

## **Double Body Baptism**

it is a baptism.

                  myself a double body:  
performer  
                  and performed upon  
the baptizer  
                  and the blessed  
both God  
                  and woman

cold water crashes over my face  
                  and slips down my body  
touching the dark places like fingers in the night  
                  it lights them up to magnificence  
resplendence,  
                  even

steam rises from the bath as from a pit  
to the hell  
                  I (self-flagellating arsonist phoenix)  
rise from

I dare not look myself in the mirror;  
                  there is something too sinful and holy in that:  
eye contact with the divine as she descends  
                  to mortal flesh

my head pounds; I may pass out  
  of this body  
and into something greater

already my hearing is leaving me  
                  and I need to sit down:  
I kneel on the grimy bath mat  
                  supplicate myself to whatever is holier  
than the vision I see in the mirror when my eyes come back  
                  to my body:

flesh and bone and sockets that bleed  
blue and grey; my womanhood slipping  
out of me like divine tears

as I crumple further within what now is  
    (and only ever was)  
my wet and naked body  
    curled on the floor of the bathroom  
dust motes and dank air rising around me  
    up to heaven

(even these particulates reach higher  
go further  
than I  
)

**Note:**

the idea of disaster  
seems like it ought to be a  
(n unfortunate) by-product of chaos  
of the unruly cynic god who rules us all  
by way of doing nothing

but our etymological foremothers

( or perhaps four mothers?  
what is it again that conceives and births us?  
chaos (1)  
hope (2)  
love (maybe) (3)  
and spirit (4)

Note: *spirit*:

see: *spir*      see: respiration  
see: breath    see: invisible sustenance  
see: God        see: 'holy spirit'  
see: '*blow blow thou winter wind*'  
see: blow

(us— away) )

tell us a *disaster*

is (Note:) the “unlucky placement of an ill star”

see: *dis*: pejorative, *mis*—

see: *aster*: star

(consider the astronaut: star-sailor  
hopelessly lost little man making himself small by  
proximity to bigness.  
loss is our one (1) fore father)

etymology suggests you can blame the stars for your misfortune

but I would not lean in to that notion

if I were you

(and atomically, genetically, I very nearly am. what are you but nitrogen?)

my last note to you:

*chaos*.

see: gaping    see: yawning    see: abyss.

see the astronaut, the star-sailor floating through all that black nothing

see him gasp, all alone. see him yawn and blow

through so much empty space

see the nearest star pull him in

(Note: love is only ever hot and cruel.)

see the final disaster: the astronaut dissolving, every atom resonant  
and pre-determined

(we hope)

## **Good Pilgrim**

Do your thoughts wander?  
Is your mind, like mine, an empty church  
hollow and cavernous, carved from ancient stone  
with a great stained-glass window at its front—  
a heavenly host of blue and gold, green and red  
in a haunting, hollow medley?

Do the great wooden doors in the church of your mind  
swing open and bang on their hinges  
allowing every gust of vagrant, lusty wind  
to touch and tickle all the nooks and crannies  
every desolate pew —does it rustle the pages  
of ancient books, teasing their covers open to allow  
inconsolately lonely words to lift from their pages  
and fly heaven-wards, lazily and vibrantly  
to bounce and echo on the imperturbably heavy stone?

Does the grand and holy temple of your thoughts  
ever stand so naked, so shorn of fancy and illusion—  
a simple building in a simple world, echoicly ringing  
to the tune of a choir long since gone?

Are you, like I am, so desperately hungry  
to let your every godly atom stand so open  
and so vulnerable? Do you ever ache and echo  
trembling with desire for reverberation, for resonance?

And do you ever play the pilgrim, walking empty-handed  
into the home of the Lord your mind, to sit and stare, to pray  
without words at the foot of a shrine dedicated to a missing god?

Do your footsteps echo as you take communion from a ghost  
smelling nothing but time itself and the memory  
of a candle someone extinguished in a moment in a time long gone?

Do you ever throw your patient palms up  
and feel the roof lifting off, a banquet  
of delicate and dangerous stars descending, shedding  
their ancient silvery light into the little lonely church  
you have made yourself?

Are you ever deliciously empty?

Do you want more than anything someday to be full?

## **A Promise**

Someday I will have a potluck and I will invite you  
it will be in a home I don't live in yet, on a porch I have yet to see  
there will be hours and hours of soft afternoon light  
the kind that stains everybody gold and glittery

I will say tender and gentle things like "I made pasta"  
and "you don't have to bring anything, but you can  
because I know how much you like to cook."  
And you will bring a special pie. And I will smile.

We will drink wine and talk about art and share  
the things that make our hearts excited  
and there will be music playing in the background  
and it will be called laughter, called joy.

We will be surrounded by friends we have yet to meet  
who will bring gifts like recipes from their time abroad  
and new ways of doing everything from folding napkins  
to building a community of activists and artists.

My potluck might be in a city, but there will be plants.  
I will have learned how not to kill them by then.  
I will have learned all sorts of tender and gentle things.  
Like how to cook. How not to worry.

By this time, I will have collected so much joy  
from so many different humans and places, old and new  
and my little home will be so full of it  
that you will smile without thinking when you walk in.

On the walls there will be poetry I wrote in high school.  
And photos from the river and the fields and the mountains.  
There will be paintings and pictures and maybe a collage  
from cities and countries and towns I've never (right now) seen.

When you walk in, I will greet you with a hug  
and your favorite drink. I will take your pie  
and put it next to my pasta. I will take your hand  
and bring you into the sun. I will exclaim, loudly—

"look at all this light! I have so many things to show you."

## Road Map

“It makes a lot more sense to me than the bible.”  
he says of his favorite book  
as we burrow deeper into the unknown terrain, climbing  
steadily upwards till the air is so thin  
the truth just slips out

This bus has been moving  
for an uncountable number of hours —my whole life  
maybe. The lines that usually govern us  
fade into the dirt that coats our shoes, our clothes  
our throats.

He has been staring out the window for miles  
not moving or commenting, but watching  
with a hunger and an earnestness I can't help but love.  
While he watches the terrain, I watch other people watch it.  
This is a sport I could spend days at.

Their eyes light in conjunction with hills and valleys  
the delicate and rugged contours of the earth  
and I am overwhelmed by how much I love  
the expansiveness of the human experience.  
Sometimes it's almost too much to bear.

Days later, we drive deep into a valley  
the dark walls of barren Earth, the great behemoth mountains  
circling us on all sides —acting neither  
as a threat nor a comfort.  
“It was my road map,” he adds, “to love. To being a person”

In less than two months, I am leaving for college.  
Every semblance of normality, every ritual  
robbed from me, in favor of an exploration  
I am too trepidatious to look forward to.  
What I wouldn't give for a road map right now.

Every emotion all at once lives in me somewhere  
pushing up like tectonic plates —I am well on my way  
to becoming a mountain, so close  
to bursting I'm surprised I'm not growing leaves.  
But I'm not.



None of this comes in the form of words, so I listen:  
to him talk about his book, to the bus jolt over rocks,  
to my heart: little and big at the same time  
and so full, as it whispers  
that to love people is the greatest pleasure of being alive.  
So I do.  
I do.