

AMERICAN WABI SABI

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In
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by

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San Francisco, California

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I certify that I have read *American Wabi Sabi* by Patricia Elizabeth Creedy, and that in my opinion this work meets the criteria for approving a written creative work submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree: Masters of Arts in English: Creative Writing at san Francisco State University.



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AMERICAN WABI SABI

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San Francisco, California

2017

American Wabi Sabi is a book of poems inspired by the natural shape our lives take over time. The poems are inspired by nature and family and disappearing in plain sight. Like a piece of wood that grays and fades from the elements silently over time, the wood takes on a different essence, its original color fades but a silvery white hue emerges, and the texture of the wood becomes almost feathery and smooth to the touch. Is the wood the same or is it now something different and unknowable even as the eye stops seeing it? This is the bittersweet beauty of a thing, of anything as it endures its place on this earth.

I certify that the annotation is a correct representation of the content of this written Creative work.



Chair, Written Creative Work Committee



1-2017

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Little Murders

In all of us
Is the self imposed
exile

no deity can touch
car alarms
the lone wolf calling

spring lawns
humid mesh
world of insects

we parted ways
paint masterly works
oil and chalk

little murders
occupancy discovered
your smile like a river

white foamed
and laughing
over the rocks

(For Thomas)

The New World

When it was the new world
grasses on the hills
yellowed in early spring
though the ground
held water deep down

wind off the ocean
swayed the trees
daring the branches to hold on
each leaf on its own
tree top canopies hurling

the bluest of eggs
plentiful birds flew in place
taking to the ground
to wait out the fury

the fox and raccoon did not
pity themselves
when they did not eat
no snake or shrew
harbored blood lust in their bones
when their young were eaten
swooped upon by a hawk or lone coyote

All That is Needed
(for Shay)

All that is needed
Is just
a moment

to catch
one's breath

told that we
are strength

is tiresome

don't watch me
from far away
struggle

with the very air
you gulp
in your sleep

give me your hand
I can't grow
into the sky

unaided
I pray to see it
when it comes

Hazard a Life

Hazard a life
cobble back
to when it was *yes*
toil forth
so long as its
all you got
jubilation's
fossil touch
all the heart
you said
there was
trout belly
brilliant only
in the stream
cold water
the necessity
shutters fall
on those
that can
tolerate *home*
woolen blankets
replace
leaves and skins
hearth fire
in or out
it don't
matter none

Call and Respond

Blue and beige hide nothing
flat roofed buildings
section eight houses

perch like settlements
strategic eucalyptus
mark the fog line

scattered porch lights
blameless
pretty even

plywood covered windows
flam scarred walls
storyboard blight

after the popping sounds
the birds
fall silent

gunfire call
sirens respond
in broad daylight

the mailman said
as he counted the shots
fifteen

making a gun
with his hands
as he mimed the shots

Post-its

Venus crosses the sun
3000 boats on the Thames
try to awaken from history

gratitude the highest protection

scientists find a new
sub-atomic particle
call it the God particle
stars of
carbon
diminish in the telling
react to
your resistance

wolf pack siblings
we eat cereal
thread bare night gowns
grown too short

Household God

Mixed galaxy formation

thine Jesus planet balled and holding

follow to what end

mind mathematical function breeched

spiritu sanctu all too true

medullary rays

but you don't know their names

sink and tabletop radiate

let them touch you

found among the bills and post-its

dust motes given shape

common brown birds land on the wet garden wood

flit pattern of wing and beak

the hot pink neck of the humming bird

drag queen fine

understood the skill of their tiny beaks

and how they can hold still

hearts beating so fast

Heritage

I don't doubt it is included
my grandmother was a spinster
my mother a ghost
turns out that's the better deal
blind worship
no flaw to pierce
something I was born with
white sweater and polished white shoes
cracked at the edges
English granny nanny
She let their children cry
it was good for them

Sky-Like Mind

Clear the tabletop
of your mind

faith is not certainty
the mistakes are mine

fealty of wonder
betting on a comet

thunder rolls across
the weekday sky

politics of water
momentary reprieve

the ground guzzles it
some parched runner

animal heartbeat skin
slave to history

fidelity to the dead
there is a loneliness

in salvation
the search compelling

what does the body say
follow its topography

landscape important
in the sublime

Silence
(for Thomas)

Sometime the silences
get really long
you think you are merely
looking out
the window
watching the landscape
roll by
going but not needing
to arrive

another town passes
vaguely familiar
grays and browns
comfort in passing
no threat of arrival
condensation on the glass
and the memory
of his face

Gravity and Grace

All the natural movements
reach for me

of physical beauty
curled in film of sleep

happen in conformity
need escapes the body thusly

what we receive from them
fear of leaving a trace

depends on the effect
light more than the blue glow

upon ourselves
grace a law of giving

all faults are the same
magnetize your God-love

analogous desires
gain no upper hand

there is only one fault
deny the need of light as more

grace is the law of descending movement
wings the persistent metaphor of ascension

(for Simone Weil)

Monday the Wind

Came for the top soil
found rarified snow

irrigation ditches
laced leaf fuzz

transient green
temporary infant

puddled rainwater
ground too baked to reach

Button Willow of
the Imperial Valley

red tips
of the bare trees

murder of crows
jelly mama

they cling to
the tops of the trees

American Wabi Sabi

Handlebar house
sting ray bicycle
white banana seat

swimming pool promise
don't they always
lure of the West

diorama prediction
end of the continent
here's your pool

glossy blue surface
paintbrush thrust and praise
your crooked leisure

austerity's favor fallen
take-out plastic
waste penitence
only if visible

hot wind
the mono-feature
belief recognized

only as loneliness
the smallest
common denominator

Florida

Boxy women flip-flops
pedicure tiny paintings
grasp the ground by proxy

green life relentless
tractors rip out perfect palm trees
men feed their families
keeping the wild at bay

jungle fauna penned in
on either side of the freeway
grows at night anyway

the Cormorants mate for life
giant driftwood nests
in the tops of dead trees

the slippery bark
their moat
from the constant prey
holy tree

Tuesday

The woman
in room five
was beaten
her head
hit the floor
of course there
are children
we all wait
for the social worker
to do
something

his family
keeps calling
from the waiting room
we can only keep
her so long
he will get out
of jail
in seven days
phone numbers
in her pocket
the only weapon
she leaves
with an ice pack
on her head

Upper Klamath Lake

The cold doesn't fuck around
paint better be sealed
hold on tight
wind will get up under there
pull everything off
leave only the wood
abandoned houses
sloped like giant fallen tree boughs
bark weather scrubbed
bracing for more
even the rain
had better hurry
or lose its chance
its clear pure drops
becoming tiny clumps of hail
dropped from the clouds
birds from the nest
molted precipitation
you can never go home again

Freedom

I tell you
I want it
beg the stars
for it
forbidden lake
cold and deep
arduous to reach
mythic and bloodied
by my effort

there are the battles
I design
soldiers placed just so
lunging bayonettes
to make sure God
is watching

to simply let go
a dulled finale
sword dropped
the quiet foreign
sound of no one
when a crescendo
was always the thing

Dawn

The birds

the birds

the birds

spill

light

tipped over

paint can color

silent

river sure

morning cars rise and fall

wave form

bell curve

freeway

last lull

the birds

underneath

Spring Tree

Translucent soft ovals

flee willingly

tiny pink petals stick to the sidewalks

rest in the curve of car windshields

resist captivity

of hearth and vase

wind and rain

able to singe them away

whims of spring

brief and stunning

beauty at a moment's notice

only appears everlasting

after waiting so long

Kindness

I held those babies
before they believed they could
when they were unknown
but arrived anyway
eyes in the dark
coal burning vision
all comers into their sight
the lap of your body
is all that has ever been known

take the first hand extended
reach the *more* snow blind

an edge exists
a fall that soundlessly comes
cannot be unseen
once felt in the body
avalanche slip
all arms widen
even if a stranger
is the only one
we can touch

Black Crow Mind

Black crow mind
branch grasping judgment tree
bad boy caw
primer flat black
Impala parked
at the end of the street
survey the innocence
I can wait you out

purity attracts
shiny object possession
nine-tenths of the law
black feathered wing
color saturation
a gleaming in its own right

Birds I Used to Know

Birds I used to know
the name of
now sound like colors
their invisible frequencies
tiny Crayola songs

the wood cabinet on the deck
slams in the wind
nailed together
by my ex-husband
its loosened door
a litany of the unfinished
marriage of the unsaid

squirrels hand fed
by my neighbor
dig up my lemon tree
fur tailed arrogance
dirt flipped onto the wood slats

humming bird beak stilled
floating in rapid slow motion
it always finds
the heart of the flower

Landscape

What is deep in my blood
Is not the blue water of Mexico

or lush Hawaiian lands
scarred with lava fields

my earth is home
to unkempt ivy vines

green and white leaves pushing
through triangles

of cyclone fence
under the freeway

borders of eucalyptus
shading an abandoned cabbage field

yellow chamomile buds
crack the asphalt

of my grade school field
my brother's bicycle left

for weeks on the bike rack
our father's rage renewed

each day it hung there
redemption possible

until it was finally gone
day arrives

from my back door
a flock of birds lift

ripple silver off

the telephone line

I walk the neighborhood streets
Solace of repetition

prayers uttered
to hold this everything

Lattice

Adore
so much mystery
childhood
nostalgia for the non sense
that necessarily
points to something
you must know

everything feels like a fable
darkness of death
not everlasting
or yet embedded
deep in your skin

each one does leave a hole
you feel it
but maybe it doesn't
need to be filled
with tireless acceptance
rather a mesh
lattice of negative space

earth light
moves in and out freely
like tiny bright fish
swimming
through portals of grief
soft burrs of felty green
adhere to the curved surface
of what they once were

Whisper

You have to whisper
early in the morning
the small light demands it
short clipped sounds
of the bats calling time
going back to where
ever bats go after

natural night
when the layer of
beings is thinned
consisting mainly
of those trying to
leave their minds
and those whose
job it is to keep
them here a little
while longer

Panorama

Bandwidth was discovered somewhere out in the woods morphed in the moss in
the dew lost necessity of the always terrain you know the way broad essential
aching roam to hide your freedom of mind created fallow fields a holding space
yearned to dissolve evaporated tree line collar of warmth safety in the leaves that
fall their rub and shake teller of weather the only change not fought see the skyline
Wabi-Sabi roof edges crisscrossed wires traces of build and break *if it ain't broke*

White
(for Joseph Roth)

hotel white
sheets crisp no dander no human trace
white bathroom sleek and slick nothing to adhere to
white porcelain sterile drain pings with the trace of nothing
no dusk motes habits disturbed your histories no time to land

white as hygiene
all that cleaning hard to reach
people who wear white deserve to get dirty
white wash hide the nature implied in woods in trees
hairy roots upending the road to civilization
out or in
supernatural fear of the forest
wolfin white of safety white of purity white of death
immaculate anonymity

City Trees

No family seeds of
generations stored barn warm
to weather the winter
(there is no winter here)
my people fled to London and Belfast
never worked the land again

beyond our faded wood deck
a lone redwood tree
is dying of civilization
western exposure peels the paint
public housing on the far slope
a valley of lofts grown in the divide

you gather seeds
from the city trees
Jacarandas in the Mission
Jacob's Trumpets in the Castro
Lion's Head Maple in a stranger's yard

interred in steamy sandwich bags
stuffed with damp paper towels
we once had a tribe of little potted trees
you carefully moved them every day
following the sun in the apartment

crushed when you left one
on the fire escape
and the rats ate it
during the night

God's Crime Scene

Commandeered spaceship
pulpit skyjack
muted like its women

hide the decay
of leavings
dirty brown mulch

bodied lives eventually return
(you want to blame the process)
medicine a no man's land

absolute of miracles
bald as an arid moon
technological whirring

takes the place
of your prayers
migration lines calling in a favor

God's crime scene
*but you don't
have to look*

away
your closed eyes
will always know

when they reach out
caress your face
one last time

hands
thin branches
of leaving

Things I Didn't Ask For

Panoramic refraction
the things I didn't ask for
the small words gather

I am a pigeon
a brown bird
nameless and imperceptible
fed from the earth
all of my days

round black eye
yellow dot center
rolls around like a wheel

*it is in the darkness
of the eye
that men get lost*

(from Black Elk Speaks)

Identity

As the crow flies
we are a we
found deep in the dirt

herd migration
body to corpse to body
one God the winner

this time
seven-eleven money machine
steam table veld
hands it over

without the cliff of difference
flag in the earth is just that
mirrored back

inherent in the miraculous
me first TV
too close to the pain

Vertebrae of the Expected

Monday comes in a sidelong glance
your lunch
a loveless plastic bag
construction workers begin at dawn
tool belt hammers
hit the back of their legs
they learn to walk
just so

heat of summer a garden
yesterday
an era already
truth a changing display
face it squarely
no climate of soft
terrain still life
the week a spine
vertebrae of the expected

II

Turn

deceptive their skin

their wet mouths

wanting

it is too late

first eye on them

first arms full

you are done for

suckled breasts

body take ever

not hostile

but complete

there is nothing

you wouldn't do

Reflection

Moths in a box
hover above the wooden bottom
insect stick pin
like they are flying
meaning discerned
in the languor of capture

nomenclature for things
we think we know
species accounted for
meaning needed
for any reckoning

*the body needs
resonance to guide it*

severed history
who collects it

*nothing means anything
in and of itself*

peering windows
family in captivity
no need for any truths
lineage contracted
first reflection
sought flesh deep
rarified species
verified

The Point of Light

I seek this place of you
still wondering
where to find
the needed resonance

to touch
your disappearing current

the point of light
you started is
my body

I end up begging
Peering in windows
For home
Life a transgression
Without your reflection

Photo

There was a photo in a box of letters to our dead it was
of a bird in the sky off center and almost like a speck like a
picture a child might take before knowing about looking

the bird I knew about the sky photos were rare then
school pictures once a year in their large envelopes the
crinkly cellophane window unglued and fluttering in the

file cabinet drawer for each of us our names written in
his sideways cursive memory was going to have to
suffice my sister in charge of all infractions my father the

holder of our failure to adapt to her absence my sister's
tiny body would always remember the pressure of her
arms as she held her close to her chest like a flower and

its bee how do you decide with so many petals such
perfect newborn flowery skin in the air there is another
trail to follow outside of language and the heart of buds

still firm and supple on the branch even when the wind
refuses heels dug into the dirt earth of her vanishing
body dreams at night laced in the color of our longing

Sister
(for Tonya)

I know next to nothing
but I know
across the miles of silence
we both inhabit
adult the country we now call home
body memory still
can be found spooning
flannel rosette night gowns
silent listening
when the night was loud
we were the tiny birds
vibrations
to wade through
moving in the dark
finding her

girl island
matching dresses
skinny legs
holding hands
was holding
yourself

Douleur Feminine

No just means not right now
once a year
who is it really for

your hair was white blond
fine and straight
mine dried grass yellow

no chink in the armor
silence the equivalent
my capacity for waiting

territory covered
yours the fortitude
of remembrance

each anchor injurious
douleur feminine
hefted into the water

thud and cloud
shoals of shallow sandbank
schools of family slights

flick and turn
silver missives dispatched
darting into deeper water

Ghost Boys

Hold that baby
rock pebble womb
dry dust hillside
vantage points
sometimes backfire

mothers of sons
long for summer
green blue water
the only menace
thin perfect bodies
gleaming wet
dive from the rocks
they tell them not to

man hands
man bodies
walk the streets
look like the enemy
to some
none can see their soft
young skin selves
ghost boys walking

The Body

Taught early that naked
is wrong
especially girls
men wanted something
that can't be named
but I could somehow cause

fully clothed I ran
into the wind
climbed up trees
ate the ants that fell
into my mouth

my new breasts revealed
too much world
my joining it forced
plight of the womb
you told me was mine
when I bled

this new body
catalogue of whose longing
our mothers
left us held
in bone of course
I can make a person
No matter what they do

Wolf Pack

Before dawn my family swims to me
in the last of the bruised night air
birds and bats with their sonar
signals call them forth my dead
brother stays silent as though he has
been in another country all these
years his expected return filmy and
vague he knows better than to
complain my sister swims by rattles
her mesh fins at me and swims away
when I raise my hand to wave we
were a unit then after school like
table and chair not a secret we
wouldn't keep drunkenness stolen
cars and money failing report cards
contraband currency handled by my
eldest brother *don't tell* our father
the enemy keeper asleep in his chair

How Are You a Man

How are you a man six feet
tall and more hands fan out
like pale butter plates large
fingered maws knuckled bone
memory recreating your
father's motions sured and
pointing how are you of me
your tiny hand a ghost print in
my palm lost if I close my
fingers on it in greed and
sullied ownership (my) ghost
boy man body coarse hairs
climb down your smooth flat
belly you pulling your shirt off
in the sun like a prince
happily knowing nothing
calling it all you don't want to
recall my possession don't
need it piercing the soft wind
of the spring day that feels
conquerable a swipe of that
hand flexed of boldened
bodied filaments you think are
yours golden gifts to keep

Secret

We thank you for your cooperation glad handed 60 trail starts there girl last one here carrier of the star's continuation her fair share life's infant quietly bursting forth *I'm sure they did all they could.* Carbon scattered dully what do bones do when silence is decided revulsion animal *who does not have the right to know* save transparency for some other life grief fortress unmovable even in his own dying he asked for her delirium allows the subconscious to run down the halls hospital gown forgotten open in the back time does nothing to hold the volume language of the nothing that was ever said ritualized hush TV dinners the waxy boxes Dada placemats hot apple pie burning the roof of your mouth eat it first anyway act as if take turns being her look for anything you might have missed archeological pawing through his dresser looking for her a bracelet a ring evidence withheld born a thief he will never ask why the stone will fall out and it will feel like murder letters on matching stationary touch the cursive trace the words from her see your name hear her call it

Gonna Tell

Gonna tell my boy don't fall for happiness tumbling from the leafy mouths
of those who would sell it or them that would plummet into the steep ravine
you cause with your skin the shape of your neck much less your mouth lips
like your father grimace and all still form the words nice like even when its
mean

Gonna tell my girl she don't get to be wild roll like a man when the grass
is tall and green blades smell wet creased and bending under the weight
of bodies tranced in the spring air she gotta lay low circumvent like some
current gone wild rouge beneath the radar of men who think they're the
boss hands on their stuff some precious house

gonna tell my girl act like a man but turn your sound down glide and
move quiet like sweet smelling silence like some submarine sonar vision
clear even when the water is murky sightless feelings you gotta trust
never raise your flag only ping above or below the sound waves they
carry avoid their whisperings low to your ground no shiver in their light

gonna tell my boy you raised by me don't fall on them man ways taking
even the dirt as yours pulling the color from the lilacs and lilies and tiny
wild rose don't backward drift down the blue globed edge filled with
your wide river like there ain't no snake in the trees no wolf ready to
take your flesh come inside like when you were my boy

gonna tell my girl nothing about how having a child is like being in
another galaxy and anything you think you knew about love is flat
like Columbus and you will fall off the earth into a mapless place
and when you close your eyes in sleep their brand new skin will
pass across your eyelids tiny embodied magnificence cells dividing
so fast

gonna tell my girl how the church God says he loves all the babies
then carpet bagger gone when rent is due baby up all night hoarding
her body while the man always gets to sleep how you become invisible
once that baby sitting on your hip you belong to it cars go by trains
too you cooking dinner and tomorrow washing up just the same

gonna tell my boy I fed him on sorrow his life a depth I swore I'd
never go but it must have been dream talk agreed to by the ones
who know what we all gotta do revealed in the path of winged
insects haphazardly hiding the truth in a trail of stirred air mother
me float me to my babies with their white hair the wind

gonna tell my girl distance is her freedom at first land mass the
necessity from all that physicality so clumsy history's insistence
to call it memory she holds the eye truth knows the urge must be
kindness as if to a child who just has to touch it finger to the fire
she grasps life redirected into her long fingers

Ice Cube

There was that time
in our childhood
when my sister
swallowed an ice
cube she stopped
her laughter and
lay down on her
twin bed and
put a blanket on
her stomach
worried like when
you swallow a hair
and you know it
ties up your
intestines and you
dies surely
something as
foreign as ice must
have the same sort
of strange
properties she
looked up at the
ceiling her feet in
their fuzzy eared
slippers pulled
close together and
was silent the forty-
five we were
listening to *Never
on a Sunday* on our
new record player
meeting its sandy
sounding end over
and over I sat on
my bed across from
her and waited for
something to
change it's not
funny she said I know I said

The Cigar Box

The cigar box was one of those cheap cardboard ones we would take turns getting from *Emil's Villa* the rib place our father liked so much the hostess knew our names I can remember eating there when I was so small they just fed me their crumbs it was a tiny victory when I got to place my own order promising to eat it all the box was filled with letters from my father and grandmother to David my wolf brother living at Hannah Boy's Center the brochure said it was a home for neglected and troubled boys I imagine they have changed the copy since then the box was a dead letter box all of them gone I recognized my grandmother's shaky scrawl and my father's sideways cursive which I studied extensively and copied in high school as needed one of us I think it was my sister found a giant rubber band to place around the box maybe to keep in the spidery electro shock of the dead their words of the weather fading on the page and David's silence holding

Apple Eye

to say I am a daddy's girl
is true

rage blossoms out
of my mouth

Absence

High touch of a light never
unsullied her shadowy hues
memories seen mostly in
dreams or states of longing so
vast and barren the heft of it a
darkened tangle like some
Dutch master's painting of
toiling village life left in the
town square we were a passel
of small brown and gray half
drawn sketches arms and legs
knotted permanently in that un-
space she had to know was
there years of animal self
destruction sometimes you
have to chew to get your leg
free *her absence was her
presence* (then now and always)
felt like a prairie of loss stiff
papery grasses rubbing small
sounds with the wind she
inhabited all our wishes she
was the wish visionary arrival
Our Lady of Guadalupe or Mary
or Quan Yin magnificence come
to explain it all to the
neighborhood school to the jail
where my brother slept to the
hospital corridors waiting for
my father my grandmother
infused with a sterile grief in
spite of the scrubbing where the
death bed vigils now occur she
was never alone accompanied
by grief sloppy and ragged why
choose such a friend we are
known by the company we keep
we wish you could have told us

What to Hold

Our dead do not think
in words

whisper in bird wings
rustle oak leaves

dry grass rasping
the dirt path
morning cooled silvery dust

my mother touched me
that summer morning

I knew it was touch
Though it was nothing like it

Knew it was you
Madrone smooth tree skin

infant head a shell
in your hands

millennium a child
in the curve
of your arm

Made

What man has formed me
father first
I know you held me
had to
dress me
feed me
impatience lodged the despair
like the lover that won't leave
hold me
was extra

(she left us all)

each day lived
to wake a fevered vision
the jungle of babies remained
threatening to swallow
you and the endless us
children in her likeness stung
our eyes her
and the second boy's dark hair
made it hard to breath
his boy smile radiated
the dream of her
vibration jarring ghost

your mind of need
where to place the dead
where can they roam
touch the walls of the rooms
they pass through
where is the tribe
you fear too much
to turn to

Leaving
(for my mother)

it has always been
about leaving

you are a phantom
I believe in you utterly

grief my worship
belly full of need

you've had my son
all along

I would have gladly shared
his swaddled sweet body

tiny palms open
any proximity to you

the driest thirst
vacuum of time

the last to know
of your alliance

tell me everything

anything a beginning
this essential lack

crumbs only
tease and betray

I can taste it
the wind
the smallest current

hand on the doorknob

all who go
are you leaving

It takes a Long Time to Die

It takes a long time to die
I remember my brother
ventilator at his throat
cloth ties like a necklace
he thrashed with his eyes closed
his large body
diapered
an intimacy
I did not ask for
elbows and knees
bent like a giant sleeping insect
translucent wings stilled
the hospital bed
now his sky
to roam

Mary

Memory is the fabled land of consequences symbolism gone naked and
rogue tomorrow is my sister's birthday I will call her and she won't
answer a code we have worked out sibling speak no mention of the
vestiges of knee socks and matching green plaid dresses shorts hidden
underneath our camouflage from the pack of shaming boy animals the
whistling yard duties we just kept spinning on the monkey bars walking
up the slides backwards jumping out of the swings when they reached
the highest point speed like a cannon ball even while wearing a pilly pearl
buttoned sweater covered in cartoon cats and ruffled skirt she was always
good at dodge ball standing in line waiting for the next kid to get knocked
out so she could advance silence her weapon she couldn't tell me how

III

Truths

simple is safety keep your hands to yourself no such thing as
always invisible touching fine hairs like thread of all that rushes
in what the eye sees converted rods and cones flip it reversed
information song always colors itself in the bend of the light
morphs but says it is reflection merely reporting back carry
only what is seen take only what you can carry no wood no
foundation of stone cool and white no bread of hearth born
heat spare me your creation myth I only came here to pray

Sea of Green

Odd how the summer
became littered
with deaths
when the sea of green leaves
were so brilliant
they made your jaw ache
when a cloud of blossoms
in a sad field
made you see something else
just for a moment
even if only lupine
or thin yellow flowers
of the mustard weeds
shadowing the broken glass
and decaying plastic bags
which tore in the wind
thinned and brittle
like some kind of wing

Riptide

The mind loves a good pattern ocean mirroring the curve of the land it seems beautiful from the cliffs life looks safe timed just right ripple and flow of the water colors more those of a still life timed out beauty habit to pacify it immediate mystery placed behind a lens boundary of splendor for the land's simple incomprehensible line

cold dirty blue gray tides of the pacific never a contest brilliant blues aqua of the Atlantic the northwest a working class ocean mean and unreachable 'never turn your back on the ocean' my father told me and I told my own children my tiny daughter knocked down and dragged into the surf one Sunday my son grabbed her by the arm as a plane of water slid her by us pulling fast for the larger sea

best to swim around the eddy of riptide circle of water that can pull you from below even as you paddle with the last fumes of land in your arms muscles burning in feathery movement keep in line with a spot on the horizon a telephone pole a bright house a tall tree there to keep an eye on your body the land watching helpless and knowing

Half Light

Half-light
incandescent wilderness
look what King Tut had

bicycle hidden in the weeds
anthropologist eye

observe mankind
in his natural surroundings

clean your heart
command love
click and enter
save as
pitch

perfect ideal
wider the corral

elimination of
the last myth

fireball
sea grass
blowhole
hidden nest

you are sure
you saw it
once

Transgression

gentle transgression

phrase in a book

voice in a commercial

visual save

mind italicizing

look here

does one cancel out

the other

paradox softness of hand

also bent in harm

no matter how small

category of permission

consent in the skin

for our (expected) wrongs

leeway for

past merit

premise that love

can bend

all the law you build

flush linked and irrefutable

established allowance

neutralize tiny travesties

which is the lapse

insect bodies flattened

on the windshield

smattered headlights

crushed still warm with miles
tiny bodies

infinitesimal shadows
on the latticed globes

what makes yours
an indiscretion

speeding downhill
commission of bodily offense

a fireball building
on the mantle of sin

you didn't know
you stood before

well being exploded
all causality

entropy brings
motion to rest

at the feet of your beloved
arrow shot high

arc up into the sky
freedom emblematic

flight back down
to earth

besides the point
the tip still sharp

piercing in its stop
somewhere in your woods

rotting branches muffle
hold any sound

Found objects

The democratic approach to good and not so good
 the we of thieves everyday saints of nothing new
 free for the taking all symbols filaments of light

you don't talk about a woman after she dies her shape
 her body the conduit welded in place in shin in bone in mind
 that first star your beautiful face your eyes your hands

your family's light and theirs and theirs *infinity* transmitted
 to you even if you drop it even if you follow some unseen
 pain giant black steam engine roaring over the prairie

burnt grass meant for animals for gazelle
 for buffalo conquest flesh over blood colossal
 there is that light *infinity* tiny threads hold its place

indifferent to our hubris never leaving being makes sense
 in the animal dark dawn congeals molten slow flame
 breaks the torpor *shape becomes the shape that holds it*

not the other way round

Murmurations

Murmuration-

1. an act or instance of murmuring
2. a flock of starlings

I want to see it in the sky darkened with wings *sort sol* Danish for black sun the turning animal unison split second shape shifting celestial flock no one wants to land first bird reaction time seconds key equation of recognition eerie circling confusion best turn on a dime feather and bone disappear between geometry and home no starling wants to be on the edge of the drawing flock confusion an ink blot just focus on the thing it is made of cranes scratch and lift feathers spangled white spots that glow survey the signposts invitation to a safety the roost in blizzard form snow geese blot out the idea of sky vast masses awe beating wings each day a pilgrimage language fails just not needed strings of notation watch the cranes at dusk allure of the flocking long neck of its being lost in the clamoring astonishment ever increasing block of autumn here they come overhead whisper in the energy of flight baying hound sound cry bugle call in the din others and there are others behind them binoculars like a talisman around your neck

Highway 5 (I)

Rain for rent pickers in thick plastic aprons arrive in dirty beige buses prison issue all comfort forfeited swelter on the rise of dirt above the fields of broccoli of onions of cotton of spindly young vineyards the next new money plant twinning branches thriving in the dry soil the hot sun fading the wooden trellises gray and lifeless white maybe emptied spectrum color is extra color is care is moneyed brown nameless birds perch stilled on a wire their body weight distorts the arc with a sag Huron Atwater Merced Jane Avenue next exit Pleasantville Correction Facility thirty-five miles Arrow up wealth arrow down earth who decides water allocation Judgment of the orchards implicate the corn cotton got complicated A long time ago going to a silo to wait it out hand to mouth hand me Down truth sour of the orange breed out the seeds doesn't all get Eaten anyway so much food grows scarcity greed only the dead keep

Highway 5 (II)

Lake bottom Stockton to Bakersfield to Palm Springs river silt
offers all orange trees full and ready drag the ground rows of
large leafy women in bumpy green dresses miles of almond
orchards how much water does an almond tree need *trust in*
Jesus congress created the dust bowl use the sky blue water tanks
laid low cornering the leaf tidied shade rows prickly slender
leaves land in artful Japanese randomness lace the dirt topsoil
blown continually across the valley echoed dull vibrancy true to
scale even the sky is whitish no particular color water a waiting
ritual and magic more than a passing thought *water equals work*
walnut trees their ghost trees stand between the living soundless
rows of crumbling mate s felled and disheveled the ground
receives them limb by limb failed windbreak leafless finger bone
trees see the plan once future idea Yucca plants of the San
Gabriels survive the mud slides bloom rare red flowers only after
A burn subsist their given almost nothing membrane of patience
All tolerance for the dead and their need to finish with the story

The inadequacy of Language

Morning commences
before the light
disappears the remaining dark edges

night veiled torpor
prickly from too many hours on its own

resounding bellied thud
dream fueled psyche

shaken loose floats away
shooed gnat like by the breeze

sullied shapes fall off
the growing horizon of day

dream soured bed clothes
dog tailed thump bounding legs
bird call emulsifies daylight
in its throat a bulging

single noted loop dropped into the air
from the unfallen world

searching for repletion
missive thrown out

love letter to the world
from the limbs of the trees

Cymbals of Love

cymbals
love
marriage
blindness
hair
hail
hat
Florida
feather
millinery
cherry
berry
child
sight
greed
takes
all
never
enough

baby Blue Dream

baby blue dream
only it is me
I want them to squeeze harder
tell them the blue is too dark
still see my own infant eyes
wide a bruised pink climbing
my shoulder that's good
man's talisman
to the dirt
the ground
off center blue drifting

the tiny heart chamber
pumps like falling
into that first breath
bounding
in the tiny red walls
soft as paper
why am I looking

circulating voices murmur sweet
simple clear care of a pup
a cub
a foundling baby bird
in a cardboard box
someone wants to keep

Enough

I didn't want his name close to my heart bite back for the wound I know you couldn't give if you tried your own hunger fed a diet of silence slicing across the thick early morning air where dreams and their children pad around silently settling with the dawn slipping into the shadows made by the sun its litany annoying *you don't need any more time* that strange feeling is peace all this contentment foreign filling a space that was not there I know I checked *I'm in the middle of a miracle* and I still need to know why didn't you check on me boy cloud hazing low and thin over a high country meadow memory stirred in the light warming the dirt smear left by the speckled granite earth sliding and gouging all in its wake this will pass too so open your pale arms and crow with crumpled half thawed wings tumbling towards this earthy heaven bounce ascension high gravity and mass are yours all ever named on your heart

Underbrush Memory Life Mask

Grief is a big legged animal trolling the underbrush memory life mask body of
fear born in the walls of the caves far from the idea of home dwell now safety
Hewn in the dark spark and collide hammer and stone in prayer hands solid large
as some limits

Clock bells chime counter clock wise hours days and the requisite year widow
In a black dress decades after a clearer comprehension is it she that holds onto it
prayer the ointment the salve a bigger reservoir spilling its banks worry the
blindfold the amulet furrow the brow and dodge the given all temporal life love
feels real permanent enshrinement taboo to let go when and if at all man's
misunderstanding creates the necessary ecology eulogy a scattering of leaves

Reliquaries

Because we have to always know of this

show me the women
 breasts carved full in offering
 museum dark air
 river of whose history

Show me the women
 I have no tether
 seven-headed mask
 shrine to the warrior

I need to see the mother drum
 prominent breasts on its sides
 beat in death and grief

spirit masks in bone and feather
mother of the men's house
 dreams tell all
 history of the continents *thine*

show me the women
 what to carve understood
 lurking in the curved branches
 mangrove forest
 seer-like
 time transposable
 entering and leaving
 the body

Sunny Day

Sunny day wandered in sat
in a brown folding chair
hands quiet in his lap red
faced from being a sunny day
trees rule the world if you
stop to think about it his eyes
wide like the sky innocence
dug up from deep inside his
sidewalk bed bound blue like
peace like the bliss of finally
knowing that this life might
end badly for him his sky or
the trees they breathe before
we do like birth or mother
make it all possible rumbling
bark like types of hair curly
fine soft or straight coarse
and cruel Darwin spoke for
the trees though most remember
the tiny birds yellow fine lined
finches evolving beaks cracking
seeds floating ambassador
calling to the brains of men God
did this and this pointing to some
steam engine bible in the crook
of a woman's arm watch anyone
near a tree animal impulse
hand reaching out touching
the trunk saying I remember
I knew it was you all along
holding the secrets we foolishly
think we need to keep I owe
you dear one make me new

Dust

There is a chant for the small deaths the moments in a day when one might occur barbs shot out of our mouths that land hanging off an arm a limb blinders like horses we don't see them don't count them except before sleep when little nuggets of malice bubble up bonafide provisions you can't not do who prays then for the loss that is with every waking moment but we think it is wrong feel harm in the wind of its simple movement forget that it is just the dawn and then the dusk when cracks allow such an entry filaments hair fine that don't bleed when broken instead reform in the failing light filled with dust motes and wishes and the favored stories haven of safety mythical and soft that lovingly pushes you out into the light of the street lamp warming your footsteps here is where you are no where else

body Map

fear is a thief antennae of love
but not that way
catalyzed liberation

chaos of familiarity
beyond the secret fire
the breasts remain a contradiction

lived sites of meaning
curved and beckoning
hardened the mouth seeks them

in heat and hunger
ripened full milk of meaning
grid of history fed

reach the inner arm
hold sway fight the crawl
vulnerability inching down the leg

knobby muscled thigh and hair
why meet only with fear
strike with eyes squeezed shut

out the invisible sentences
paragraphed books
volume of needed meaning

the vagina the line break
words scatter
climb up the ladder of spine

knobs of vertebrae make it easy
words vine to reach the skull
but that is all you get tightly coiled origin not the point

Summer Woods

Before the time comes is the vigil of sickness sitting by the bedside Kleenex and plastic cups of forgotten water and Gatorade red child-like cheery colors supplant the truth that the living feel must be fled of as though that were part of the agreement but the dying always know it they grow impatient with the words of salvation that float in the room up into the stale air on the visitor's exhalation floating down with the gravity of everyone anyway in the inward tug and thorough silence that comes when words no longer form on their lips but some might go in an instant on a trail in the summer woods hiking in the late afternoon dog at their side the hospital workers smoke across the street one leg raised against the wall cell phone screen companion of light proof there is someone there people to whom we belong the fog and the wind mark the coming dusk street light lanterns on the empty playground sometimes there is no need for deep sorrow for some life has unfurled its banner fully an arc like the red of the sky on the lined edges of the land the eye draws there dusk an event included the darkness that comes merely following the turn and roll of the sun a bigger star of the unending heart of being

Formulaic

You blame us for the seed babies
everyone else was a legitimate citizen
of the nation of family
known best by its mother face
pillar of body
mind breasted heart
all the world's should
scheduled into the frontier
newly held in the fence of matrimony's what
would that it should hold this
scatter of sky
formulaic
Dresden sadness
when you want more

Pool

Swimming pool comfort blue even though the life guard looks angry at his post thick jacket and flip flops what part of his life is he replaying eyes open and unseeing certain the lap swimmers won't drown new swimmers emerge from the locker room pause at the top of the stairs like African birds finally reaching a lake a pond a river bend shiny synthetic caps fronds growing out of their heads wrinkles of yellow silver blue and waxy pink stepping towards the water the soles of their feet arch as they pad tentatively to the cement edge a symphonic splash no matter what follows