. Morning, Five Ways
3. LV Winter, 2015
4. Tanka for the New Year

NOLA, 2006

Rusted bikes clattering
over rutted streets:
only sound this morning
in a city still learning
how to breathe
now that the flood has receded.

This boy I barely know
takes me to a childhood home.
We stand on the sidewalk
saying nothing,
breathing in the lush smell
of puddles and drowned worms.

We're stripping away
the blackmold sheetrock,
exposing studs
we hope are strong enough,
press of bodies
in the small rooms,

smell of sweat
and waterlogged stuff.
Someone has planted
sunflowers out back.
Their big heads gyre west
to watch the sinking sun.

Down on the sand after dark
listening to black waves
and that air-swelling bayou hum:
we are almost children still,
hurtling forward,
verging on something pure.

MORNING, FIVE WAYS

1.

Whitebread morning--
give up on daring.
Focus on something
mundane and immediate:
backbone, for example,
or sinew.

2.

Through the open door,
a furnace blast of morning
The dog has shit a chickenbone
still whole.
No goose today,
no golden egg.

3.

You cannot remember,
standing in a potential friend's foyer,
which boots are yours.
Perhaps finding the correct coat
will spark something.

4.

You have not yet opened your eyes.
The fact of being alive
kicks you in the ribs,
threatens to slit you down the middle
and spill your slick ruby innards
all across the slant of light
whose heat sears through your lids.

5.

It is best to wake first
to give yourself the option
of staying in bed and listening
to his roughhewn breaths
or leaving for an open space
where you can hear your own.

TANKA FOR THE NEW YEAR

New Year's Eve, and grey:
cloud upon cloud, swollen full
with unfallen rain.
We are already asleep
on the chill white sunless sheets.

LV WINTER, 2015

It's not hot yet and already I'm tired,
trying to read Bronk while the baby sleeps,
trying to sort the husk and hulk of words.

The sun is asserting itself again,
hot butter glow cowing the short grey days,
filling the air with creosote and sage.

Lizard skitter and hummingbird pulses,
the rest is stillness, that desert restraint,
knowing always when and when not to move.

Coffee is blacker in the old palm's shade,
dry fronds brushing my shoulders, somewhat like
a lover's presence, breathing, imagined,

remembered: that kneejerk covering-up
of unfinished pages, this black-on-blank:
I'm sorry, dear, this is not yours to read.