

Washed Out

my| bent-backed Mother

Cleanses

me| of

my| heroes

| (the wanderers in search of

| Ineffable or Eden).

| SHE

Drowns

| them in a box.

| To degrade them

| further,

| SHE

Hangs Them.

| The skin flakes, their theirness leaves.

| Empty vessels: flags without wind,

| never to be unfurled and lived like

i| lived them;

| again.

Swollen

I look to the door of salvation,
but there's no lock for my key. I keep it
on a necklace of rope, thick enough,
just to cover the lasting impressions
of a burley man's permanent touch.
Its utility gone. Its battle cry muted. It
dangles between my swollen breasts,
always reminding, and me, never
forgetting - The Man Who Passed Through Me.

In the tired light, the prince that never
came decides to enter my womb, and with
him, an expectation dematerializes:
that something phallic would ever want to
press against my chapped and bleeding lips.
My womanhood percolates on an image of some
form and mine entwined, outward emerging,
an empty vessel. My imaginary grandchildren
call It the source, along with another one.

You heard the fable, that love is
intrinsic to a happy life. Mind, I have love.
Not for him, nor for her, but for the It
that resides from his residue. Yet here I am
killing my love in a neon hell, performing
ablutions on its waking mind. Doc!
I need 20cc's of hope stat. They take my key
and open the door. I ask them, if possible,
to only remove the sliver of It that is him.

Bare-chested

Bedouins dressed in rags and coverlets
hold to their gentile chests,
an antidote they say.

Their faces, bronzed in ancient rays, peer out
broken blinds, spare the sneezing grandpa, crippled
in the corner. He heeds them to make the change
with the wave of a crusty finger.

A bare-chested boy clutches his Molotov with the others.
He nods to the grandpa. He read the papers and he knows the scene.
The towel slips from the lips of the bottle as
he cleanses himself with the fuel
that fueled the war.

He presents himself before them: those bronzed
in uniform but not in God's form.

The boy becomes the fire: the only light in Zion.
Welcoming arms press trigger switches with ease,
sounds crackle, his brain in bits.

A deadened tide, the rest press on to meet the same
Maker. How history repeats itself! Matters not
the names the flood has claimed. A deluge
disseminates into rivers like wine.

Boots are taken off, laughter scatters in the air spare
an American father. He holds to his heart,
a picture of his wife and kids.
He thinks about the boy:
the boy who just wanted some hair on his chest.

Buried With Me

When my father passed, he dug a grave
deep enough for the both us. He claimed,
at least in spirit, that it was his way of letting me know,
“There will always be a place for us in this world.”

When the sheriff clumsily roped the vessel,
his bones slipped through, spilt back
into the chamber of our well, fumed with
the water that consumed. I recall the taste
of flesh, the tender pork butt he broiled on
some birthday of mine, a memory that is clear
only for my mind to shape it into his wish.

My mother’s cracked hands tend to bleed, so
I patch them. Sometimes she whimpers in her
sleep. She cradles me, breast to breast, Creator
to creation. She knows his love leaked like our
broken faucet, his gumption suppressed
like a paintbrush that began balding years ago.
She crumples in her sleep like our unpaid bills, for
we both know; dreams are our only home.

These days, all of me is awake at night, in
a stupor, bent to rage by a
ticking clock. It used to tinkle
with ethereal routine. Since the split, the clamor,
the privy hands, they bark at me
like a sea of drowning dogs sensing
continental shifts. Who is going to tell me when
I stop living and start dying?

When I trek, I cut slits on the faces of my
palms. I reach into the dawning sky for the
clusters of pooled air, the essence that
pours crazily from the mouth of God, from it,
a pine breeze, living wind creeps inside
an open gash. I awake to the siren call
of an owl with a broken beak. To think it
escaped me for an infinitesimal amount of time,
the time it took him to blink his lazy eye,
that only now is his will free.

Basquiat

I look to streets I'll never live on,
a choking smog, and a people
that are shown hazy,
wandering madly toward an
immediate future. Death,
not a goal, rather an
expectation not yet met.

Basquiat's *Untitled* shows the
New York landscape, a more
earnest map of a city
that once meant freedom.

The eyes, ungraced,
are done searching,
the lines that encapsulate
are not worth
their boundary:
the sketch of a soul
in its unaltered state.
Zie bleeds off the
canvas, and why not,
in a dreamland
so empty
of dreaming.