

## adirondack echo town

a dime in the dirt: i hook  
my fingernails into the ridges of the coin -  
the silver core of the torch.  
i run my thumb along the sand dune  
crest and fall of roosevelt's  
face. imagine my skin  
could heal.

at the thick oak doors of the methodist  
church, specters of the workaday saw mill flicker  
in burnt black wicks and  
stain  
the glass.

inside  
we pray at the rock where the trout wriggles  
and asphyxiates  
we gut the trout in the steel grey sink and laugh at the bait  
left curdling in its stomach.

elsewhere  
in appalachia a priest palms serpents,  
a bite - he dies, for the life  
of me i cannot decide which hands deserve the blood  
of christ.

after twenty years of questions  
god would not admit  
imagining  
the holy ghost.  
hot wax hardens into white,  
bone pools.



## the myrmidons

*“and I am sweating a lot by now and thinking of  
leaning on the john door in the 5 SPOT  
while she whispered a song along the keyboard  
to Mal Waldron and everyone and I stopped breathing”  
-Frank O’Hara*

i.

in the eye  
of an anthill. the fine black pinprick spoke.  
*that’s disgusting* she said, when I first showed  
her the myrmidons. *bugs make me want to puke.*  
the anthill tightened its grip on the dust  
and the terminal tufts of grass -  
the sidewalk’s edge.  
*let’s talk about something else*  
i kissed her, swallowing the difference  
between ant and man.

ii.

i first met the myrmidons in the appendix  
of a ninth grade anthology of myths.  
troy extended to either side of the kitchen island,  
olympus floated in the gallon of distilled water on the fridge.  
that night, the c-pap machine bubbled and trapped my father’s breath.  
it climbed and filled my ears, multitudinous  
as blowing through a straw into a glass of milk.

iii.

her boots cut fangs in the woodchips  
with each dip of the swing. *why are you  
so quiet?* at the apex of her highest arc  
i lose her words in the metered scream of the helicopter.  
i can’t find the sides of my shadow.  
my fingers tighten and stick to the grease -  
the crease and rust of the chain.  
her silhouette sits in a moonsilk frame.  
she asks if i ever think of flipping  
over the top. i’ve never risked it.

iv.

*i want to make you cum.* the echo dies  
against the carpet walls of a cubicle. in my head  
she hears me as paul simon.  
in the crook of my armpit, breath on my chest -

her hum falters at the crest of our goosebumps.  
cecilia and other sad songs sung facetiously,  
they meet the aluminum voice of the air  
conditioner and split my focus. melody  
clings to the back of the throat like string.  
the eardrum can, at best, approximate  
a beating heart. i hitch  
up my underwear and feel the myrmidons  
crawl between skin and the memory  
of sheets.

v.

a singer fights a war with the throat -  
the latest in our physical ironies.  
she writhes, a writer in the wrong body.  
the black box critic ELEGY  
implies himself. *i thought you hated it*  
the subtle bruise of make-up on the eye.  
*yes - i was annoyed.* an apology, spit  
fill the dip in the tongue. *you won't speak*  
- *why won't you speak?* lipstick tightens at the sound  
of tongue on teeth. a click. confusion.  
a bolt of lightning finds its way to ground.

vi.

biting gums, mistaking it for pleasure.  
in the mouth  
of a tunnel in a pet shop ant farm, the myrmidons  
present themselves. i cannot see beyond the body,  
reflected in the glass.

**elegy for a november afternoon**

*to clifford nass*

what music, in the silence of the trees  
what burning orchestration in the chorus of the leaves  
that float the warm-toned melody of autumn  
through the crackling, gramophone breeze

what poetry, in the words between our breaths  
what long, spiraled verse tangled tautly in a tress  
of hair she tucks behind her ear  
to hide it with a silent, sad caress

what horror, waking up to hear you died  
what hollow, sallow news to greet me on my side  
how my face plummeted and rolled along the floor  
and came to rest with dust clumps in its eyes

what sorrow in the faces that you knew  
what quivering and splintered, rock-cold, marble mood  
which will befall the statue garden, clad in mind  
with evening gowns and night-black, wrinkled suits

what guilt as I rewind my vital song  
what heartbeats traced, all lazy, lax, and long  
slurred half-notes, stumbling forward  
and my voice slower, rambling, ambling along

what memory asserts itself today  
what shadows stir and stalk me, walking black-clad in my way  
and pace along the leaf-rich street  
rattling the corpses wind forgot to sway

what fury at the closing of an age  
what frustration – fucking futile – as I rip from page to page  
after answers never ventured by an author  
who forgot his thought mid-phrase

## sonnets when half the week is through

### *monday*

the civil war, a temporary bridge,  
small boats strung together, rope, pontoons.  
pathways vivid in our dead photographs.  
gnats and goose shit. skipping stones. i moved  
in august. the waves are blue but this  
is dog walks - the power plant and power lines.  
a flat stone skips, I scream towards your shore.  
a song between cricket legs,  
a small song of acceleration,  
a song thin as thread and quivering.  
your finger tracing circles on my chest.  
the wind whips mud and sand. my lungs insist  
upon the frantic breath of love - each splash *thunks*  
and bends the power lines.

### *tuesday*

sunday in the park with george. paint-stained  
smock - my pelvis rises in shuddering bursts.  
i know there is pain in love. dot sweats.  
i wish for steadier hands, to reach into  
your past. wordless in the passenger seat. i will die  
forgetting lace in the untouched parasol.  
bleak lanterns: dots. a haze of light.  
artifice, at a distance, falls to art.  
art! the soul teeters in the heart,  
a feeble miracle. the soul is sound, color, light.  
sunday in the park with george. the soul  
pierces the fingertips and leaves blood  
on the floor. i know there is joy in this, the body of creation.  
this, the body of love. this, the body of love.

### *wednesday*

*la jalousie* - the slats in blinds.  
a too-tart mojito (tess cut lime  
juice with sparkling water - lime-flavored), mint leaves. i read  
an article the other day - foreign words,  
"precise," for "emotions you didn't even know  
you had." *pronoia* makes me laugh -  
the fear that everyone is plotting  
to make me happy. i always begin  
by bending sonnets, then breaking them.  
why must i name the heart like snow?  
sprigs cling to the walls of  
the glass. cold bites the tongue: a lover, poetry,

accumulated snowballs – surrogates for the heart –  
porous, crumbling, misshapen, partly ice.