

## **Bathsheba**

*"It was springtime, the time when kings go forth to war... but David remained in Jerusalem"*  
(2 Samuel 11:1)

Be healed,  
let the scales fall,  
let that they would  
fall from all eyes.

how the word closes space,  
that torn nothing  
between two sides  
of the same curtain.

We stitch the rip.  
Or pull it apart,  
and ripping is fun but  
soon grows old and done and  
then you are left with broken  
threads,  
cans on the shelf  
leaves on the trees  
but for those who knit  
we could go on like this --

a prophet on a podium,  
David from the street.  
Bathsheba bears the king,  
But I am not David.  
I am not Salome dancing for Herod,  
For lovers in private chambers.  
I am not jester, doll, object.  
I dance in freedom,  
joy that I share turning twisting time  
Life is a rhythm,  
a celebration.

The journal you gave me  
sheds pearly sequins  
about the corners of my life--  
on my desk, the floor, porch steps:  
They are silent as jewels  
and ever-changing in the light.

It started with a flame,

a seed, a circle, and a blade.  
Tonight history rushes onward,  
rolling over the track of Time.  
It is cold; it is quiet.  
All I desire,  
endless roads.

there is continuity  
when my soul is quiet  
and mind stops to stillness:  
there is floor and body, illumined  
feet dancing on sunlight  
and between the lines  
there is doubt and double-checking  
smoothed over with turnings and grace  
my body is a love letter worn soft with  
use and years.

A web of cricket calls  
run through with sidewalks  
and homes and highways:  
man ripping the veil  
and laying concrete.

I am here  
re-rooting,  
the digging down.

Cobain's poetry--  
raw as trash beneath a bridge  
coke bottles and candy wrappers  
half buried in the dirt  
rusted notes  
songs like sewer grates  
soul like something precious  
thrown away.

Beneath the stereo pulse  
of a girl in a Lexus,  
there is another  
lying in bed staring at the ceiling  
and off to the side  
a gypsy, an artist, an Atlas.

Beneath this prosaic

rush of minutes  
a stillness  
Beyond this bouncing tug of war  
nothing,  
much.

The rush of going up--  
frenzied pushing forward.  
The collapse--  
dissipations  
like tears falling  
to the ocean.

I come from nothing  
behind the curtain  
reality peeled away  
I unlace your boots  
unbutton your clothes  
burn away all bands  
that keep you as you.

one wind  
one tree  
ten thousand leaves  
cleaving,  
dancing,  
leaving.

gears play. symphonies  
rise from the concrete  
underneath my  
bouncing bus seat.

bus beats  
like drum beats  
on concrete  
road wheels.

on the bus  
I hear drum beats on concrete  
road playing  
against the wheels  
engine parts jostling like bodies in a crowd  
chiming like sanctuary bells.

George

sleeps all day, works all night--  
in the interstices of schedule,  
he smokes on his pipe.  
In the morning when I come  
to catch the 6:00 news,  
George is curled on the couch,  
bud bowl in the crook of his arm.  
I sit and I wait  
till the time  
when he wakes  
so I can take  
a drink from his big blue eyes.

Mike sees love  
flying at him  
from every direction  
nowhere to run  
but Alaska  
away from  
girlfriends, bar fights, and brothers.  
In Alaska, he found a cabin by a lake,  
a restaurant by the roadside with a  
help wanted sign in the window.  
He unpacked his possessions  
and parked his truck  
delighting in his own absence  
refuge of a wide empty sky.

Charles shows up for his doctor's appointment  
five minutes early  
to wait through the window  
and time his entrance  
to the moment a space opens  
at the reception desk.  
Hi, Charles Messing, checking in for my  
3:45 appointment  
The receptionist: I remember you  
A passage of doors opens onto the inside.

Annie sits on a bench,  
drinking whiskey from a red coke can,  
red hair wet with rain.

On her morning walk with Muffy,  
she heard a phone ringing.  
It must be coming from that sewer drain,

she thought with a frown.

There was a knock at the door.  
"Come in", she called. A man  
in a black mask entered.  
"I've been waiting for  
you--" the girl began.

not teacher and student  
but holy communion.  
not enlightened and fallen,  
but the eyes of God.  
not either or,  
but an eternity of all.

focus  
the beauty of being  
the road falling away  
at your feet

focus the silence that  
felled Elijah  
silence on the mountaintop  
God on the mountaintop.

## Initiations

### I. *Año*

fingers that whisper over  
the smooth skin of youth  
telling death  
with purple marks  
the libations of dialysis bags  
God plunged into a vein  
taped, marked off  
with medical tape

papery fingers that reach up  
to touch the smooth cheek of youth  
whispering  
death  
with purple marks  
lips working towards some revelation  
eyes imploring some salvation  
the dialysis bag that keeps your consciousness alive,  
our connection between life and you  
what Truths can you tell us  
from this needle  
plunged into a vein  
taped, marked off  
with medical tape

### II. *Vaya con Dios*

elders in diapers  
on white cribs,  
lucid skin ready  
to give up the bone  
only the eyes  
still imploring  
the faces hovering over,  
pleading some rescue  
*I'm not ready  
to die. I'm frightened*  
as if we could lift you out,  
leave the body to its decay.  
*Don't worry, we could not say  
We're here to take you home,*

*you can stay in the family room,  
in the overstuffed chair  
puffing cigars  
drinking chocolate milk  
working the crosswords  
by the fire,*

no, we must go now  
and it will be hard  
knowing that when we  
let go our gaze  
turn and walk out  
you will be alone  
when some other thing  
calls to beckon you home.

### III. *Azul y Amarillo*

Rosemary's blue peel treatment and Rothko

midsummer night's dream  
in a crowd 5 billion wide  
and while the moon shines down on these  
faces lifted to the light  
straining to meet,  
to make it to the other side-  
some are caught breathless  
exhaling their ecstasy on hospital beds  
in motels, needles,  
sun rooms, with dialysis machines  
laid out on roadsides, broken glass  
on stretchers, oxygen masks  
from blue to yellow,  
*give me your poor,  
your tired, your weak*  
we'll make it to the other side --

death by hypothermia, clothes fallen  
frozen face that speaks of  
a desperate release to yellow

things i touch that turn to ruin  
page edges gorged with the tea spilled in my purse

## Visiting Dama Shirley's Grave

I lay stretched out on the back seat  
not stretched  
but curled, knees tucked,  
arms enclosing  
my head- throbbing from the wine  
pressed against the vinyl seat cover  
trying to sink into tiny holes, the patterns indented  
to look like leather  
to escape  
the radio scratching out of the speaker...  
the bump of pot holes  
the swing of a curve.

i awoke to the clink of gravel in the wheel rims,  
the brake squeal; the engine cutting off.  
when the catch from the door released  
I pried one eye open,  
and crawled out of the back  
into

the clean air of a mountain storm receding,  
sun glistening on the road.

We sat on the footstone,  
my father and me.  
Ate brown rice and chicken legs and sausage biscuits;  
sipped sweet tea from straws,  
watched the black clouds moving off over the valley.

I confronted the tree etched onto my grandmother's headstone  
cautiously, with guarded curiosity.  
Seven years had passed since we last touched  
four graves dug fresh,  
the green tent over red piedmont mud  
your parents to your left,  
two uncles at your feet  
green tents like the ones we came from  
the ones we stood under,  
wrapped in blankets  
huddled next to strangers,  
other concert goers warm with wine  
seeking shelter from the storm.



## **Hospital**

At the hospital,

We bide our time – slipping

in, and out

of a langorousness...

daylight hours, night hours,

halfway between a respite and a hold-up,

the women sit plying their hands,

TV, supper, planted before the screen, waiting for a flash,

These flashes of brilliant redemptions.

I can wait, I promise. *And ye shall know the righteous.*

All the weeks staring at my feet, sitting on the hospital bed staring at my feet.

I wish you heard me sometimes.

You were listening, not watchful, but seeing,

eyes all around.

## **Emila Says**

Emila says:

Hold on tight.

She folds her fingers into her palm one by one,

"Like this". She gently shakes the fist.

You've caught yourself early enough,

before there is too much slippage, too many hopes broken.

Pretend they are not fingers, but a fan, the many stays of life,

connecting to this hand. She pinches each fingertip and wiggles it.

These are the things that matter,

these the things you must hold close.