

Ars Poetica with Slug Song

I match my body to a Mourning Cloak, get speckled  
down my orderly border and be like paper but less. Reft

of gravity I light upon my abdomen with a fairy heft.  
I'm distancing, I apologize, for that and for the rot of fauna

rotting as often as there are whistles in the verdigris,  
but birdsong is song song as brainsong is song song, conscious

music tapped to the tune in my head called 'To Slug,  
From Incompetence, With Love', so named for nothing

could touch the decency of the leopard-blotched mollusk,  
no line of type or skyward ode will ape its glister on the world.

The morning's gone all glaucous with a traipse of verdant rime,  
it will not dust away or speak. It speaks of fire, flies, and Dagger Moths

at lek along the margins of a stream. I sing to the ants  
*O lawyer up* when I find their mandibles in birdrot, feet stuck

to the guts of a finch or the spume of a sparrow. Nothing knows  
so well of abjured pith and spiderspit in swath as summer does.

Is it a wonder I douse my psyllium husk with whiskey water  
when every inch of me is pouring out of me for June?

The slug is gone. And nearly the song. Its silver wake desiccates  
on rotten wood, which is wet. I stand and find a shovel in my hand.

I have spaded the finch over a fence into the no-man's clover. I have  
the distinct feeling I have gotten off with murder. I dash a slug

into the world: 'I match my body to a Mourning...'  
It has a sheen, a tricky shine, and wants to rhyme despite me.

## Opium and Ambergris

She spins into a mist of Chanel N°5  
as he boils his spit in a spoon. She knows  
he's only human when goodsick, nodding  
on and on along to *Hunky Dory*, endlessly  
affirming the worst: the stink has gotten in the blood.

She cleans and hums his Bowie back, spirited  
by a caustic mix of vinegar and lime, married  
to mask the fragrance, sticky as iodine,  
that's settled in the walls. She hates to love  
that at least he's here, quiet as a whale

dying under water. She lights a wood-wick candle,  
it spits and she tears up. This life is made of trust  
and giving in. So, she thinks, get the seepage out.  
Blood down his forearm from another punctured blot  
forms a dainty cross in the folds of an inactive wrist.

Is it too soon, she thinks, to turn to Christ?  
She begins to feel the fiercer quiet she will miss  
and rushes the floor with lemoned mops, sings  
(mouths) *It seemed the taste was not so sweet....*  
His breathing blinks. She wrings his drool out in the sink.

The Chef and the Wren Wait Out a Blizzard

I admired a mote of all purpose  
flour upon my loveline. Garlic  
ran deep in the rills of my prints  
and blew through the nose  
under riffs of snow. The world  
was given half-pictorially  
in sonograms of lambent becoming.  
One wren too soon set for Winnipeg  
was seen syncopated in synonyms  
of snow and those vague contours  
escorted me from work. The breath  
shook in light of sight and took delight  
in freckled slopes of auburn crown  
or belly taupe when wind let my face  
face its course. Bird, what is north?

*Cheap  
Yet drilled deep in me  
through genes  
the deep-seat to  
birds who jig in heat for to woo  
whoso cannot  
coolwhat's cooped in me  
to renewanew wren's brood  
and pursuefood pursue refuge  
andmove andmove andmove*

*and then to hop aside from life to die*

I too am rapt by the spangle  
of a singular music, fictive ditties  
sibylline as snowfall, secretive, affixed  
with an eagerness for issue. But  
is there more the hand of fire  
can find to lave me giddy,  
lather me into constant wonderment  
in a time whose every speech  
is juncture, every half-trilled twitter  
a strutting stutter, cataclysms written  
with snow on water?  
I watch a mote of purpose  
light upon my loveline and know  
there is a calm at the end of the mind  
in which a bird who only speaks to birds resides.

## Necromancy

Dad's in your shoes again, gumming them up.  
I want to roll in their prints like a mutt  
reeling the madness of human oil out of its fur.

How to shake a living that's been a knowing you.  
We've handed down too many types of touch.  
Your garb is boxed, all's handled. Yet daily

diapasons of Polo cologne and admonition infurl  
instantly, instantly fuel life's too-weak pilot light,  
a candied flame of potential and balding

beside books I've unfastened for wind  
and a leaden finger to gesture your whereabouts.  
I went asking wildflowers and tossing your shirts

into rivers to see if you'd take form and drown.  
Then I burned Ovid in spite—only to see your nose:  
it was of smoke dissembled in its own smoke

like when I found you years ago, smokey-eyed lash-  
line to browbone, a lit match to your hush-hush liner.  
You lashed out against me when I hoped we might

pleasure in this accentuation a touch-up more.  
Now I love you mum as suck-your-cheeks to rouge,  
mute as foundation stippled satin in your pores.

I'm not sorry for considering your contours.  
This nuanced knowledge of your tricky skin  
helps me conjure up your perfect Shade.

## Embodiment

We put his ash in desert fire  
scorched by a desert wind  
Now his ashed teeth & hair  
his ashed skin is ash trifold  
Fire is a body Blood & bone  
embodied in a fire is a body  
Then a body burned my hand  
His new hand burned my hand  
& with the animating transfer  
I shook my hand & death alive  
hissing out dry Adamic words  
then held death up to the light  
& let ash all sieve out through  
with the hand close in the fire  
until the exposure brightened  
burned brightened then hurt  
That night I saw a desert fox  
all low ashen slick & sharp  
The only thing alive was fox  
& an ember's last hop in ash  
The fox flashed fire all night  
licking at spat pith and bones  
In the morning a warm indent  
was sunk softly into the sand  
a script *Q* of a huddled thing  
beside my still burning hand