

*On Being Asked Who the "She" Is In My Poems*

She has only  
ever undressed  
herself  
but she's been touched

and she's been  
touched.  
Her skin is  
lined

with moonstone  
and her eyes are  
made of  
wind. Her

insides  
are the flavor  
of lukewarm Chinese  
tea and

wild rain. She is  
my mother, my  
grandmother,  
my cat. Sometimes,

she is six and  
one- half years,  
sometimes,  
she is on

a train. A  
raging  
river, in  
love with a

man, she  
is the  
experience  
of modernity,

the fall  
of the written  
word, the anxiety  
of a poem without

blood. Precocious  
and demotic, she  
is the guilt  
of indifference

and the yawn roar  
of death. She is  
the nude and  
reclining

page, her tongue  
typed black and  
inked with  
spit. She only

makes her tea  
with rain water and,  
in the downpour,  
she dissolves, her

pieces soften,  
softer than  
skin. She is the  
love that

comes with  
projection and  
the question  
of cause.

She is  
upstairs,  
tossing tea  
leaves

out the  
window and  
into  
the yard, where

I reach,  
desperate  
fingers finding  
nothing but the

dried pieces  
of a just-missed  
world, the  
foggy circle

of her breath still  
dissolving in  
the second-story  
window.

*Untitled*

Inverted wrist wrung

swallowed alive,  
lost, the whale -

in love with the bird,

the thin wind of  
somewhere else to sing.

The bird – bound

by the mountains -  
whistles her lust

for the wavering

moon in the pit  
of the ocean.

They press their bodies

to the water  
and the cold air

of wish.

On the shore,  
the swollen sea

spills tears all over her

legs while the whale  
wails down

the moon.

*Untitled*

We are husking words,  
peeling off their wet clothes  
and squeezing saltwater from their hair.  
She shakes vowels from their pockets  
while I wring out consonants and slowly fall in love  
with her larynx.

Larynx.

“ull” We hang each letter  
“ah” up and I curl  
“erh” into every new shape  
“ih” of her lips, vibrate  
“enn” with each rush  
“ehx” of shaking air.

We are brushing meaning away  
into the sand until everything is  
sound, washed  
with the crooning roar of ocean,  
filling the eardrum, the stomach, the sky.

Lost in the drowsy weight of her tongue,  
I watched her voice splash out  
into the open beaks of a thousand beach birds,  
their harsh cries saturating and swallowing  
the empty air.

*Each Summer the Last Summer, Each Minute the Last Minute*

The summer pushes her tongue into the winter's throat.  
She is scooped out and bow-like,  
ruined, perfected, an empty arch against the sky.  
Her harpist's wild red hair  
like fire, like fountains leaping,  
alive, moving among the anti-touch people  
like a tongue passing over a bloody knife.  
She dotes on what the wild birds say,  
the angle of light that burns water,  
the splash of words in passing  
worn by salt and sway into this threadbare beauty  
where no sea leaps upon itself.

This is how you live when you have a cold heart.  
You will ache for slow beauty to save you from your quick, quick life  
and your shoulder blades will ache for want of wing.

They're trying to wash the river in her blood,  
in your lifetime of touch.

You do not have to be good.

Until the blunting of time,  
waking up in the same skin isn't enough  
to keep the wound wide open.