

## **A Conversation about Divorce**

I gazed at your hands,  
broad, mannequin in their stillness  
calloused, the steering wheel a metal bat in your grip.

We hovered over the never-ending wheels  
the engine, smooth and violent  
sitting, camouflaged in supple leather, hidden from the bitter pistons.

The headlights cleaved the interstate from its anonymity,  
a half-eaten burger  
grotesque, quivered on the dash, timid in its uselessness

while a rancid heat tainted your solemn navigation  
veins throbbing, green with dark fire,  
the blue baseball jersey your only respite, sport and fraternity.

A thousand days dolled out  
a thousand games, sweaty under leather armor  
the stitches shoot across the dusty plate, the boys throw hard, act harder.

And still he never comes

## **Flowers and their keepers**

Delicate little glitches  
below an open window,  
box wide to the sky, the oak, the broad boulevard.

Every flower pulsing with electricity  
gone completely schitz,  
too bright and too blazing brilliant for  
small spaces,  
fostered in perfection -  
the color of the flower, the symmetry of the brick wall.

And just above - oily fingerprints on the sill,  
histories of gasping for air.

## Shadow shock

The night shook and heaved  
like some frenetic ecosystem  
unique and alone in the middle of the sea.

Do you remember it?  
Dancing with supple starved bear bodies  
clumsy but powerful all the same,

knowing - feeling - deep in our muscles  
that even as spring welled up  
like oak flavor in a casket of wine

some strange time of desolation  
was coming upon us all, hibernation pulling us  
to some strange cave

right as we had finally discovered  
how to eat, how to drink.  
Jack Daniels passed by cigarette light

round and round the circle and the music  
there and not there, a mirage or, maybe,  
an oasis; thumping basement speakers, hips

like foreign fire, wonderful and warm  
and completely new to most of us  
even then, our senior year, elbows, ribs, shoulder-blades

were still far-eastern treasures, mystical and sharp,  
scaled bronze dipped in lavender.  
We so tender young and yet so old with

the weight and shape of our cosmology -  
withered by fire  
and shriveled by the dry winds of high places,

finally forgetting and dancing, coddling our fragile frayed  
emotions in a whirlwind of violent embrace,  
miasmas of dark futures drifting in the dark corners

of the room. And at some point, perhaps  
at midnight, when the heat of a hundred bodies swelled to  
sickness, the square windows were opened

and a cool breeze rolled through the basement,  
drawing us closer to the heat of each other's twirled limbs  
as lights from across campus dropped like tears onto our faces.

## **Andromeda**

When he arrives,  
a stranger standing  
spindled and lithe and hairless  
at the door of the world,  
I know he will ask -

What is it like  
moving in that distilled silence  
your home so narrow and sliding  
blindly  
towards some steep precipice

turning and wiggling in your sleep  
terror and glitter and bad breathe  
hot against your face  
pressed knee to thigh?

And if I am brave  
on that fated day  
with hands sticky from a supermarket orange  
I will reach deep into his chest  
and pull out his lungs.

## Concerning a Criminal on Death Row and the Story He Related to Me

Squatting with sweaty haunches over a pock-marked parish,  
the soil only feels like cement  
no Bible-belt front-porch biscuits  
just hard-tack concrete drowning  
in cigarette soot, piss stains, anemic squirts of sunlight,  
the tantrum shoe scuffs of a whole lotta ghosts.

So we grew the things we liked best:  
plastic bottle liquor, yellow potato chips, numb sitcoms, nudie magazines  
we were happy, we were full  
and everyone too stupid to know the difference,  
leaving corn, beans, vegetables, chicken eggs  
to hearty rye-bread men with white houses, green rows.

In high school, I found a frog  
and twisted his legs off, meticulously.  
Later, trembling with laughter, I held my friend down  
and pinched, pinched over and over again,  
until finally  
his tears turned to salt spots on my hands.

When my father died  
my mother put on skeleton skin with loose drapes  
of a yellow pit nightgown  
and got lost in all the spaces between the chair and tv.