

TAXONOMY

that first oak in california sat on its haunches, lowering
an acorn in each moment of lithe boredom, so
painful of patience.

it played hide and seek with names, all franciscan
in their vowels, all shadow in their paso robes

blue birds steal in san miguel
and san gabriel, they play pretend -
they sputter their thrush, their
“no mom, she pinched me first” in city parks,
now.

on the solstice i was offered a candle, and i refused,
believing in the magnetism of the sun.

astute oak, what an idea! the idea of: god
in everything - when i see violence in a knit sweater,
my last name, the sea-salt of some forgotten
cayucos.

HOW TO NAME SPECIES

AN ELEGY FOR ORANGE COUNTY, IN FALL

for bea and kelly thomas

fewer leaves,
only now,
winter-moving sycamore -
the hurt in their pooling,
each impression - footfall yesterday

what slouches toward orange county:
black and white citrus of our youth,
bare and fuzzy -

a sample translation: kite-flying in larwin park,
the bushed filled with curated mytheme: cloud in a coke bottle, felted
plastic, the homelessness' chauvet.

an aphorism
about alienation: anaheim
puts a ?? in my throat, the way
vase-water mingles.

why to name species, latin, etc.
chain-link face, o comrade in the swimming pool,
the long unison, service, and americanism to be
crossed over

THE COAST STARLIGHT, TOWARD CAIR PARAVEL

as a child
i would press myself
lanky en-dash
across the tinny drywall

you tell me you get up every morning at 4:30,
such romantic ringtone in the oblique distance
we sleep through

ah
an explanation: in love, a post-it fastened to everything,
pleasant copse in certain motifs
 filed under: remarkably insufficient, lacking in the
 pathos of mare's tails

some loves fit that hollow deictic so timidly,
echo with long since unravelled fugues that account for how it is that your name is
maddy

here's my number, here's my love for certain stuffed animals, here's the similarity
between the smog of san jacinto and the fragile gestalt of yours translucence.

A QUESTION OF FRAMING

upon rediscovery of your hideaway,
i will discover the lack that remains.
the lack, a plaque on the wall, paired portrait
by two of our friends in the living
room, replete with sagging couches and
the door that never really did close all that well.

in this dwelling i construct a haggard, pushpin identity

there is a certain buildup of impressions,
clogging flow – an obstruction by collection
of
meaning

upon rediscovery of our old, cork hideaway,
plain room with hotel smell,
i discovered myself to be alone, remembering
our friend's naked lunch with his sister,
and another passing me a surprising strip of paper,
secret with the names of psychologists.
today, it isn't empty, but the ethereal has slowly dissolved,
and many others have tacked themselves to
the loamy drywall

there, in brasher tones we probed the nature
of mind, after my brother sat up and
fell down – once and for all – my suffering
stood with noble resolve.

HOW TO NAME SPECIES

THIS ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORD-
physician's report,
we cut salt deposits out of pillows.

in the corners of hospitals there is a waiting
after something else:
the subtlety of hate in having to
listen to the Disney channel.

over the intercom, frothing,
"dr. tran, please call the ICU."
over the intercom, people turning their heads,
"people are born –
people die."

even today:
Madugu, my Swahili teacher, asks,
baba yako anafanya? what does your dad do?
and in response:
"how do you say he's dead?"
and then:
"how do you say it's okay?"

over the intercom:
"how do you say it's okay? how do you say it's okay?"