

Borderland

(on the first anniversary of my death)

Sister moon,
enlighten this hunter trail, guiding the
pathway that challenge raven night,
defending medicine on wings of prey,
and if I go, let my fighting pony roam free
running with legends across the start of time
to travel the end of empires, searching skin
past those swollen rivers from mountain
storm, vision tales told in trickster song

and if I go, wash the mud from my pony
and bake it in the sun, adobe bricks to
build your doorway, to enter either direction,
or leave when you are done.

butterfly ice

when gravity demands answers
obedience stills the unafraid
summer shakes with impatience

while the last heat of fall dissipates
patterned flight chase wild scent
aspens flickering their last gold

release into stationary skeletons
sudden drifts of white ghosts
journeys end requests no mistake

and landing only from it's own thirst
ice cold and flowing downstream
slow to tumble silent until the halt

conceding to capture without escape
tangled in a weave of late passage
lucid plunge between smoothed stones

as this little creek turned prey
lost marriage in a winter trespass
standing down on frozen shade

6/8/68

(on the photos of Paul Fusco)

eleven thousand volts
winding down from NY to DC
creeping, with no schedule to keep,
and there was no, this or that on
who was on the wrong side of the
tracks after a military guard lifted

his casket upon chairs
in car 120 on the Penn Central
so a million could witness,
draped red, white, mostly blue,
families standing with strangers
solemn and still as gravestones

in skin colors of lily-white
to darkest night quietly
sharing stories,
yet another,(where were you when
you heard the news), star gazing,

mostly
in dream, with hope of renewal,
crushed by salutes from uniformed men,
nuns cross to bare, and kids shirtless
as ladies dressed Sundays best...
all together a gaze in an unbearable haze
coming to grips with the last chance train.

Shore Leave

The nightingales are sobbing in
the orchards of our mothers,
And hearts that we broke long ago
have long been breaking others.

W. H. Auden

someone stands at the end of a pier.
knowing that somebody is out there somewhere;
on the edge of a late night yellow fog,
sheltering waves with only the sound below
where vows were once scratched in wet sand,
captured then cleansed by tidal pools on the mend:

it is law like love which governs
each sailor's tale, splashed in mermaid luck,
as the lighthouse protects on lucent waves
in persistent sweeps, keeper of a coastline warning,
flashing the way home protecting a rocky doom,
safe passages from temptation, forward-back again.
it is love like law
that demands drowning time with memories,
when breezes fueled flight of driftwood sparks,
and the smell from smoke and salt dazzled senses
and imperfection was abandoned by sand and foam,

forgotten in perfect paradise, keeping a lover
alone with a calendar, page after page.
distant oil rigs dagger skyline of gray on gray,
a bed turned down and without body warm,
morning washes bayou rain uphill, porch lights expect
the tumble home and routines will be routinely done.

B Side Serenade

(Kara Dean)

Her daddy left when she was young,
and they had to make do
with what daddy left behind,
whiskey scars from travel post cards
belated birthdays signed,
a small time town can't hold you—
and her mama keeps her Barbies
in a box, somewhere upstairs.

Religiously read daily horoscopes
wishing on lucky stars that should align,
but it never changed the wolves cry
Casanova cowboys in four-wheel drive,
one night stands with spiral descent
on a staircase missing a debutante dress,
got bored slinging cheeseburgers at
Denny's, then slipped on her city shoes.

She found the lost with tricks and treats
hanging around a wrong crowd,
ten cents up on Peruvian Blue
ten cents down on Mexican Brown,
the newspaper reported a back page splash
as cops hosed off a corner sidewalk,
where witnesses went blind then deaf—
two shots to the back of the head.

The big fancy cars sped by flying flags
in just cause, Support Our Troops, No War,
Save the Whales...but nothing on
a daughter's darkness, detectives say
it's a who done it who cares, and someone
will lay low until the coast is clear—
and her mamma keeps her Barbies
in a box, somewhere upstairs.