

The Water and The Wake

A Song of Self

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I am born into the dirt. There are fossils buried upside down in the desert. Nevada was once the sea.

All the history I know
 is the way the dust blows
 cutting at the face of the earth.
Conflict-construct deducts
 from the sand-sculptors I find
 to capture filthy the free—
Send off didactic calligraphy—
 the lights seem to me brighter in my wisdom.
 Boyhood and summer becomes them; I am
not a boy... I can't appreciate this moment:
 westward-boot leather-toe, like you can.
 Wrinkled furrows of manifest, resent not
only the meager syllabic meanderings of verse
 or worse, the sounds of unraveling minds. mines. Mine.
 We don't speak of the syrup we pulled from the Rockies—
Instead revel in man's triumphant sun-bulbs
 blushing dry meadows with life. Nothing survives
 but we—ay sayers—dehydrated sipping on silver.

Water calls to me in leaky faucets, puddled sprinklers. I catch the hose hiccups on my tongue. I am a woman returning to water.

I'm not especially proud of the way the summer collected
Pooling about the fallen calendar leaflets like dirty pond water
I'm not especially proud of being proud to wear expensive jewelry
And party dresses whilst half asleep and drooling on the couch.
I'm not especially proud of pretending to do work with no deadline
And soaking up praises as sponges do the murky dish water
I'm not especially proud to find excuses to wonder of lifestyles beyond my reach,
a name for which I'm sure I won't be proud to adorn
I'm finding excuses to fill vases with filtered-water, promising blooms from dead stalks
While living in the sunshine of possibilities, I am nearly a kin to the diagonally cut
Stems of the corpse flora, so beautiful; less beautiful by the day.
Holding my breath—in anti-anticipation—for some naïve suggestion
of failure, I'm still reading the work of a dear dreadful Virginia
Woolf. How fitting; it seems we are pulling each other under.

When for a moment I am submerged I can hear a voice like the sound quite mistaken for car engines and coffee pots. A humming drumming sort of sound. Like the shape of a hand in my ear pressing at pretence. I listen and it's gone.

It was the ocean that came to me
In a dream apologizing for unhappiness
With her own moon tides to blame
For the uneasy shore
There I wept
With her searching my skin for answers
Finding only cruel aloe-d sunburns to pacify our melancholy

She calls to me from where I stand
—wherever the water goes—
Sending her best in rain and snow
Hoping these precipitative love-notes will be enough
She's almost right, like an afternoon alone covered in sand
Wishing for another life;

We all belong to the sea.

Beneath layers, maybe sheets, maybe tub line bath water, I feel the pressure of else-ness. I am transcendent; translucent; transcribed across temporal memories. I remember what was not.

I remember oozing from the crack in her. She was a tree limb; she is a ship.

I can still recall the white milk spilling out across the sea. A ship with a wooden mistress leading us star-ward; arms outstretched and I came from the deepest hull where the water beat drum-desperation against her broad sides.

I remember clawing at the gravel and reaching the caliche. Fracturing every fingernail on the desert backbone and wishing still there had been water.

I reminisced of coming up for air after swimming for centuries in blue-bleak blackness and gritting my teeth with sand for sanctuaries. Oh pity.

How many years did I live under-sod before they unburied my bones?

How long can I hold my breath; waiting for the tide...

And then I begin to change. The mirror mocks my attempt to recognize features, only the reflection of a sink full of water swears who I am.

Myth and no more—that the sea breeze
bears down at my toes.

How much more beautiful I might be
if my fish folly webbed first my feet.

Not so.

Instead the base of my scalp, the rims of my ears,
the crest of my brow, the crook of my jaw

All metallic; all scales.

The sea wails to me and I respond in skin drying to rust.

I must return to the sea.

I am detestable in the middle-ness of my predicament. Obvious. Obtuse. Strange. I dig my fingers into my skin and pull from it madness. I cannot wrap my worry in scarves and sweaters. I belong to the gaping faces of those who watch me change.

It's the worst of all days... until I try and remember the days I'm stick under sheet and without the gumsure to rise and repeat. The days that my heart strings ache for playing and the light from the morning seems as drowsy and self piteous as I. The dead days. When the whole of my existence combated the color of the sun and I wove within me the will to carry a tragedy like ribbons across my gift-package face. These are not the dead days. These are alive with possibility of settling and unsettling roots. Filthy fingers we lay across lilies. We forgive ourselves for the things with which we a wholly to blame and take instead the awkwardly shaped parcels dripping of guilt fresh plucked from mangroves. *Water and weed. I am in between.* Like the following summer after a glimmering barrel and a ruby-soaked root. When the seeds are dropped into the froth they take upon themselves the current and whittle their way past sober-sought startling etch-a-sketch silhouettes. The old pity the young and the young misinterpret the pity and I am three feet below with buoyancy in my tendrils watching as they crack against each other in rivalry. Braiding their sprouts toward the mud before they've yet tasted the algae. Forgive me. I am weightless, with the root of something old and sinister wrapping itself about my ankle. We'll be rid of this soon, they say. Not soon enough.

Scaling. Protection from harsh words; lingering thoughts. My flesh would finally be infinite. I could swallow them up.

It would feel like sugar on the skin,
Making itself hard and thick and brittle,
Murky and bubbled catching the spheres
At inconsistent levels as if trying to speak brail.
It would tug at the inner most lining of the pores
Plucking the puckering lips about the follicles,
Binding itself to the hair expressing upon the surface only
Subtle sloping waves. The stem of each scale
A plate with a tip, the slick slipping prick
As they came together clicking and pricking those burrowing below.

It would start slow. Like the itch of a twitch in my fingertips
The grasp of a rasp on the surface. Merely an annoyance.
But from the tips of my bones a floating remote coat
Would rise and surmise on the surface the urge to converge
like chainmail, or worse, roof shingles, one mingles and
chews the idea of water-proof but never dared to test it.
Hesitating to show them the sun, they would bleach
And screech as the movement in the air clicked them together
Constant and craning, the clicking and sticking of their points to their joints
Would drive sure insanity through the root of my cells and boil
The toil in my mind to pick at them until I was bare and bleeding
Only for the follicles to return harder and more shining than before.
What's more, the light would catch them like fire and retire their
Heat to the underside of my flesh. Hidden warming now swarming
Until I began to accept them as my own. All alone under a borrowed suit of armor.
We will breed battle for the sea.

Wetness, wilderness and all in my ears like the hand of a pressing necessity, peeling away my shyness. Not a song or a howl but a hush.

I speak the language of the sea. In bubbles in currents.
I corrupt the very babble of my cornea. I taste the water
With my eyes. I smell danger with my tongue. I sip the serendipity
Through slit nostrils and spit exhausted breaths from my drosil.
Shut. Up the side of my slipper ee scales I inhale across the nerves
All lined up. Coiling and crunching as I move. I can feel the climax of my
Cruising through the splinters of my spine. I speak the language of the see in sensations,
Revelations, revealing rickishay remedy round-about my mimicry.
I sing the silence around me in chill-laden laughter licking at every scale until the leather
Of my underflesh, labyrinth as it is, lags behind my finning and we begin again. I
Speak an unsaid signing of survival and simplicity, stark, the contrast of light and night,
when the sun comes down from the horizon in squirming silky lines and
I dance about them a damsel in distress. I confess, it is a language without
grammatical intricacies I can click on my tongue among the same tender tastes
of truth and trust. I must speak this language of the sea.

In fearing change, I would look once more at the places I leave behind. They would be strange to me. Sticky with regret. I regret that I ever wished to linger there, observing now their intricate dark net.

Murmuration

when thousands of starlings come together in one spot to swap war stories

They brought with them the sound of the air
wrapping the light in their wings like a veil faced widow
over and under from inside the dampness the sea cackles them to life.

What horizon spitting out buzz burdened insects, claps hands
again towards the peak as if escaping from needles?

The fabric of that terrarium crinkles, curls, cuts a face;
the light milky irises, the Cyclops sky blinks with birds.

Coiling about themselves a helix, thrown into the air, one's regretful words:
they glide, catching a fellow's wing with a beak or a claw.

Lifting bones and down themselves when caught with another's unsympathetic bladed talon.

Wheezing in the claustrophobia of networks; coughing up the choreography of instinct.

Animism wrought need: chemistry, history gnawing at the feather stems until all of them
an airborne, coiling flailing, sailing, soot-colored nimbus.

**Another life, another perspective to peer through like a telescope on the dirt I hid away in the back of my mind.
Unremembering innocence and naivety for the chance at aerodynamics. I belong to the sea.**

Upward lifting forces are the driving survival, a thrust for the air
and with it comes a raking across the subtle side of bones
and what drones inside wakes instead a jaw locking breach.

But below, where the cold sleeps scale side flicking through
basket pattern breathing aparatti, comes not one sound but
many. If the whispering masses cut short in their cement shoes
could shout everything all at once: silence is the loudest kind of sound.

From beneath, wrapped mischievous-ness in the dark, were it only
for ears tuned to the pitch appropriate or eyes focused accurately
in spite of survival, a clatter might meet a breath-broken secretkeeper:

There. where the sun claps quietly upon itself. There. where coins pickle
peculiar in sailor-bed rust. There. Hush. It's beginning.

I am not a mermaid. I am a woman becoming a fish. I'm still in the process, and so is my poetry.