

## ANOTHER ANECDOTE OF THE JAR

*after Wallace Stevens*

My father placed a seed inside a jar—Fast Forward: the seed straightened out into a flower, jumped out of the jar and ran away—Rewind: the flower returns to the earth, roots dug into the open arms of prodigal redemption—Fast Forward: the earth tries to speak, drools, plays dead as an empty jar—Rewind: the rim of the jar smiles wordlessly as my father—Fast Forward: my father is my grandfather's son—Rewind: my grandfather never speaks in my memories—Fast Forward: my memories are as unreliable as these old family photos—R: one of these photos is of my deceased grandmother that I never knew, her gray hair is tied back disappearing into her tan skin into her dark blue starry blouse, she smiles but she's gazing off-camera as she leans back on a white concrete terrace in a Brooklyn backyard—FF: I have been to this place many times, the terrace is painted a different color now, but I can't remember what color it was before my cousins had to move out of that old Brooklyn home, the home where my grandparents lived out the ends of their lives—R: I think I remember my grandfather's open casket—FF: the casket was buried in the earth—FF: the earth blooms with the white tongue of a spirit—FF: the spirit rises up to god—FF: god does not speak—R:R:R:R: I am a seed inside my mother's jar—

## THE RUINS

I heard a man singing somewhere in the ruins of meaning. My trembling head felt like a dandelion. I had a dream where everything was small even my thoughts. I felt in the smallness my origin like the first worms. They tickled the roots in the wrinkled dirt of my brain. I felt an incessant tugging at my roots like somewhere in the past there's a tugging at my hands or a memory I can't let go. I heard a man singing and playing a piano and I thought he must have seen a lot in his lifetime. My head turned into a dandelion and I thought the metaphor was fitting but then I became deeply afraid of the wind. I've heard it said the wind speaks if you listen. I told it to take the day off and that I'd handle it so I started going around blowing into empty bags and stealing kids' balloons and moving clouds and leaves and holding the wings of birds and blowing out candles and sometimes I blew out dandelions too. I started to sigh a lot and thought yeah speaking is difficult how does the wind do it all the time. I heard a man singing his heart out and thought singers have it good they can just sing and sing and no one will get mad at them as long as they're in tune. I wished I could sing. Maybe then I wouldn't have to speak.

## THE HOUND

*after Kate Bush*

The night ran away with the child  
that played in the past. I had forgotten  
how small the world used to be / back then,  
the moon was closer to the ground.

The trees led me thru the memories.  
Hidden in the dark, I found a fox,  
its wounds were deep as shadows.  
Its little heart beat so fast in my hands.

I became a hound; my head was wet  
with blood. I felt ashamed. I hunted  
the past and caught up with the night.  
The trees let me hold the child in my fangs.

I bit down. I ate what was left. I chewed the bones.  
And I was still afraid / of what could have been,  
of nothing real. I had always been a coward.  
I had forgotten / what had really happened

back then. I ran away with the night.

## THE PAST RETOLD IN DREAMS

Driven mad by starvation, the wolves began to hunt the ghosts of the forest. And the ghosts, afraid of the wolves' white-fanged hunger, hid themselves in the bodies of the trees. When the winter came—from across the mountains, like nature's angel of death—the desperate hunters were eaten whole by the frost. But, even in death, the beasts still clawed at the tails of ghosts. For thousands of years, they've hunted in this land, haunted by the passage of time; on this grass, over these hills, thru these trees, these memories; the body of this past, decomposed and repulsive, all its bones dislocated and thrown around wildly.

All the memories growing and wilting and growing again  
in the wilderness of this graveyard  
of our thoughts of ourselves  
at the ends of our lives,  
something opens:

light spills everywhere.

My room is a mess. There's a ghost asleep beside me. Morning-light comes in on the wings of the curtains. I'm blanketed in a cold that makes my blood burn blue in me. Shadows in the corners of the walls are sharp as blades. I can't move. There's a warm fear in the back of my head keeping me awake. I don't have the will to move. In my desperation, I become anxious—the fear is hot in my head, hot against my cold skin. I could freeze to death here. The ghost stirs a little. I could catch fire here. There's a head coming down to rest on my chest. I make up reasons. It's heavy. I make up stories.

A shadow slashes at my ankles. I tell myself  
life is just a dream, that a ghost had  
once, every day for thousands  
and thousands of years.  
The ghost is in me.

My eyes open.  
There's light everywhere.

SCULPTURE OF MYSELF WITH 22 HANDS  
*after the Thousand-Armed Avalokiteshvara*

in the country of that bright head  
crowning  
the horizon

children grow  
like wild-  
flowers

a long time ago  
I hit my head  
on the edge of my mind  
and I cried and cried

in my dreams all the locks  
have been unscrewed from their doors;  
and all the snakes  
have unhinged their jaws

everything is out of place  
as I struggle to grasp  
what's there in front of me

all the stars drift away into the dark

if you look hard enough,  
you can still see the glint  
in those still dead eyes

in that old house,  
there's this ugly painting of a child  
crying  
hung on the wall

once I wished the world would end,  
just so I wouldn't have to begin

afraid,  
I decided to cling to anything I could

//

and you were the pearl of wax  
sunken in the night sky.  
you followed me

as we drove home

I wore a coat made out of the hide of some nocturnal animal

I thought to myself,

I've never wanted anything badly enough  
to do anything about it

the past chased me thru all the abandoned cities in my head

now we are at the precipice of a new beginning,  
yet again

the black hole

in the back of my head  
rips apart the light of that smile  
that I've all but forgotten

and now I've forgotten  
what it ever meant to me

but someday

I'll go back to that place

and I'll tremble and stutter  
as I try to say to something

and nothing would matter anymore;  
I'd pray to anyone

//

with hands clasped as butterfly wings

in silent prayer, even the wind will scream