

Plan of the Coliseum

Sad, to remember walking through it.
I pushed my hand
into everything, wanting
some notion of dust to take root
in a cut or abrasion. I
was with my step-Dad
with the smoke from
my first cigarette still soaked
into my fingertips. That first feeling
into my imagined past
ended poorly.

There was only one entrance
and too many tourists'
feet, like my own,
staunching the wounds. I sank back
to a corner, pressed
my hands against the stone to feel
for screams
or maps
toward living.

What a marvel,
these lines and angles and
perfect ellipses
with space for seating. Space
for a shout, a bet, corpses,
mercy. Perhaps,
like connecting dots in the night sky with our fingertips,
looking in possibilities
for the lines
to hold our blood in, we grow --
replicate ourselves over and over
with incalculable deformities.

Eventually, the dotted lines
from one bright light to another
lose their clarity.
We imagine our violence contained
in a clean informational placard. Defined forms
blur, our astigmatisms worsen. An idea
for sound, like the groan of stars
in empty space,
becomes the brain. An empty building
becomes the past. Cut from our eyes
the world softens or breaks. My hands
lose their innocence. The Coliseum presses back.

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I still remember
his laugh. The story of carnival tricks.

The cold, wet smoke
that lived with him.

But how candid can we be
before the words fall out, laughable, beneath us?

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There is no more evidence here.
The Coliseum has its own holes to fill
with tenuous reassurance. It's own awkward martyrs
pinned into every crossroad

to beseech Earth's hungry pull
to hold back. We laugh
at such things now. At every encounter with the living

our memories
hobble towards us -- their zombie legs
freshly stitched -- their craving

for us
the same as ever. *Is it moral to get better?*
To look on things from a distance
until the gravity
and the jokes dissolve? No more world-cut eyes, no lungs
collapsed, no fingers left to reach
and break -- just reams of new white paper
waiting for dust. The maps
still unreadable -- the screams
a familiar, ignorable burn.

Garage Sale

Like we've driven to Anaheim
with the family bones and meat in the trunk

and walked onto the convention center floor
with our clacking, soggy bags

for the Antique Roadshow
to appraise.

Like we've laid the house on a long white table
and sliced from collar bone to groin.

Like we've put the organs on ice in red picnic coolers
on a scratchy red blanket

next to a sign punched into grass
that says:

Prices Cheap -- Dust the Bones,
Take the Weight, and Leave

a Penny in the Jar.

Title Poem -- Thesis Statement

The subject tonight is love -- as always
it flops from my mouth
writhing. A wild, contorted thing --
like a throat in mid-shriek -- and I run
for neat, labeled pins
to hold it down.