

Migration

She says she's leaving.
All I hear is night air
whistling through windows
along the miles I carved
on highways from Texas
to her side,
dark, hurricane-season winds
whipping up my gray poncho
outside a Pensacola rest stop,
the dusky shadows
stretching out like
spirit-guide petroglyphs
shamans, demon-eaters
behind the truck's tail lights,
tall, broad-shouldered, armless.
Dad humming softly at the wheel.

In the fading snapshot on my dresser,
our parents stand on a street as
familiar as her snores across the hall.
They are young, looking past
the rim of the frame, flowers
reaching for the sun and each other.
I'm older than Mom was then,
wary of roots, no place a
home too long.
Their union
created only her and me,
and now we slip apart
like laced fingers leaving
the clasp one by one,
seeking their own denim cave.

It's raining this afternoon, and wind
sways in the trees outside my window—
hurricane season—but when I dream it's
tornadoes on the plains and I don't even
try to hold myself down,
I just let my fingers curl up
and fly away.

Momentum

In those days I was a freight train
storming down the tracks.
I was steel and steam,
a force, a motion.
Maybe you knew me then,
maybe you felt my engines,
heard my lonely call.
Maybe you saw my eye
beaming down the rails,
smelled the oil
burning in my belly,
kept count of each connected car.

You were young on the plains
when I whistled or
perhaps you were the plains.
I was a traveler,
I knew my destination.
It was written on white pages
at the station, inside me,
the paths cut across
the pale page like rails spiked
through the plains, and I rode
them from stop to stop,
inking the skin of the earth,
through the strange still,
through the nights,
under mountains,
through cities, going somewhere.
I was somewhere.

Daybreak

In Texas the morning sky glows
cerulean blue like a giant screen waiting
for day's first slide to flash onto
the scene, to form its blank face
into who it will come to be.

Not so in Chicago, where the gray
mornings dribble in their sleep,
clutch their pillows and loss of
mind, retreat inward to a shadowy
skyline of finger-shaped caves
pointing forever at heaven from
cement moorings of disbelief.

They line the sky as a charcoal
sketch half rubbed out, a marriage
of precise lines and amorphous
shadow that elope, heady and arrogant,
across the page.

But these Texas mornings are watercolors
bleeding gently into open sky,
seeping through the roots and tendrils
of the growing things,
coloring the white of my bones
and my gray cloud of dreams.
Could you desire more than
this brilliance, color and light finding
hands clasped together
at dawn, anticipating the promise
of what's to come?

Bird Watching, Datil, NM

The grackles carefully parting the earth
with their beaks are meticulous, leaving no
small knoll unturned, thoughtless of Earth's
modesty, ripping her grass panties,
thrusting with their black beaks to emerge with
a worm, a beetle, some prize-worthy umbilical
cord of flesh that curls defensively back on itself
before it's gulped down with a slight shudder
of feathers, two cursory bobs of the head.

Later, as a group of them finds its way together
in the sun, one after another fluffs tail and wings,
sings a screeching song, runs towards
its neighbors with neck outstretched,
pupils dilated, medieval knights
on horseback with lances out. Then,
just as suddenly, they stretch their faces skyward,
still croaking, some odd cult
receiving a message from God through the dirt.

Primal, lusty, unrestrained, the birds
are pure action, shiny black instinct embodied.
One, bigger than the rest, begins a halting
dance, hopping now in a relay
round the others, who follow suit, a tribal rite,
claws and toes drumming a soft beat.
If they fly now they will rise as one, as
a centered thought,
a dark sail lifting in the wind.

Trinity

If these stars could lead me
home it would be in a
pickup after midnight
road song on the radio
air racing through my hair
faster than breath or the
coming of dawn driven and
hungry like we are
to consume some life
or youth or shared space
if I could stop my heart for
just one beat
and sail on the space in between
if it were a little darker or holier
and I took the wafer
moon on my tongue
like a body and
gulped the air like blood
could I be more aware of the pulse
we measure down this
white-striped vein would
we become a pumping
time-keeper in the shallow
hollow of throat or
wrist of this cottony night
and could I find for just one second
the right way to keep from trembling
in the splendor of too much god
and too few words
would you find me kneeling
in the morning
worn to ragged breathing
like this was the first
time anyone tried to run down
the ghost of night driving, took
too long to get home
almost started confessing
feeling blessed and unworthy
and awed.

