

January: A Case Study

Turns out the winter wasn't brutal, the fear flesh pink and unfounded despite the lows, the stone ground, the cautionary tales. I was frozen but sated, just acquainting and reacquainting the dominion with the remnants. The following is a chronology. I'll provide references and associations but predominantly you'll have to read time painted in a succession of reds (mostly lows, burgundies); let light breathe and recoil; accept devouring and wanting as simultaneous savagery.

I'll begin where time is partitioned, lop off chunks and hurl them across the sea to your rooftop. I write to tell you it's a season of fruit bread, mulling, a conversation in the celestory and the pitch at the last of Holiday parties. Season of the move to Montgomery from Kingsessing where I no longer lock the doors, where there are lights lining the private grounds at all hours. Scent of French grass and luminaries - perfume from a man I didn't love, but used to get over one I did. It must've been the flax, the crescendos, the low hanging. It must've been Arcturus and bloodhounds, the vat of nectar, the forgiveness. Forgiveness, forgive me, I promised I'd never write poetry again.

I'll mark the time with a drive down Haverford, across from the college where I fingered the edges of stones lined along the Newell staircase, where I told a story about egungun and sacrifice, about when I almost died but God said 'no, no you've got to stay to grapple and bleat and shed, with the rest of us.'

Time as endangered language. Self-portrait of angles I hadn't seen, a radio show, six hundred thread count, a honey brown haircut like I'm still on the lamb but they found me. Let us... commence an increasingly muscular relationship with transformation, commence increasingly active engagement with rebirth, where I thumb a wound long enough to finger some skin to peel off in tracts, where I *slough* (verb), I emerge, I fucking molt. I was happy and cozy and morbid just waiting, to bleed out a corpse.

Season where I laughed my bones to crack, where my heart got fat and I ate the fat from around the heart, with lemon. Season of beef and two homes. Season of relished reclusivity, hours alone where I sit and play with my empty hands, envisioning them holding small objects... flow vs. resistance. Surrender vs. war. Committed focus

vs. adaptation. Forgiveness (the aforementioned) vs. bloodthirsty vengeance.

Season of this: expose the holes in my story, expose the loose edges, the flight to midsummer, the visitation and revisitation, the gated elevator shaft the marble staircase, the vaulted ceilings - the stage to the story I monologue. Surrender my brutality I tell you *it's time now, it's time*, like the small beast sensing the storm.

I heard a story of a man who came home to glass shattered all over the dining table. A hawk wounded in the bookshelves awaiting the falconer. He spent every dusk in the yard after that, making up names for flight patterns like Inuit studying snow, like charting and naming every possibility could protect us. Season of accumulated wisdom, where I dismember another self and drag her down to the fields to bury with the others, make a shrine. I loved you all I say, leave flowers, dance. I loved you, was just happier fleeting, just better with you dead.

I come home muddy and write a manifesto, outline laws that govern space and time and release and withholding and how they're counter-intuitive, how they taunt and deceive. Make of this a study, don't grasp don't agonize. Iterations of hunger too daunting, surrender, commence a marriage to cyclical time, redemption, small bottles of colored glass *what does that even mean* ooh baby everything, the swells and swallows, the well from which all springs yes, let us not once forget the task at hand.

February: Psychometrics

Swallow yourself. Swallow the spotted air, the potentiality, the stake to your claim. Indulge a series of if-lys conjured like pipedreams, vignettes, watch them, swallow. Now is not a time for decisions but to lay wait, to assess to grant careful and lengthy consideration yes steady the hand.

A time to stockpile and reserve, repose, re-inhabit - a time to prepare for the birth of the new writhing gleaming wide-toothed self. Prepare for the birth, for the gutting, the reconfigure. Prepare to get to the hearth to the loam, to the embedding and debed all, no we will not build yet, we will employ, employ, employ new mechanisms new adjectives, words never before used to describe us yes
a girl can change her mind.

Psychometrics: a swing-shift, I penetrate privacy (my own) to speak the thoughts that parade and stalk all hours, that laugh and taunt, squeal and ooze. It's enough I tell them and take to the wretched work where I sit on the couch naming the beasts. Humiliated, heave and weep and commit 'I'll defeat you.', I say, 'I'll speak your name so loud you poof in a cloud rendered useless.' This is how we kill them.

My repose from inflamed I will not spit in your cut I will not debone you I will not vitrify or victimize no. I am not carnivorous or ravenous there will be no eruptions or fissures, I am not tidal nor torrent will not split you this time no darling I'm sweet now, restful I am bellows to ember.

February is a drawing room, wrings her hands. The liminal space between dimensions where you watch possibility/time/fixed states of being but not just yet, no. February is half-asleep, tenderness - tea cookies and candles sent as gifts and oblige, talk low, carry on about weather, illness and shared concern.

Soon we'll be returning to dust. Kneel at the altar of remember. February: from the dust you came, rust and rot, we are nothing, prognostication and ceremony

and little paper hearts hung round a Chapel on pink satin string. This is how we
mark time, seasonal, muffle and fog, the morning
drive in breath and prose and later run the town
down for someone else on fire, someone else
completely fucking on fire even in these ungodly times.

Train yourself to think of time in epochs in eons, you are small and sweet you are
the baby in your own palm, the archer and the araucaria. Psychometrics: measure
the frequency of yourself. See yourself diverge, prance off into a realm of the
unreal, a realm that runs right alongside this one, bifurcation, perpetual
branching as you chose... and wait now yes
but you will, soon, have to chose.

March: The Creation of History

At first it was hearsay and periphery - an illness, the borders, the airport closures in the New York Times. I turned off my radio show when all they talked about was some virus while the burning world went on burning, orange and cerulean, a dictator, a looming. Adagio, these are the scenes at the start of the film when in unnerving oblivion we relished an unseasonal season. Preceding calm and prevailing winds before the quickening, the numbers close-in, the Nation addressed.

We keep night watch, man a posting, take orders for empty streets, talk of enforcement and duration - first a few weeks now months. Crescendo, we stockpile, persuade the artillery and batten my vision to their predictions. Mercurial uncertainty and mounting concern and a good drunk denial happy hour conference call we *are* the ship, strung together now like precious stones on a hairpin.

The world's a stage and we've a fresh death count to factor into our tethered story. Address us again and advise and instruct, shift your orders from quarantine to shelter-in-place and I can't remember what we talked about back when we thought ourselves immune. Is it sick that I've found parts to tongue? The stillness/ silence, the low hum of dread, the halt. Embark now on the war, there will be casualties, there will be damage to assess, there will be proof for our ancestors that little has changed.

Normal is skinned to the bone, reconfiguring as normal does. We don't even notice him at work, how imperceptibly he moves (an oozing) or how ruthlessly (ground beneath our feet). We speak to each other on tin cans tied to string, we lay wait, we all dress up, prepare a feast, hear violins while the ship descends and marvel at the seething precision with which calamity arrives.

Dearest Certainty, you sweet mirage, you were a delusion but still I'll miss you, your steady hand, your reverberation. Is it better this way that we strip ourselves of you? That's the work isn't it - to be done alone in our quarters with our flesh and in fact it's done best this way. Certainty, let me insinuate and suggest, take you by the hand and say: just let go, it's an illusion. Say: if it's gone tomorrow thank you God for all this stupid glorious mess. Say: fine then, I'm ready.

It's early yet. There will be phases - denial, complacency, terror, tenderness, compassion, rage and don't worry as of now we're well-stocked. We've got tuna and root vegetables, bags of rice, bottles of vodka, a wine rack of both red and white (to consume in that order) and I'll be terribly busy with the war within to tongue and prod, the purge from my marrow, the remedy to surrender. You know all about this old work though. You're not worried about the set but the gaffer, when weeks from our peak we're hand in hand circled around the fields, bracing and paralytic and all ice blue with wait.