

The Truth the Stars Know

Nebula

A birth in dust, a congregation
of clouds, the sweet shapelessness
before formation, all possible
pieces of you – unattached.

Red Giant

It all accumulates. And then swells,
amassing diameter, boasting luminosity
and through the miles: you can see
these stars burning time.

White Dwarf

After losing the outer layers,
we are confronted with remains
of expired brightness: shrinking,
energy depleting, fearing the onset
of the invisible days. Curling in
to yourself in a rich, rewarding density,
but you are told
you are dimming.

Supernova

In a celestial eulogy, you obtain the light
of 100 million stars. You burst spherically
into the unknown, racing, freeing what once was
for the sake of the ever-expanding “will be.”

Black Hole

And what of the dead? We can only trace
the parabola of their absence. We watch
the distortion of space: it's like the undercurrent
of the high tide. It sucks you to sea, but it breathes
you out in its waves.

Take-Off, or The Philosophy of Leaving

I try to imagine the time of leveling. I am glued
at an acute angle, watching the aisle arch skyward,
waiting for gravity, strapped, committed
to leaving you behind. Below, the city wrinkles,
ribbed and colorful, acrylics on earthy cardboard.

I like it better that way. I can never fall
in love for real. I'm too fond of falling out of it.
If I leave you here, you can miss the me I made
for you. Take care of her.

Already we are leveling. The sky nestled
below us, we skid over weather and sunbathe
above the atmosphere. I press my nose to the glass
to remember it is colder up here. Before we touch down,
I expect I will really miss you once and pretend
to miss you twice.

Turbulence jerks awake the sleeping, we descend
under the cover of night, dark cities are just inverted
skies: little stars dropped on their heads, calling themselves
streetlights, confused about the origin of their spark.

After reading about the Rwandan Genocide while I waited for my volunteer shift to begin at the Annual Apple Festival, Brookside Nature Center, Maryland.

When it started, I helped the kids
fold fingernail dirt into their apple turnovers,
little tongues licking sugar
off their fingertips, dipped back

into the bowl after. Oliver, his mom calls him,
crafts a paper crown to be the apple king.
Apple peels float in the cider. An autumn
leaf falls into the apple press. It is demolished

and then forgotten. A mother tucks her palms
under a pregnant belly while she laughs,
then spoons applesauce for the toddler.
It smells like funnelcakes and fire smoke.

I mold the apple turn-overs, crimping
the edges. I am so far away
from genocide. I slice each apple into pieces;
they are bites of family time and sunny afternoons.

Do they grow apples in Rwanda? Can you slice them
with a machete? When I walk the orchard
path to leave, I gather fallen
apples. How can I carry them all?