

Fordham University, November 14th

“I don’t know how this generation will sustain...”

I hear my boss on the telephone
as I read murder mysteries.
Fill in the blank, young ones.

but it’s Friday afternoon,
and I’m weak,
and I’m horny
and we’re not ready to think about sustenance.

I don’t want to be a lady
I don’t want to be a gentleman
I don’t want to be a prophet of the future
and we know that doesn’t make us unique.

We’re looking to puncture
everything we’ve learned since Monday
leak it out at the dinner table
hoping we’ll find a “self” in the vacancy.

Help me fill it with something, anything
hot with smoke
cold with November air
take this drink, take this pipe, take this tongue
the frantic trifecta of youth.
I know it’s your hundredth,
but it will be refreshing
I promise.
And you’re right.
I know.

I want to transfer
all of my responsibilities from the week,
written on my hand,
to her skin.
Ink on a ribcage.

Don’t read those
they are personal.
Hypocrite, I know.
I hope she still wants to talk to me after this.
I’ll still want to make her tea in the morning.

But please don't ask me what's inside, or behind
because I don't know what I'm hiding from.
I don't think you do, either.
But I'll listen to you try.

Is that youth?
That pile of boots in the corner?
That "whoosh" of the deflating air mattress
through the night?
Be gentle.
But who am I to say?
I can't even write a happy poem.

The football field through the window
The dead flowers in a Coke bottle
the untouched textbooks
of African history and German language
it's all such a happy cliché
is this young?
is this original?

The lengths we go to
captured on Polaroid
like a cheap imitation of our parents
what we've seen, what we've heard.

We've got to live for more than our youth,
or what will we have when it's gone?

Sacred Space

Sacred space, sacred measure
measures the two feet between us
as you ash your cigarette out the right side window
I ash mine out the left
each honoring our dominant side;
all that weakness in between.

I hate being touched
and I love being dramatic
and that adds another thin breadth
of a kindling crowbar
prying, perpetuating
this promising air between us

We don't like to talk
about any of the things
we've been told are enjoyable.
What we want, what makes us happy,
what makes us (subtly) special.
We're not alternative. There is no alternative
to this trembling homogeny. Film over a lagoon.

I know what makes me happy:
the echo of an organ after church
my soft, always empty bed
lights reflecting off the bridge
cups of tea made by my Dad
and his soft, wintry hands.

I know what makes you happy:
pale, pretty girls
startling contrasts
equality, careful design

And I know what makes us sad.
People spending money
My dead aunt's cat
sixteen year olds in twenty year old bodies
the existence of romance and its acceptance of insanity.

So we know what's poetic about this.
We know what's ironic about this.

But please, we don't have to talk about it.