

LOAM

by

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A thesis submitted to the

Graduate School-Camden

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of Master of Fine Arts

Graduate Program in

Creative Writing

written under the direction of

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Camden, New Jersey May 2014

THESIS ABSTRACT

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The following is a collection of poems written in a variety of forms including open, closed, and nonce forms. Elegiac in tone, they comment on the knowledge of impermanence, the transitory nature of the physical world and of the self as a fixed identity. These poems reveal moments of self-revelation, observation, and ruminations on how the past shapes the present. More importantly, however, they seek to transform, shape, and direct the speaker. The poetry collected here aims to establish order out of the chaos of ordinary life experiences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the editors of the following publications who were the first to publish the following poems, sometimes in different forms:

Aspects of Robinson: Homage to Weldon Kees: “Sunrise on the Delaware”

Slippery Elm: “The Housewife’s Lament”

Slipstream: “The Pink Balcony”

The poems here would not exist without the love and encouragement from my family and friends, especially from my husband, Keith Hennessy, the man with the kindest eyes I’ve ever seen.

A special thanks to my dear writing friends who have helped to shape these poems –there are many: Malik Abdul, Michelle Bonczek, Luke Bauerlein, Zachary Burkhart, Darcy Cummings, Brian Heston, Jill Ivey, Elisabeth Majewski, Luke Stromberg, and Mr. Daniel Wallace.

A deep and lasting gratitude for all those who mentored me in ways small and large along the way. Many thanks to J.T. Barbarese, Lise Funderberg, Dee Jonczek, Alexander Long, Tom Lux, Anne Marie Macari, Kate Northrop, Patrick Rosal, Lisa Zeidner, and especially Lauren Grodstein —for everything.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title Page	i
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv-v
<hr/>	
Quaker City Flea Market	1
Equations	2
Releasing the Ashes, A Still Life	3
Pudding	4
American Craft	5
Supernova	7
Sunrise on the Delaware	9
Thirteen	10
First Death Without Sound	11
Loam, Holy Sepulchre Cemetery	12
Survivor	13
Somnambulist	15
Faith	16
The Railing	17
Fishing	19
Summer Job	20
Mill Yard, Lomax Rugs	22
Johnny Boy	23
Johnny Boy Redux	25
The Pink Balcony	26
To Nell Skelley of Hilton Street	28

The Swashbuckler of Leon Street	29
Trash Man	30
Vanishing Point	31
Modigliani and Jeanne Hebuterne, Paris, 1920	32
Sinkhole, 1990, Anthracite Coal Region	34
Notes for Class	35
The Housewife's Lament	37
At The Level Of The Peach, He Said	38
Old Lover, New Canvas, Wet Paint	39
Requiem for Monogamy	40
Everything Is Not An Omen	41
Buoy	42

QUAKER CITY FLEA MARKET

Quaker City Flea Market: it must be
Saturday. I'm in no mood
for the dusty sun, but I must touch
and taste and touch just once.

Booth to booth I am wanderlust,
I am blue water ice lips lacking air.
I am coconut sunscreen and glasses,
asking, "how much this, how 'bout there?"

I am passing mirrors, flatbed trucks.
There is so much here not wanting wear:
rusty bikes leaning on bent rims, broken kickstands,
crystal doorknobs, pieces of wrought iron gate,
leather shot glass holsters, terra cotta pots,
a circus of children like fleas.

I am one of them.

I am three. I am asking
my father, "am I four, am I four yet?
Dad, Mexican jumping beans for a quarter!"

It is hot. July. I can't seem to forget.

At a flea market, it must be.
This is not a dream, but summer.
I go back to find these baubles,
then wonder how to carry them home.

EQUATIONS

If sunlight,
then the bleached boards of my back deck,
the basil, rosemary, oregano, and dill
potted in terra cotta.

If the river,
then seagulls, handfuls of bread,
honking flocks of geese, wrinkled men
with newspapers, beach chairs, cigars,
sitting next to cars, listening
to the sixth inning.

If the park,
then the creek, families running through
the plastic grocery bags they carry:
chips, grape soda, peach bath towels.

If contemplating god, the body or a lack thereof,
then the sun, the river, all water.
It's how I imagine we began.

Then it is the beginning of summer
and you have ended.

Then there are your ashes
and what to do with them.

RELEASING THE ASHES, A STILL LIFE

A human being is only breath and shadow. –Sophocles

A visceral breath no less,
but bits of bone
quickly camouflaged
by flat ovals of stone,
pebbles, shells.
Of course, that's all
these bodies are
--shells made of what's formidable.

The sun was bright, blinding even
in the half hour we stood
by the shoreline and watched
you wash away.

Some imagined threshold.

The back of my neck pinkened.
Horseshoe crabs lay belly up,
exoskeletons cracking with salt and sun
in their brown saucers,
their barbed tails shriveling.

PUDDING

The kind that comes in the industrial sized silver can with giant black block font reading: PUDDING: CHOCOLATE. The kind you bought for \$3 from your neighbor who gets WIC, food stamps, and rations at the local food bank every two weeks. The kind you made from a cardboard box and brown paper packet with some milk. Now you were really cooking. The kind whose skin you'd vie for with your dad. The kind he asked for after the stroke when he could only taste nectar. The kind you fed him the next day when he could no longer open both eyes or talk. The kind you fed him the next day when he could no longer chew. The kind you knew he would like if only he could swallow. The kind that ran out the side of his mouth down his face in a snake.

AMERICAN CRAFT

This is the house of stained glass.

This is the hand of the man
who built the house of glass.

This is the cutter
held by the hand
of the silent man
who built the house of glass.

This is the sound of the score
ripping across the glass
that drives the hand
of the lone man
who built the house of glass.

This is the copper
wrapping the glass
that makes the sound
of ripping across
the beautiful hands of the man
who built the house of glass.

This is the solder
running a bead
between the copper
that wraps the glass
that rips the hand
of the cold man
who built the house of glass.

This is patina
staining the solder,
that runs a bead

between the copper
that wraps the glass
that rips in half the man
who built the house of glass.

This is the lead
that sweetens the blood,
calls to the organs,
and swells the cancer
that unlaces the brain
that frees the stroke
that breaks the body.

This is the trade
our family has made.

SUPERNOVA

My father once killed a man
on the el. He didn't want
me or my brother to go without
winter coats, wouldn't give up
his wallet, and so
turned the knife around.

He kept doing this
as we grew up,
turning tables,
throwing tables, knives sometimes,
but mostly we dodged.

One night when I was six
my brother, seven,
he came home late and gave
us gloves with Sugar Ray's
name scrawled across the fists.
We sparred before dinner and
I fought southpaw despite my lead hand.

When I think back to that night
when he insisted we learn to fight
I imagine him never forgetting
the way the stars looked from
the edge of the el platform,
cold in their light.

I have to see him this way—
aware in that moment
of the extravagance of his anger.

I can't think of that man with no coat,
dizzy, sweating, writhing on

the tribal shapes made
by the shards of smashed green
and amber glass beside the el's rails.

When I look up at night
blinded by stars
that live and die and burn
before the smallest stars ever
punch their holes in the sky
it's those stars,
those massive stars
that set everything on fire.

SUNRISE ON THE DELAWARE

To be the old woman
and sell roses alone
before the blue bridge at dawn.

To wake without light—not to
the chests of robins in spring, not to
apples, not mouths, not ribbons.

THIRTEEN

-after Aimee Nezhukumatathil

When I was thirteen, we moved to a twin, one half was our house, the other our glass shop. My Irish twin brother and I fought with our fists the way our father taught us. When I was thirteen, I fielded grounders, wrote notes in calligraphy, cut glass and smoked pot. I secretly wished to be Jo from *Little Women*, to live in a snow covered village, wear petticoats and granny boots. We cut, slumped, painted, fired, foiled and sandblasted glass together for other people's homes and their churches. Once, my parents taught my chemistry teacher how to make a stained glass bird. When I was thirteen my mother held a training bra up in the air, asked, "Do you think this'll fit?" and tried to press it around my new breasts in the aisles of Kmart. That night she made my favorite: sweet and sour chicken with rice. My favorite: Laying on the couch after dinner, my head in my mother's lap, her fingernails scratching my back. Our house smelled of banana bread or melted solder depending on the time of day. We finally had a yard: an apple and a cherry tree, peppers, tomatoes, potatoes, horseradish and strawberries. Rows of roses and two blue hydrangeas. When I was thirteen I got my period and my Mom let me stay home from school, showed me how to use a tampon. The next month she died and now I am always thirteen.

FIRST DEATH, WITHOUT SOUND

My voice went missing four days.

There she was every morning
brushing her teeth, singing Dylan into the sink
staring at the mirrored medicine chest.

And then, she just wasn't.

Inside that chest rust spots formed
an archipelago where I stayed
for days hopping from island to island
not speaking, but sunning.
I felt no heat—the rust on the metal
corrosive, persistent.

Her song, her long ribbon
of silk spilling away.

Four days after the accident,
her hands folded under
the yellow glow of funeral sconces.
I made the director remove
the blanket from the satin casket
to make sure her feet were there.
Then I demanded, “the shoes, too.”

Then, her face,
what I looked at last:

On her right cheek, two crescents of flesh gouged out
and built up in purple-gray pancake makeup.
My mother's eyes stitched with black mascara and cat gut
her mouth sealed in pink wax and sewn shut.

LOAM, HOLY SEPULCHRE CEMETERY

First, I rip up the grass and laugh
shove fistfuls of her burial dirt
in my mouth, mix the spit with twigs
then everything blackened blooms.

It's new, this space I'm born into
this life without reference.
I must give birth to myself:
endlessly nesting matryoshkas.

Death's not what I thought it was:

It doesn't matter how
she died or if I carry her photo
we look so much alike
now I can't tell who is living,
who dying, who dead.

Death's not what I thought it was:

It's a room where you lose
over and over the one thing
you cannot bear to lose.

SURVIVOR

Because like me, you too slow
down to see car accidents,
search the windshield and windows
for the splatter of bright blood,
see the scattered belongings:
a royal blue cardigan,
some papers flapping, half-wet,
the car, a crushed ball
of aluminum foil.

This impulse, this fix, this
flick and jerk response
to the body's carnage
worries me for all of us.

Because the driver was your mother.
No, because the driver was my mother.

Because I can't stop looking as
if it were happening to someone else.

There was an accident.

I was supposed to be in the car.

She was wearing my earrings (hoops),
my sweater (blue), my black and white
British Knights.

Because she was my best friend.
I never wore them again.

Because they were my shoes
and maybe too big for her.

Because I did not go with her
there was an accident.

Because I could have gone with her,
but did not.

It was an accident.

SOMNAMBULIST

I am walking through throngs of people
passing out calla lilies and coffee.
I whisper to them between exchanges
and sips and smells of the coffee and the calla,
that I know love is violent.

At first, they don't believe me.

I tell them,
"Look, I don't want you to find out the hard way.
Love is violence and doesn't last.
Stop convincing yourself that it does,
stop imagining what's alive will live forever.
It's not possible to keep burning and burning
without wavering in light and heat.

The last few flames are what you warm your hands over,
the friction, what saves you from freezing."

We press on as the white petals begin curling,
browning in the veins, on the edges. The coffee cools.

FAITH

At 12 o'clock in the afternoon
Ave Maria swings the tongue
of the bell in the tower.

I used to think there was a man
up there orchestrating,
a musician that stopped
whatever he was doing,
cobbling shoes or some
dead art in the middle of the day
sun peaking –a small man
climbing his ladder
to perform for me,
who wanted so much to hear it,
to believe and remember that music,
to sink into its hollows
and feel all that black moss
pulled out of me.

THE RAILING

-for my brother

I lay at night eavesdropping
on our parents from the ribcage
of a house that heaves back
black and white xylophone bones
spun on the lathe in a makeshift
workshop basement.

There were five of us,
now we are two.

And I ask you, brother,
who will be next,
who will be left
to listen to that
lone note, to that one
finger hovering over
a black key.

Can you hear that
black note held
in white space?

The music of pianos
coming from the convent
where we practiced
sounds like our parents,
our sister, speaking to us.
But I can't hear them,
don't see them anymore
in the corners of my eyes.

Did any of it really happen?
Were there houses we lived in,

lessons with nuns, wood
tambours we sanded,
rugs and tables and chairs?

Were there doors we opened?

Who will be left to eavesdrop
on our dead? Who will be left
squinting through the railing,
a night light blinking
in the duende of the dark
of those last hours?

Which is to say, I am afraid.

I have seen swirls, turbulence,
the eddy and vortex that exits
in that dark. Black steak,
white fish of the body
flaking off into ash, oh half of we,
my brother, my love,
let it not be me.

FISHING

That morning when the minnows darted frantically in the circle of the white bucket I began naming them. We climbed into a rented rowboat, set ourselves out on the bay. All day long we cast our lines high in the air, then out, out over the sparkling water. Later, while docking the boat, my father, insisted the day continue despite sunburn, hunger. The adults fished in a row from the big black rocks. Against the rocks they cut violet squid which was quick to give under the gutting knife.

I brought the bucket of minnows sloshing, down to the pebbled beach speckled with the blue black shells of half-opened mussels. The veneer of abalone turned to the sun, which was turned to the tumbling waves that smoothed themselves thin as ankle bones. Crouching on my feet, callused with half the summer under them, I reached my hand into the inertia of all those gun metal fish bodies, those small bodies bumping up against my palms. I grasped one floating on its side. Its tail was not like gun metal, but a fan of wet feathers. With its tail between my forefinger and thumb I pushed it forward into the smooth waves of the ocean's breath. Then I thought to save all of them. One by one I plucked them from the bucket.

But the third fish would not breathe water. It floated back to me, then away and out into the water. I looked up at the black rocks. There I saw minnows soaring through sky on the ends of blue fishing line.

SUMMER JOB

Ever since I can remember
there was the white barrel
at Ella's corner store
where we went for
pizza-pretzels and pickles.

I reached my hand into
that lagoon of Venetian green
among seaweed stumps and seeds
fishing around till I caught one.

Years later, I run into a store
after work at the hydroponic plant
where I've picked peppers all day.
I know I don't look good,
can taste the salt and sweat
but I need cigarettes
and now have the cash
to pay for a whole pack.

The cashier is someone
I go to high school with
so she doesn't give me shit
about the cigarettes,
but about the hairnet
I've forgotten on my head.

At that moment I wish
for the thicket of childhood,
for a white pickle barrel
to dunk my head and hands in,
to hide, yes, but to cool off
in its salt, to breathe in its dill
because I know tomorrow

will be hotter than today.
I'll still be 16,
but I'll be getting overtime
packing pickling cucumbers
that will be shipped to arrive
in someone else's kitchen
to soak for seven days
and become that green tissue,
the tongue that drowns
in salt and garlic,
pepper and dill,
in the coriander and vinegar
of the humble pickle.

MILL YARD, LOMAX RUGS

Run a gauntlet past six jumping barking dogs
with a mad-as-hell German Shepherd
as the final test to get in.

Lean and bounce against the fence,
below the barbed-wire sing:

*Three-Six-Nine The goose drank wine
The monkey chewed tobacco on the street car line
The line broke the monkey got choked
And they all went to heaven in a little row boat.*

Be still. Listen.

The slip of rain pinging metal cylinders
filled with Rabat, Persian, Berber.

JOHNNY BOY

*Ladybug, ladybug, fly away home
Your house is on fire, your children alone.*

I could beat all the kids on the street
but there was one boy who was faster
than everyone, everything but the fire

that caught his kindling legs,
quicker to burn than the rest of the row homes
on his side of the block.

Johnny, soft pretzel boy Johnny
would sing on Saturday mornings,
a basket of twisted dough his song.

And when he was done
he'd grab his dad's old monkey wrench
unscrew the face from the fireplug.
We'd all come running for
steam and rain on concrete,
clapping cool hands against summer thighs.

Soft pretzel boy Johnny,
the first boy fastest boy the last
boy I ever thought I loved,
and only more after his legs burnt
when they wouldn't grow hair
when he wouldn't wear shorts anymore
but would lift up his pant leg
every time I asked him
when I had to see it again,
had to let him show me,
then tell me again
how he wasn't scared,
there wasn't time

his sister hiding, the fire climbing
Mom at work,
Dad asleep in a chair.

All this blowing behind us now.
Our scars still show,
but not when they touch.

JOHNNY BOY REDUX

They fall asleep with lit cigarettes
between dry lips,
they do.

This is what to do with our parents' cigarettes:

Chase the cellophane,
crumpled butts that wash away
in rivulets along our curb,
race against a slick black snake of water,
run and run, beat the stream
before it all goes down the iron grates.

Even if none of this lasts,
even if none of this saves us,

try to stop beauty from escaping
like the light in your face
every time someone falls asleep.

THE PINK BALCONY

Imagine we stayed on the pink balcony
instead of the real one, the roof with no railings.

This is where you showed me
how Ken always makes the first move:
his swivel shoulder, bicep, palm
lowering to Barbie's hair, then hip.
Then the kiss.

Ken's hands didn't fit
Barbie's breasts.
He was so far away,
his elbow hard, and so,
the kissing from balcony to bedroom.

This is where you moved the covers over
and I couldn't see what was going on.
I thought I knew,
I knew Ken knew.
Ken would smile through it all.
I wanted his lips to move.
He just kept smiling
that plastic smile, pink, then white,
kept moving up and down
on my Barbie.

You knew.
You were two years older than me
and I thought that was why you knew.

Imagine that was why.

Pretend we never got caught
hanging out on the roof,

climbing back in through the window,
as if that gave him a reason.

Your stepdad home early from work
imagining dolls instead of girls, or daughters.
Imagining how later, he would fit into you.

Imagine no one ever jumped
off balconies or roofs
and they were safe places
for us to play Barbies.

I want to imagine you as a little girl
never being called a whore,
no one moving up and down on you.

We are not like Barbie, not like Ken,
We bend.

TO NELL SKELLEY OF HILTON STREET

Though you had grandchildren
and I, grandmothers,
though my mother worked
at a dry cleaner's on Kensington Avenue
and my father was a maintenance mechanic,
here you were with your magic.

I remember the wood:
the grain, the knots, the sheen,
the fireplace made of river stone,
that imagined fire, the real cocoa,
green wing-backed chairs,
their pink rosebuds, climbing vines;

shopping trips to Wanamaker's
outings downtown, eight whole el stops
away to see the Christmas lights.

For the blue Yahtzee cup
and the dice knocking
against the hollow plastic.

For the curious elves,
twelve ceramic curios
you gave me to keep.

For the Beatrix Potter and
Velveteen Rabbit you let me read
aloud to you and your husband.

For the lighting of the lamps especially,
their ancient glow in your brown home.

THE SWASHBUCKLER OF LEON STREET

You connoisseur of stripped street signs
and orange traffic cones,
you faded American flag waver,
professional sports heckler,
protector of parking spaces
when the snow falls,
shoveler for hire
tackler of touch football
guzzler of gossip and spreader
of general good cheer—
everywhere I've ever lived
I've known you.

You lover of muttish small dogs
and summertime plastic snowmen,
you coupon thief in the night,
opportunist strolling the streets
with your bungee corded shopping cart
piled high with bounty,
you collector of cans, aluminum,
copper wiring and wrought iron,
you bringer of block parties and illegal fireworks,
fellow trash-picker-re-envisioner,
you swallower of pride with your head held high,
you entrepreneur of Carpe Diem
because that SSI check has to stretch
and every day you are less stranger,
more neighbor.

TRASH MAN

He would bring home coffee tables, black and white TVs,
broken chairs, bassinets, whatever could be refurbished.

He would strip the finish with turpentine—
his hands two lathes spinning the wood
working the sand paper scratch to a smooth
surface of bleached bone.

He was enchanted with chance,
by possibility, by the power of a healthy roan,
the stiff smell of horse, rippling chestnut muscles
and warm honey roasted peanuts down by the track.

He wore corner bar league jerseys,
beefy tees tugging at his belly.

He shot a mean dart, could spin English
on any ball behind his back.

In fact, the more he drank
the more accurate he became.

This morning I emptied cartons of cold lo mein
into a black trash bag, ran it out to the curb
and watched the trash men's blue jumpsuits,
grease stained gloves, their old call and response.

The last time I saw my uncle he was drinking,
leaning, liver in hand by then,
his drink in puddles beneath him.

His death was sudden, but not tragic.
And I found myself lost in all his losses.

VANISHING POINT

I.

She stuffed her pockets full of rocks.
 Everywhere she went she felt their weight.
 Her shoulders creaked beneath her coat
 like boards of wood about to break.

She thought of all the things that made her ache.
 The flowers on the kitchen table:
 the Black-Eyed Susans, the Blue-Eyed Grasses,
 the wilting, the wanting, the wasting away.

She stuffed these thoughts into the rocks,
 squeezed them tight between the cracks,
 became a wailing wall and walked into the water.

II.

Listen, I'm done.

There is not one reason,
 though I believe them
 all. In fact, I believe
 in Big Bang, Buddha, the truth
 of bananas and whole foods.
 I believe in watching bodies of water,
 people or rivers or tubs.

Any of these hurt about the same.

I still even believe in love.

I see birds flying in
 an arrow, see the order.
 My eyebrows like wrens lift
 and hope to follow.

MODIGLIANI AND JEANNE HEBUTERNE, PARIS, 1920

He leaned her against the wall
 and I don't know why,
 but I couldn't stop staring.

The way her head
 was angled:
 a cleft, a cue, a question mark,
 the slop of her neck
 tugging on tendons.
 A plum line
 from collarbone
 to nose to brow bone.

Then her gaze
 mottled by his odd palette,
 and her eyes—
 cerulean ponds
 floating above cheeks
 flushed with quinacridone violet,
 a texture smashed
 with the blood of mad berries
 and brought to life again
 by light
 swirling in titanium white.

She just sat there, cool as avocado,
 as if she were just a woman
 I could meet somewhere
 on a park bench,
 watching the carousel at the steps
 of Sacre-Coeur in Montmartre.

What was Jeanne thinking
 as the mirrors spun around her,
 as Modi, like a great bear
 with a sable brush

crashed around her too,
lifting, stretching her neck,
tilting her head,

While she watched herself spin
in the carousel:

The orchid pinks, then lemons,
something like the rhythm and interval
of oil stains along the studio walls.

Jeanne, where did you go?

There were no carousels for you,
no diamonds, circles, squares of mirrors,
no lines, no rows of light bulbs,
no blown glass glowing against your eyes,
no golden poles twisting your irises,
no horses galloping in your pupils,
no nostrils flaring, manes flying,
no teeth at the bit.

I can't help but think of it,
what paintings you planned
as you heard the horses galloping by,
what green shadows, hollows,
what purple moons under your lashes?

How did you sit so still?

Were you thinking of negative space,
of what was there, but not there?

Always the horses. You could hear them,
but how could you ignore their thunder?

SINKHOLE, 1990, ANTHRACITE COAL REGION

-for Regina Rowland

I.

In a country of night black
as the slippery slag
of shale, clay and coal dust,
she falls.

She keeps falling,
the soft moss of her body
inaudible.

Her friends are near;
they do not hear.

II.

Freshman year history:
Mr. O'Brien shut the door,
taught us about Molly Maguires
and Centralia, a neighboring,
stripmined ghost town
consumed by subterranean flames.
and spontaneous sinkholes.

He never said her name,
just warned us against unmarked graves.
She was his student
and he knew what I knew.

The dead do that. They just walk off,
get swallowed by the earth again.
They disappear without a sound:

Her white coat. The snow.
All winter long she lay.

NOTES FOR CLASS

The vocab word today is rivulet.
twenty-six sophomores –all girls—
stare back at me, cock-eyed,
patient as flies for me to answer.

I let the word perform its own confusions, `
let it sink into the silence
of ceiling fans cleaving a beat in the air.

All I can think of are
narrow and irregular lakes,
the tributaries that have roped
themselves into a network
of keloids across my chest.

On Monday, Sara saw my scar.

The girls can't remember
the meaning of rivulet
but the skin does not forget.

They won't dare ask me,
they're too polite.
I can't show them
the raised rivulets,
the braided skin of my scar.

But I can teach them:
if you want to know
your past, look at your body.
If you want to see your future,
know your mind.

Some girl looking to fit in

somewhere will hear about it
and start the scar's story:
an ex-con ex-boyfriend,
a rape, a terrible accident,
a fight, a fire, cancer.

She couldn't say what she saw
but she saw something.

I'd tell them maybe
all of the stories are true
since the scar starts
at the center of my sternum
and climbs up to cross
the rocky terrain of my heart.

There is a kind of cadence
to academic silence
not unlike what you might
hear sitting beside some
small stream of water.

THE HOUSEWIFE'S LAMENT

I love the opera of the wash
on the line, the language of laundry:
I don't have to speak for months.

There is the pulley system—its ease,
the flapping pants, swinging sleeves,
the going out wet, coming in dry.

If I could be that line
or even tied taut to a tree
I would not sway, I would stay:
a lace scarf draped on a high branch.

If I could be that rope and
control the coming and the going.

Today I drag my fingers through the water
of the wash basin, see concentric circles
like carp breathing below,

hear his echo in the small sounds
the water makes.

AT THE LEVEL OF THE PEACH, HE SAID

you just bite. There's no
contemplating: its juice
does not ask to be considered
in light of what it represents.

It can be summer if you want.

No matter, these days ripen
from the brush of hands
a stroke along the forearm—
the forearm of all places,
underbelly of softness
and all moon.

I remember him. A perfume
of bones licked clean.
It wasn't their marrow
but the licking cleanly done:
thorough, rough
like a cat's tongue.

OLD LOVER, NEW CANVAS, WET PAINT

He knows my weakness
for hot bread, garlic honey;
for brown paper bags full
of olive oil, figs and cheese;
for black grapes, spiced wine,
and Swiss chard.

I am a blossom raised
between his forefinger and thumb,
I am petals like plums
dropping all around him.

He'll read Rumi,
Whitman, Sexton, Plath
aloud and as long as I like.

It was never about him.
But he'll light the candles,
burn my home,
make me leave my life.

REQUIEM FOR MONOGAMY

It was bound to happen. We're given this
green world, these blue bodies that shed
translucent chips of skin like fish,
what did I think? He asked me behind
the jazz club, in an alley along
the Vltava, "Can I make you light?"
Maybe it was the blue from the moon
that hung on his lips, or the light. His light.
The sun rose, set. I let him light
my cigarette. It's just that he was there
last call last night at the bar, taking
my pulse, breaking loose my voice,
unfussing, untying the sounds
our tongues made when twisting.

EVERYTHING IS NOT AN OMEN

The buoy's hollow knocking
-its 1-2-1 red blinking.
The gull's scream.
The tree shushing
is not a sign,
not even its twisted limbs
like gnarls and a lie
you once told that kept
coming up.

Is this a journey out?

A river is a place of truth.

The truth of geese flying low
and honking
then skiffing the water
gliding in from flight.

What could they tell me?

Terrible things, truth.

Below, a couple in the grey-soft rain
pick through garbage
turn over lamps, wood, crutches,
contemplate a future.
A finger slides between
the black wet knot of a bag.

All day I've felt the dead watching,
all day watching
the sun go down.

BUOY

*“There is this cave
in the air behind my body
that nobody is going to touch:”*

-James Wright

No one can reach it,
not even me;
there is this something
that recedes
to a lone boat bobbing

with the tide of the bay,
an inlet where first
I came to exist.