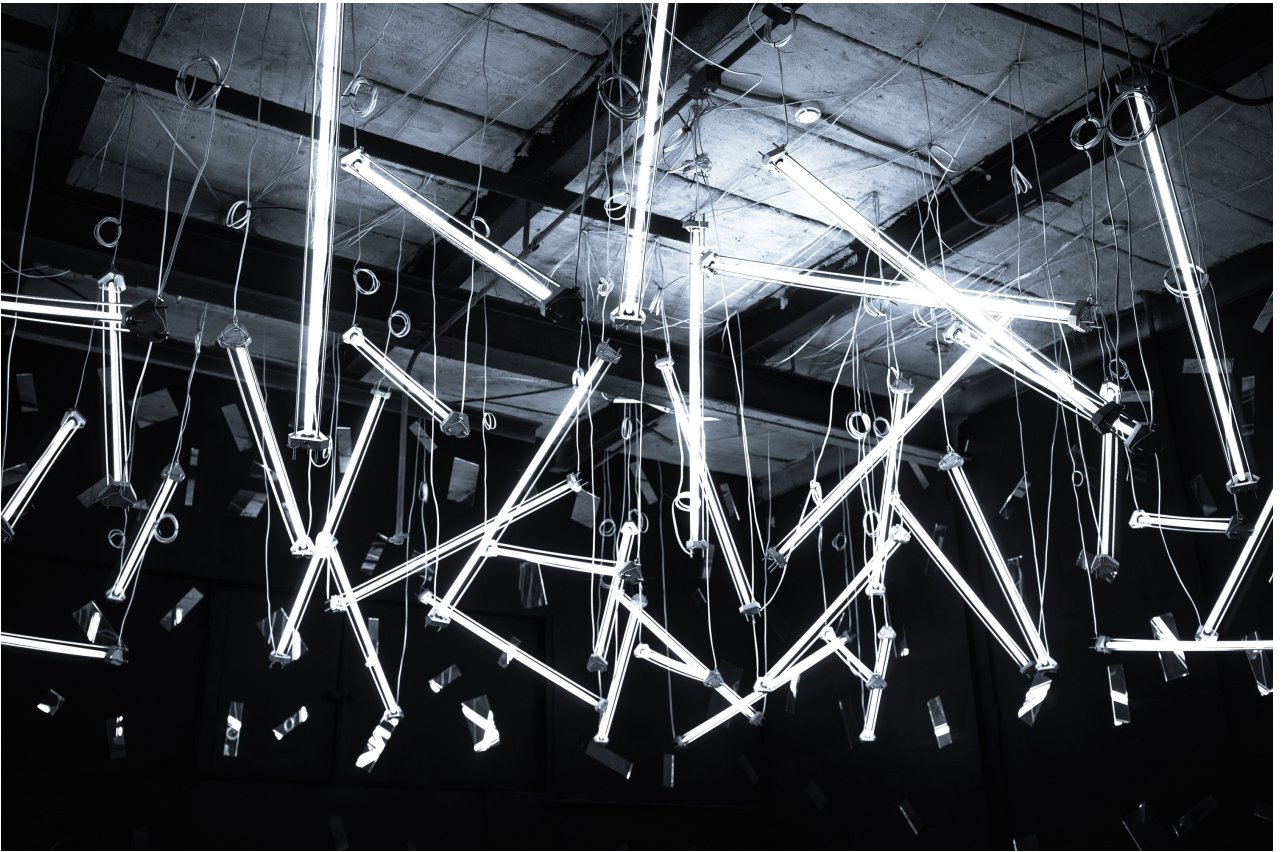


LEFT

POEMS FROM THE HEARTH

OVERS



A poetry collection by
Charles Snyder

LEFT

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OVERS

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THE HEARTH

Thank you for downloading my free poetry collection! ***LEFT OVERS: Poems from the Hearth***. In it you will find poems I have written over the years starting as far back as 2011 when I began writing poetry in Long Beach, California. Pieces I wrote during VONA Voices and in Spain.

When I used to practice Christianity, there was a passage I loved, roughly stated goes: I go into the furnace and come out shining as pure gold. Like alchemy, these poems are essentially snapshots of the process of shedding, healing, and growing.

I have to thank all of my friends and colleagues who have read these poems over the years and have helped them become what they are presently. To the literary magazines: Abernathy Magazine (***Bluegrass Return, Black Cicada***) and A Gypsy's journal (***Vagabond Dreams of the Otherside***) for being the first places to publish my poetry, thank you for the support and encouragement.

Warm regards,

Charles Snyder



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The freight of my travels as
Philly or New Castle beneath this
Train track heading to

The means of freedom
Out of blame out of
Hurt out of
Doubt out of cycle hereditary
Just that out

But I got out tree
Root below may
Have even chewed on tooth
Chipped crevices may have hid
In the before
I may have crawled there

I like to walk at night
Because I know I am
The brightest light on the block

When you are beauty you can
walk in the night on
Old hound stone truths
Shaded or lit and be

Radiant

BLUEGRASS RETURN*

FOR GREG

I listen to the wind that obliterates my traces. -Steve Roden

Blood

Can't wash away my

& Wind

Obliterate this soul Lord

I cannot rid this skin Kentucky

I prodigal son

I native son

Bluegrass State

Who doesn't like flowers?

My taste buds

Baring yellow tulip flowers tang

Fiddle trees

To the next generation

& Daughter to pass on my healing story

Looking for my new reflection baptismal oil

Into sea Kentucky I go plunge

Cigarette burns blue too damn fast

Never sounded sweeter

Sylvester Weaver's laments

Father-Goddamn

Family a lifetime burden

Obliterates my soul

In my new world
Memory notes/wind travel

The older know better than to dream
To learn who they are
Youths burning desire
Better suited for younger bones

Trying to forget these roots
Brother flower into father
Bluegrass Louisville pain
Oceans Bloom

I still remember
My pain vow
Soul yoke blue
Pricking four string guitars

Standing with me shimmering
Some good memory
Eclipse Kentucky Plight
But Ancestry

Now for Sister
Only for Daughter
Now I go back
Home has no heart quarter

Like a soul record
Hitting home
Onto screens of cigarette smoke
Nostalgia

I never intended to go back

VAGABOND DREAMS OF THE OTHER SIDE*

09

From it
I'd like to be
If I could score
A fuckin' good job
I hate this bus
I was embarrassed
See this shit
And was praying he didn't get off at
My stop then
I missed my stop cuz he wouldn't get up
An aorta knocked on my throat
Sweat avalanched curled my nose
Lakes for armpits
My shoulder several times
He jabbed his forearm into
I'm afraid of drunkards
Boxed me in
The drunk next door
Of my loathing I guess
Lost the momentum
Broke thoughts
Screech of dry breaks
Wish the air turned to avocado
But after bills
It comes at the end of every month
Dumpster dive &
Mana doesn't fall from the sky no more
Water bread
Wallet like empty fridge double takes
Broke

Of that space he too wants to escape
Pad stomach is eating its way out
Skull hand forearm paper
Scribbling poems
On neighbors rot
Enflaming my asthma choking
Red suffocate this LA heat
Sun side of my face baked up
3 on a the latte
Shouldn'tuh spent that last
Can I live jus' a lil' bit
I just want to live like a real person, like a
free person
Dope smoked up my rent money
Broke faces
I see all the other sad
Turning over in this riding
Sarcophagus

PROCESS OF BEING ZEN

Have you ever seen

LA its true nature?

The backside

The warehouses

The meat processing plants

In the afternoon desert heat

It smells like

Ungodliness

Like Earth dying

Like god carcass maggoting

Like hot bile & hot shit & well

There are meat processing plants

There

Trick

About beating that heat

Constant

That wears on you

Remember what they tell u

U ain't real

No ways so all of this can't be real;

Consent; take rest in the fact that

My wick, your wick too will one day

Run its last sun cycle

And won't have to pound

This concrete no more,

Because what's the point of resistance

When it don't pay the bills no way?

On each of our faces

The crow's feet of time.

In This, like a

The divining rod;

Wearing

The

Humble sack.

then see

That bridge over a disgrace

Rivers the

Cracked factory knuckles

The scarred nape red and brown

Burned Clay, yo a gold tooth!

U want to know who the real life

Custodians of LA are?

The ones greasing those cogs to

Keep its face on

Behind the city

Like the apparatus behind

The camera on set its

Operators colored folk & immigrants

But

LA is dying

Its rotting;

BITTER PILL



I
Emptied myself clean
Until belly raw disgust
Nothing left Emptied myself clean
Shame I felt dirty until belly raw disgust Emptied myself clean
Nothing left Until belly raw disgust
Used cum receptacle Shame I felt dirty Nothing left
Flushed it down Shame I felt dirty
I was for her some kind of fuck
Flushed it down Used cum receptacle
Whatever was left of me flushed it down
I balled it up I was for her some kind of fuck
And buried so deep that no one
I balled it up Whatever was left of me
Could access And buried so, so deep that no one
Shrivel purity And buried so, so deep that no one
More than anything I was hurt
Shrivel purity Could access
I felt used More than anything shrives purity
She said More than anything I was hurt
Feelings still for an ex
She said I felt used
Queasy on the car ride home She said
Smell of bad sex Feelings still for an ex
Like rotting plumbs
Smell of bad sex Queasy on the car ride home
Vinegar skull drawings Smell of bad sex
Pictures of her dead mother Like rotting plumbs
Lights flashed yellow streaks
Pictures of her dead vinegar skull drawings
Head rolling in the road bumps Pictures of her dead mother
In space shoulder of seat and Lights flashed yellow streaks
seatbelt Head rolling in the road bumps
Bad breaks shocks seatbelt Head rolling in the road bumps
seatbelt In space shoulder of seat and
Bad breaks shocks seatbelt
Bad breaks shocks

TARPIT

Boy, finds home in a tar pit

Man, tries to atone from writing wrongs of his past

Boy, 8th grade locker room forced to take a shower hunched over his penis
like a secret he wanted to hide

Man, voted yes on 8* he thought it was Christian but a sense of betrayal

Boy, parentified with the world and siblings on his shoulders

Man, tries to painstakingly build boundaries but those walls are paper-thin
He betrays himself at times who he lets in

Boy, felt a certain way about boy touch

Man, has a hard time with Boy's narratives

Boy, have never been 100 percent comfortable in their body

Man, crashes, rocks, swirls, jams his self-worth when no women around

Boy, wants to communicate

Man, does therapy

Man, pocket keeps what he knows: women a catch and release game

Boy, knows why

Man, tells child he's not clean in the tar

Boy, always forgives the man

Man, whiskey mixes absinth some nights to forget

Boy, requests and pleas remind man of unhealed traumas

Man, still has a hard time forgiving abandonment, emotional abuse

Boy, slowly forgives his father and mother

Man, writes poetry now he is learning how to talk to child

Boy, gives offerings up like candles bound in the center of paper squares

Man & Boy build a stairway with rungs of healing and radical acceptance found
The tar pit is a limestone foundation now, chalk-dry storing positive affirmations

Boy, looks at man with pride

Man, tries to manage at times when he is at his lowest, when he can't
find the rungs, he becomes

a tar flood

Drowning himself

Boy, into Man eyes is all it takes to stop him now

From flooding

WINDOW SEAT

Like ink

Spreading its black tentacles

Through rewired water

The IT I can feel plume in

3 AM

It's a full bloomed attack and I rest my warm

temple against the cool window ledge, this

Long Beach-West Side

The racks of wooden striped orange white

Horses and their beacons beaconing

Synchronicity of lights street lamping, tinting

Cedar Street green, red, yellow-the apartment

On the corner staring back at me in split personalities flipping

The fuck out the old school Crips below lamenting about the

Good days, cats painstakingly assay procreation acts

And it's now dawn again 7th night

In a row

LBC port cranes craning their necks serving

Their gods without debate or defiance

A two hour train/bus ride to work

Hive human and swarm sick dead

Linings indifferent

Litmus my

Bloodshot in the jowls

Best years of my life someone had said

Of this empty cappuccino paper cup

Which looks like brown fungal growth

To me

DAY

When I got to LA
Heard dippin' the
Weed into
Formaldehyde
Or animal
Tranquilizers
Was all the
I used to date
This one sister in Carson, CA
During undergrad.

Rage

We saw this brother she hadn't
Seen in a while. Since H.S.

He was hustling to push those
Hard plastic grocery carts
On sweaty black top parking lot,
For tips.

Walks with staggered legs
Stuttering mumbling glass chard
Could've been GEMS
His own name, she said his name, Didn't
register. He did remember her face
though, her face remembers, the brief
pause.

Said he had potential
Said he was the class clown
Said he was capable
Said he had potential
Said he was a nice guy
Said he was capable

15
25
15

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TAUGHT TO BE TAKERS

Taught to be takers
 Not good lovers
 Taught to pander to white-exoticism as right
 Some kind of mythical creature their dark fantasy

Good lovers not
 That, the earth was made for and by dicks
 Some kind of mythical creature in a fantasy they labeled dark
 Taught not to be sensual, vulnerable as a stone pillar

Their earth was made for those who have a dick
 Taut thumb pointed fingers sifting through thousands of videos
 Taught not sensually but vulnerable as a stone pillar
 From her sockets and orifices, clutching to hips, she looks back mouth agape

Taut fingers, thumbs sifting pointedly thousands profiles through
 Into the tributary of thigh crease and scrotum sack
 And sockets, orifices into/from/back hips her mouth agape clutching
 Taut jawline clinched then energy the spill of refuse

Into the tributary of thigh crease, from scrotum sack
 Taut and spraying star glitter on the ceiling from mouth
 Taut jawline clinch-hooked mouth corner the spill of refuse energy
 Taught on signage, monuments, lyric

Taut semen spray as star glitter on the ceiling of mouth learned
 A sickness expecting women to do the labor internal
 Taught on signage, monuments, lyric
 Taught self-worth is an external pill

Sickness expecting a partner to all the labor internal
Taught to self-betray, take the penis as a hoe
Taught self-worth is an external pill
Taught never to use sex-organ as a source for healing

Taught self-betrayals, to hoe the penis
A projection of an inner turmoil wild, wild. mad wild. feral.
Taught sex-organ never healing sources for
It has skewed my view of girlfriends at times

An inner turmoil wild, wild. mad wild. feral projection on
Taut bedsheets of saliva, semen, mucus lonely dazed drunk nights
Has at times skewed, my perception of women
Taught my addiction, now unlearn what's been designed on

A bed of saliva, semen, mucus lonely dazed drunk nights in
the view of a smooth trench curving into wide delta ellipsis, bulb strong
taught my addiction unlearn what's been
A benzocaine and proparacaine affair

The craft of a smooth curving trench, a wide delta ellipsis pulsates
My strong bulb every time I open an incognito tab I want to relapse
A benzocaine and proparacaine affair
Taught to be takers very, very young

WILL YOU RESPECT ME IN THE MORNING

My apartment creeks and cracks taking its first yawn
 Sun kissed, my neighbor's dishes clatter, egg waft,
 An open car door and that piercing beeping, key jingle,
 I lay here, as dawn ivies the sky from night to day,
 My thigh muscles a deck, my chest becomes a lake,
 My brow the crest of a waterfall, and a dense lump in my throat
 As I look over at you sound asleep, I want to wake you, I want to tell
 You everything, instead, I turn over and suffer until this
 New day is made via eye recording sunrise, but quizzical
 Anxious riddled thoughts linger and I wonder:

How do you see me, now?

Am I not worthy of your love, now? I want to defend myself like

I am a flower garden; I just can't bare the crunch
 Of wanton and careless traipsing, the garden gate I've let
 You in maybe prematurely, even if I didn't
 Want a visitor and watering I allowed it anyway
 I self-betray at times for intimacy before I am ready to bloom

I am a child on the bank of the feather river; I am scared to cross
 This quick moving frontier that can drown me in its body
 Of judgment, my strokes, the way I thrash around
 I can't swim well, at times navigate its expectations

I am long corridor with throngs of solid lines and streetlights;
 My ego constructed from the traffic of comings and goings
 Of parental figures and later, lovers. Broken lines after the reveal,
 During intercourse, at climax I am at times the most vulnerable,
 I guess I need to know was I good enough? If I didn't make you come,
 After I tethered my emotions onto you, will you break off our chances for more?
 Maybe I like you more than I should? Maybe I shouldn't have
 built this fantasy world—us, a solid line between co-dependency and validation
 drawn on these delicate corners.

Maybe, I'm not ready. I put a foot on the ground,
Flatten the spinning.

I am a night pool holding moon beams; I know I cannot keep anything
Or anyone for too long, how do I keep your shine? Sustain this feeling
Even when I am bare skin under the surface of this dark room, between,
Inside the slivers of your light.

And at the heart of this:

*If I give you myself this first night in
I don't want you to think I'm easy or
Thirsty*

It's about this nakedness, it's about the flicker of a neuron
And being or being an instrument, it's about the fear of times
Not being the greatest lover, living up to other's expectations,
It's about keeping up a front and the fear of losing it, it's about
Being completely unguarded in the mystery of someone else's eyes,
In their thoughts; I tried to whisper this to you last night:

*If I enter you and by doing so, you enter me
If I pledge to you a heart portion, being bare and bleeding
Will you still accept me naked, open, with fear on my tongue
But the want for love in my heart?*

But I couldn't during the turbulence of it, in the fresh eyes of it,
This body made new again, body was up for review again;
And the fear which comes from vulnerability, I thought:
My body is uninhabited with nothing but bare soul and though
*I reveal my hidden parts on bed sheets facing the dark
With glints of lights peeking through blinds
Only to spot my flaws in the eyes of the night
What will keep you here? Keep you coming back?*

BLACK CICADA*

That change
Can not
A life expectancy
Not revolution

Here I am
Down
I am hunkering
Feelers as nails so
World wills me
Though this die

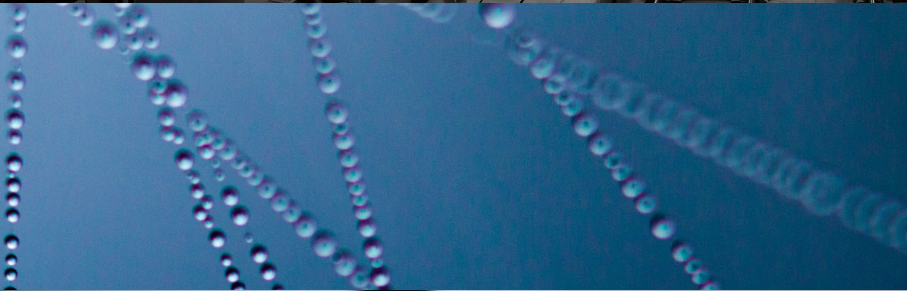
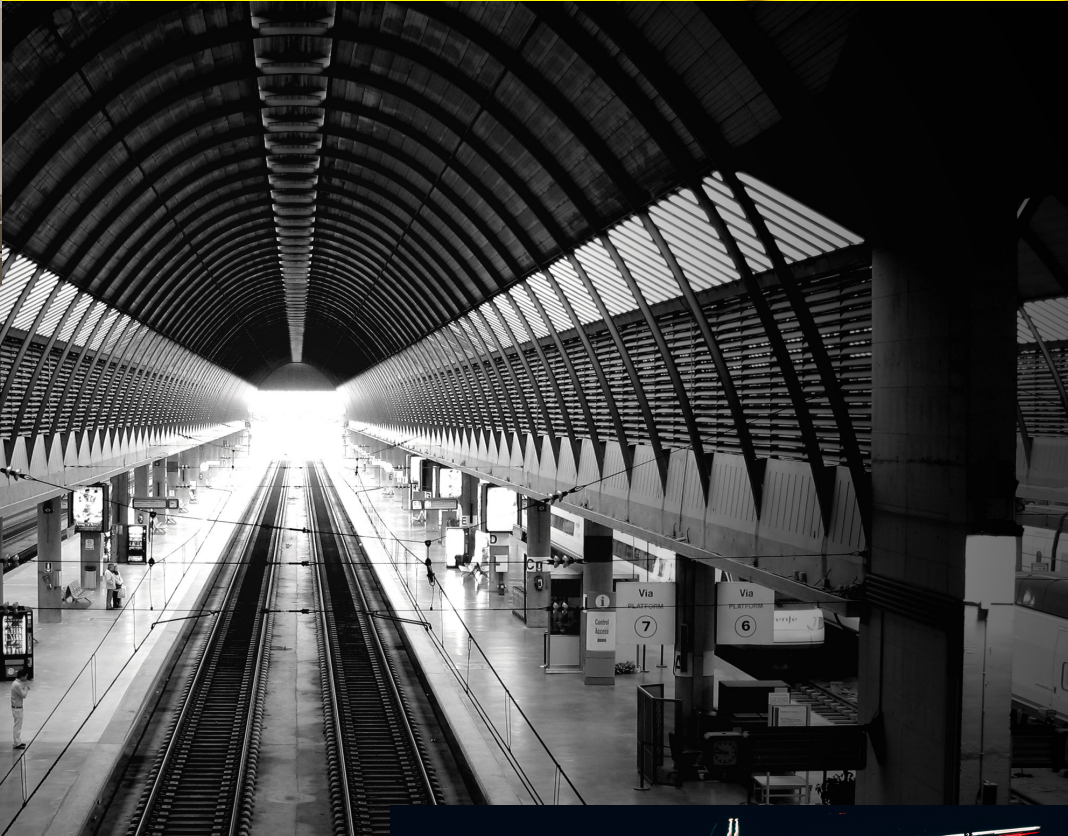
I will not
Black bird/white ant
I will not white ant
Black bird

My make up
Who will hear my song?

I will tell you the heat
In the crease of oak shoulder
As loud as I want to be
That drumming

Against Delaware humidity
Opening up
As I bend my thorax
A black star

Shed my shell
To sing my song
Of hiding



WE HID, WE HAD TO

There was no one to tell.

I was that one that stood out

Chubby light skin freckly kid

Anxiousness, praying for the rapture,

Those tears that fear and avoiding crowds

Ruptured any chances for the ability to protect oneself

To protect others and self-efficacy escaped me too.

I used to get bullied by this one kid in the 8th or 9th grade

It wasn't as much about him not

Liking me but everything about how hurt he was

But maybe he was just a goon too, I realized. I hid it all.

Single mom didn't want to worry her, too

From lil' bro 'cuz I was supposed to his hero.

Kept it close to the gut, a swaddling baby.

I watched it grow into a baseline, a full narrative

I couldn't shake like a grave I deserted

That wanted me back into its lifeless womb.

I had no one to tell. Being labeled weak

Anything but hard was a heavy weight to bare.

Meant that anyone could come for you. Always

Needing to escape terror. What makes boys brutalize

boys, brutalize girls, Brutalize themselves?

To my adolescent self—

Who pinned you down, told you were

Ugly unwanted fat white boy/half-breed poor?

Them or you? To that boy—

How did you become an enemy, how did you decide

I was prey? Who took your power away?

One day, I cried, no I bawled, ashamed to say,
“Don’t cry” he whispered, my bully. I ran until I decided
Not to anymore. No one to tell, ‘till now. Thing was
None of us could afford sensitivity nor the time
To be vulnerable, to face the world
And admit our parts brutalized.

Now I know the crucible of power roles
How a toxic force we men can be if not shown love
And sensitivity—early poured into the drain
Of insolvency and forgotten.

Those of us, who were abused, molested, abandoned
Told to grow up faster than we were ready, parentified,
Told we weren’t shit, gonna be like our loser fathers
Gonna end up a shit streak, hand on a brew, staring glazed over
And upside down, eyes crapped out between gutter and corner:

We hid it all in the night sky behind stars
Sent it to a crater on the dark side
Of the moon, hoping no one would find us out.
Some of us, though, some parts of us, sure,
Still roam restless among the stars,
Looking for respite.

THE RICH OR RICHMOND, CA

An apartment caught fire/or

Fire bombed. Mixed stories that day. Someone passed.

What we saw on Poetic Justice,

Boyz In Da Hood,

that one Domino video, was literally ten feet away.

I don't know who's silhouettes

against blue shades belonged to

And their bottles became something

They weren't meant to, the bone-

dice head-butting' off each other sounded

like Dougie Fresh's beat box.

Mom's voice like a hot-knife cut that hard shit down,

—Yes ma'am, we'll be quiet.

—Thank you, I got kids here.

The big homie next door looked after me and bro.

Central in the 90's. 8fff and Barrett.

Mom the bread-winner

Without my father around

In our pink stucco townhouse, before the Kaiser was

Finished, which its innards like looked iron stalactites, those

Rottweilers that scavenged at the trash

Bins; Burger King, Churches Chicken, and Mikey D's;

The lemon, eucalyptus and warm beer hot of
human urine on summer concrete, cookin'.

There was a hill we played football on,

Felt like a king once or twice on its sagittal crest,

Bike rides to the corner store for Now and Later's

And dem cheap pies with crème fillings in that flaky

Wax paper, East Bay mud, the Richmond Bart cutting through it.

Our first evening in,

Armed swat cops on dirt bikes

Hunting for someone like an escapee,

Shoulda seen the way they hit them hills
who did they think they were saving? No,

protecting?

Like that Nintendo game with the motorbikes, Super Bike or
something, the hunters, the pray. Same DNA of slavery days.

The carriage has only changed, not the hunt, the people, or

the

game.

—“Naw we mixed, we half black; we black, we black.”

Throwing for mom

A basket of newspapers

In the Oakland and El Cerrito Hills

Before sunrise, before school time. Scared of shadows

like dogs.

Mom nose plants her new electric typewriter every

Night, she’s becoming a nurse or the typewriter itself.

The old lady (a sister/elder/queen always nice to us) next door got robbed the
night before I

The 5th grade started,

A gunfight ensued between a cop and a brother, the

Other stole off into the

night duckin’

The ghetto bird’s eye beams like sentinel laser blasts

On X-Men, towards that sagittal crest hill,

Another

X’d man sung his last song that night, Black

Cicada.

We’ve never had any real money if you ever thought that,

‘cuz we light skin

Negroes.

ABSENT TRACES

At a diner, parenting questioned, cheap coffee likes excuses; stale toast, as elegiac reflection. Recollects lonely druggin' Denver days and his pop a salesman on Great Plains.

Higher than stomped ceiling; limbs fused to tulip chairs and glazed on the knotted Macramé. Like rounds of tether ball—"That Brazilian Gold," fire hooked mid ceiling; nights interchain.

"Pink elephants fox-trotted across the molding and window frame that night," he said. Acid days, mounds of cocaine, gold fish in the heel of platform shoes; nothing plain.

In Denver, his eyes were set on dying light blending slopes metamorphic. Jealous by what he can't cut; yearns for no stops to San Fran as there's no plains.

"He can't make fire bleed? White inna white world!" Her mixed son shrugs, eclipsing ears. Fixture at Chris' and other bums drinking to better days, which won't come, to put it plain.

That '98 white mustang: sputtering, a graveyard for cigs, valleys of choking ash. Marks on clothing, marks on skin, that COPD scaring the lungs, wheezing again.

A child left, in an abandoned house and the feeling of wilderness. Your shared genes walk the world oblivious in his privilege; my heart swells of disdain.

A past perfect "Contender," sketches of him drawn with a stick of fusain. He's outside Omaha, jeaned, flannelled, stands in the flickering abysm on flat plains.

Stares at a plane ticket, a boarding call, one way in night sky's abysm, two paths, he takes the easiest. A home without furniture, four children w/o a father, a windless plain.

WE WOULD

Stay out past curfew teens, whistling and yelling at the night workers; later, being grown, talked about the women we slept with, whiskey dick, one-nighters,

WE WOULD

How we ghosted, how we told her to get out, called each other pimps, a chick was a depository, a chick was a thing with a sole cause; Used bitch in various ways, insult the masculinity of a dude, to degrade and devalue a gal

WE WOULD

Keep a copy of "Bad Feminist" out as a fishermen's net, net the means of using feminism as a tool to win a heart, to collect another sexual body, to catch a lady's attention,

WE WOULD

Speak our piece, then get mad when she didn't roll with it, brownie points for being slightly vulnerable and doing what you're supposed to, then lash out and contradict the whole damn thing when ego wasn't stroked; send dick pics like show-and-tell, like a business card, like bait, like a 'hello'

WE WOULD

For boredom, something to brag about women we stuck; consent was always implied, some would respect boundaries, she wants this too, some did not; understand the essence you took, is also the essence you gave up,

WE WOULD

New lovers were like classes on improv, "yes, and," like "yes, and...I cheated so what!?", "yes, and...I'll do whatever it takes to replace one, never giving myself time to heal, on to the next deal, the next rebound-romance"; "yes, and,"—a bandage never really dressing the wound properly with self-care, never taking responsibility,

WE WOULD

Some will mention

We weren't given the chance at youth,

Some were asked to grow-up before they were ready to

WE WOULD

We Marionettes, strings wrapped around limbs heart our self-worth, the strings pulled by the patriarchy here, sole stitch of its little brown boots in the auburn of gas lighting, denied it all, see her buried like low-lit campfires, like ash-scattered wind,

A nest, built on shallow thatch-promises, naturally allowed things to be born, but heavy, shit just fell through and cracked open; spending most of paycheck for the weekends, cocktails as coping mechanisms make the mind and body rancid, it is only to numb desperation behind not feeling lips, nor face.

WE WOULD

THE FIRST TIME I SAW HIM WITH HIS BREATHING MACHINE, IT TRIGGERED FLASHBACKS (HAIKUS)

MYFATHER'STOUNGECRACKS

Splits his kids Joshua tree
A thirsty like love

HOUSETOHOUSETOHEARTS

Women as survival use
Never latch on

HOMELESSNESSFELTCLEAN

Remembered the showers
New homes, new faces

HOWHISLIFEWAXES

Dwindles; melts; minus sign in
Patches tungsten-stained jeans

PREGNANTHEADPAUSES,

Causing scenes, embarrassment
Whispers, darting eyes

ASKINGFORAFRIEND

Toxic atom, sharp cherry candy
To dislodge his name

TOOTHEDRUSTEDBUCK-KNIFE'S

Carved effigies, wood curl-tongues
Mouths of abused selves

WHENHECALLEDME"BITCH"

My tear flow housed by night, he
Low thinks of me so

QUARTERED

FOR TREY

We nearly drowned in our
Tears that one Murciano night
But like good little American men
Like brothas we brimmed
And sucked it in and laughed it away.
I hate it when people ask me
And then tell me what I'm not/Am.
Yes, blacks and whites, equally.
You quarter/Me half
And mostly no one knows,
I know that feeling brother. The over compensation
To be down. I know that too.
At them out of them, bite them and thrash
Like I could literally slap the shit indulging
The fantastic & this whole poem
And I've judged myself for uttering words
About blackness
Dividends/blood and tears/ literally
Cried/bullied/paid my black dues/
All I wanted was acceptance
Your story is kinda irrelevant, sorry
Can't you see me?
Fresh like the smell of almond blossoms
Some more ripe than others
Of scars,
Did I ever show you my collection?
Not to enter into Black heaven –
You ain't even heavy enough
How much does your blackness weigh?
How heavy?

MOMENT FOND REOCCURENCE

Hoops around those BART track pylons
When that Berkeley day

Abundant in child laughter
Reverberates off those cement hexagons

Flickering fire
Fly carried the dreams of this child, even though

His father's speckled tempest
Scattered him and his sibs
the corners of
the Bay decades a human

Can be so
Abusive verbally

And when later on lose his voice to
the crackle of newspaper crumple
because lack of air, the tightening of
Bronchial tube, inflamed tissues to pinholes this
Karma. This Justice. This Irony. I trusted
The cards when they breathed

Clarity and healing do come
In that midnight hour;

A thin curl, streak, of light against a hazy evening sky
Beacons this memory, I smell the light rush of fennel under the
Rubber pitter patter of my
Keds, and the slow faint echo of a
Child's laughter.

CHURCH HURT

1:1 It had snowed badly. Chains on van tires. Eyes closed to sleep for a moment, eyes opened. We slid into mountain, into park ranger, an amen moment. A salvation story. Recant. Repent. Pool dunk. Up for air. New creation. Go.

Obsession, true-believer syndrome, the poster-apprentice. Faith blind, I was a teenage evangelist, on bus, on street corner. 1:2 The magic of Sunday mornings. Luster rubbed off on the touchstone as fingerprints on the black leather, gold imprint: Holy Bible. 1:3 I rarely set foot in churches now. 1:4 Deacon's welcome. Church agenda in hand. Thick tortoise shell bifocals. A navy man. Choir sway. Sitting still but felt him jittering. My hot red cheeks, course of cool sweat around my temple. Clammy palms. His eyes absorbing praise wave's undulations but rejected by holy water. This man who had seen so much sea. Had been around the world and then some. Hands planted on knees like gothic gargoyles clutching globes, as still as an arm chair, a façade. I remember him not wanting to go. As if by, kismet, the anti-gay rhetoric. Dehumanized. Go figure—from defender to demon. The Adam and Steve-ing. The stone who sat there, animated. Walked out a knave in nave. 1:5 The spectacle and some of y'all's pastors were pimps. Still. The flock is different. And I thought one should not be led by what they see. Shrugs. Slinging the always promises like a cheap baggy of brown weed. A gateway drug or something thereof. Of getting higher: you pay the right fee. Be blind. Be numb. Gave that ten percent, got no get back, but the building fund still up. The kick-back, top ramen only this week. 1:6 But I wonder how many more sat there in turmoil and later that day, decided to defect. My blindness was like the crimson veil. The hair-fissure tear between the robe and a man who helped raise me, I chose the latter and chose a form of death. Sores and wounds throb half healed—still, I'll keep them this way. 1:7 I feel like a shadow man, a half-way believer. 2 I used to find joy painting walls, inhaling paint fumes, probably. Putting up chairs, stacked ten high. The simplest praise. A purpose. I answered that call, then left its aims—they sullied it with self-prophesizing claims, corruption, projections of homophobia, some of your wildest witch hunters, hiding behind the cloth, are gay. 2:1 But now, I find God by the time the fire reaches the end of the blunt. 2:2 Now only hometown nostalgia subtracting like this city is into the San Pablo Bay. 2:3 This is, almost smooth, to the touch, matted. Remember the victory lap for the weary, around the burgundy pews come Sunday?

EN CABO DE PALOS

Fat fingered hands
Holding golden challices of beer
Slightly at the hips of their glass
Near the mouth
I wonder if they hold their wives with this kind of passion
Not sure why I'm impressed by this
I am
A man in appreciation of
Craft
And habit
This religious practice
Not holy but
Not deity either, never was
We will never will be god.
Just human.

Slow boiled
&
Bone.

SO, THIS IS FINE

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

We don't serve niggers here.

A night in Virginia, 1960's.

Go 'round back and order some sandwiches.

So, this is fine, honey. This is fine.

A night in Virginia, 1960's.

Those old dusty service roads in the south

So, this is fine, honey. This is fine.

Overhung willows/pebbles pinched under

Those old dusty service roads in the south

Rubber tires sounded like pellet gun shots

Overhung willows/pebbles pinched under

I can see their headlights

Rubber tires sounded like pellet gun shots

Dust clouds combing over it

I can see their headlights

The carry of the engine pushing through

Dust clouds combing over

Into a long night indignant

The carry of the engine pushing through

My uncle who made calls from his naval base

Into indignant night a long

For road accommodations

My uncle who made calls from his naval base

Bugs huddle ceiling corner in this family's house

Accommodations road for

Exhausted my grandfather

Bugs huddle ceiling corner in this family's house

Uncomfortable my grandma trapped on the edge of the bed

Grandfather exhausted

Uncle's crew mate's family opened up their home

Grandma, under ceiling light, trapped on the edge of the bed

They left that welcome for the road

Uncle's crew mate's family their home opened up

Long haul back to Toledo, OH

That welcome they left for the road

On empty stomachs

Long haul back to Toledo, OH

My grandfather's pulverized human dignity

Stomachs on empty

My mother's childhood - black kids aren't afforded

We don't serve niggers here

My grandfather's pulverized human dignity

My mother's childhood - black kids aren't afforded

The luxury of oblivion or innocence

Go 'round back and order some sandwiches.

The luxury of her oblivion

At that damned diner

Waitress be damned too

We don't serve niggers here.

At that damned diner

Sometimes I possess bad taste/made a poor comment

That flex of power to emasculate, dismember, disenfranchise

Go 'round back and order some sandwiches.

About the hotel we were in that night

Sometimes I possess bad taste, I made a poor comment

So, this is fine, honey. This is fine.

We don't serve niggers here.

Anguish-red ringed mother's hazel/green eyes

My grandfather's pulverized human dignity

So, this is fine, honey. This is fine.

Go 'round back and order some sandwiches.

A night somewhere in Virginia, 1960's

We don't serve niggers here

I made a poor comment about our hotel room

We don't serve niggers here

Black kids aren't afforded a childhood of innocence and oblivion

On empty stomachs during road trips during long indignant nights

Go 'round back and order some sandwiches.

So, this is fine, honey.

This is fine.

WALKING IN GIJON, ASTURIAS

Ménage à trois

Before I went out

I watched a porn two dudes,

One chick, later walking home half

Drunk on

Cheap whiskey I

Remembered a story

A friend told me about two male leopards in Thailand

Fuckin' she spotted on a night safari; a narrative stymied

Nothing newly born, nothing really had changed

No new revelations, laws, labels or theories, just that I was

I was really hard. & the night it was cold. What of the

Issue, the fuck or the connection? There have been times

When I questioned my sexuality when not in a romantic

Relationship with a woman. Usually single. Single feels alien.

Why am I not fuckin' right now? No one really taught me

What sexuality was, masculinity was, so I played along

Like how a night wave fizzles scrapes sand up & hisses. Golden orbs coin

this causeway, I've been brainstorming all night. Churning.

Not sure if my questions stem from being raised by a woman, gay uncle, gay aunt,

I just wanted to be a strong man in my twenties like my frat bros or like Pac or

Like the movie The Mac but all I got was this insecure artist with an identity

Crisis and unsure about how to define what a man exactly is. In my 30's now,

Only thing different is, I got courage to love all of myself. To define how

I'm seen by my eyes and others. And my demons are juvenile angles just looking for

mentorship, & love. By San Lorenzo bank right shallow, rocky, sensitive

Ecology of masculinity I watched whirlpools fill with golden

And subtract, to wet tombs to hollow eye sockets, take your pick. Escape

Blindness without light, no one can. A night dog's eyes flicker off and on off bitter sea

Smell

EAST BAY MUD

I remember the smell of fresh paint in apartments
We'd move to, vacate too
Drips on old windows as frosted icicles
On mom and pop window store front holidays

The estuary near Golden Gate Fields
Akin to developing years looking for dry shore,
Consistent stable foundation solid earth
When there was none

Vagabonds and road warriors, we
In new acquaintances we made homes, constantly
The coming and going dry brittle
Sea wood pushed a centimeter here there
In the summer heat nudged by an apathetic Bay

To, in people, never get too comfortable
When a tear drop became a signal for evacuation, boy
How we bawled until we disassociated from it all

Walls smelled like egg and yolks tangy
Mayonnaise, the carpet like cig ash and dead skin cells,
That filled your nostrils upon entering no telling
Who did what in here, no telling who lives
In the fibers of this carpet

We always started off good

The people came and left, just
Created callousness. Why
Should a nine-year-old ever be callous
About life?

TETHERING

Blue gate anarchy a blocked road if I wedged it just a tad east
 what would happen? I dream of being one but don't have
 the sac time or resources ears too yet smell of fresh olives in vinegar
 old from old man street vender from the campo the hipster fate tatted on
 his left hand the first segment of his finger the handlebar mustache. The typical
 hipster hair tryin' to be steam punk, tapered sides hair on top, my question
 is his motives self-loathing-that I do get, they worship blue collar
 working class but never been blue collar, since when did the tech industry become
 blue collar? Like those jokers who stole San Francisco shoot glances of self in their
 silver pewter, I'm sure he made or re-purposed into a mirror, maybe I'm stereotype-
 casting proly loathes his parents calls them by their first name, nice pea coat tho
 Democracy has fallen sell it never was really for us colored crayons poetry is a
 gunslinger's conquest instead of alchemy all art is tethered to capitalism.
 I'd like to live off my craft tho. My grandpa when asked "how ya doing?"
 always, always grumbled: "I'm still vertical," until he wasn't.
 what will be my slogan for life to the youth? I know: question everything till it
 becomes real. Maybe dudes tattoo, fate, wasn't as self-indulgent as I had thought,
 maybe It's to say fate is a fucking fist, idk that will punch? Idk that will clinch, that will
 ball-up, that will chop, that will brick, hurt, mash, churn, pickle, masturbate, drill, idk
 fuck one up? Is there softness or compassion found in fate I moved that blue gate a
 little stage left. I hope someone breaks free. No I didn't, I lied. I'm not an anarchist,
 however when I pick my hair into a fro out in a small pueblo in Spain where any signs
 of blackness is a disturbance to the quo, quizzical, alien, I am. I believe u should be
 skeptical of the sun lose faith then find it again, make mystic, ether milky way
 make it something hard to reach like a girl or a guy u always wanted to fuck but never
 could a) cuz they were out of reach or b) cuz well they fucked something up before
 that part and now u pine away over could-have-beens, Instagram or FB pics like an
 ingrown toenail, like an ingrown hair that plumps up under your skin reminding u be
 weary of all that is unseen if the surfaces renders u skeptical or dirty or even afraid of
 said bump, but who in the name of romance has ever listened to good sound logical
 advice when they were chin deep on course to drown? The problem is always u.

NO RUM LEFT?

Empty glass handle of rum like taking
responsibility for my actions

Excuses like

a full glass of rum on ice; Summer

Wilmington vibrates in cicada's
sweeping opera, by the end of the party the acceptance
Of reality a bottle of rum Becomes a character arc.

Mouth dry and fuzzy, I can see
Myself in different reflections; I'd admit
It wasn't my best self, wasn't my finest hour
only thing you can do:
Numb. It all out. We did that. We did *that*.

The knowledge self
I possess now, much to be desired then
Walking to the closest café to reflect, in
The heavy heat, to the tune of dying cicadas,
I was shedding, I was blaming,
I was carving, I was hollowing, I was
Half choking on inhales
That felt
Like threshing white cotton sheets
In my nostrils.



BLUE IN GREEN

Jazz

cold chicken to white wine

Jazz

sorrow how days jam, A

cold chicken to white wine

deep heave of sax, a morose bass

sorrow how days jam, A

I can hear the skyline being drawn

deep heave of sax, a morose bass

Her turned

I can hear the skyline being drawn

Embarrassed for having talked to her like that

Her turned

lashed out like a tide of peacock

Embarrassed for having talked to her like that

Face watching the clouds, rise and fall

lashed out like a tide of peacock

Her adverted steel blues illuminate her décolletage,

Face watching the clouds, rise and fall

She's on my couch, opaque-silvers

Her adverted steel blues illuminate her décolletage,

chill in my hand, made the glass stone

She's on my couch, opaque-silvers

sipped on the small of absent cognac adding that to a list

chill in my hand, made the glass stone

I could almost hear her creep up behind me

sipped on the small of absent cognac adding that to a list

watching the cold sunrise gradient

I could almost hear her creep up behind me

Velvet azure as it attacks my emotional states

watching the cold sunrise gradient

Silk ribbons soft tangle

Velvet azure as it attacks my emotional states

I saw us unraveling little by little like

Silk ribbons soft tangle

Ruminations in half realities and memories

I saw us unraveling little by little like

The anxiety of a future never to pass midnight blue

Ruminations in half realities and memories

Interweaves fingers slipping like sand, sighs marked

The anxiety of a future never to pass midnight blue

a heavy premonition to bare it

Interweaves fingers slipping like sand, sighs marked

Two polar traumas didn't make a whole coupled by my

a heavy premonition to bare it

eager palette's desperation might have been a cause or a curse

Two polar traumas didn't make a whole coupled by my

her I sprinted back when she distanced I never said we was

eager palette's desperation might have been a cause or a curse

Sage, three small lies I told in the beginning promoted envy like ivy

her I sprinted back when she distanced I never said we was

Expressed

Sage, three small lies I told in the beginning promoted envy like ivy

The seaweed of my needs weren't effectively seen

Expressed

she often labored over as I rarely tended to it, also over-tended

The seaweed of my needs weren't effectively seen

was a field of escape routes, shit became unbearable

she often labored over as I rarely tended to it, also over-tended

My inability to be fully vulnerable yet hold pounds of moss

was a field of escape routes, shit became unbearable

One step at a time we say, time can heal therapist say; zaffre in this song

My inability to be fully vulnerable yet hold pounds of moss

climbs toward the ceiling, often resting for a breather,

One step at a time we say, time can heal therapist say; zaffre in this song

A crystal ash tray refracts blue stage lights, a cyan smoke body

climbs toward the ceiling, often resting for a breather,

The silhouetted piano player, the keys paint the room in strokes

A crystal ash tray refracts blue stage lights, a cyan smoke body

The silhouetted piano player, the keys paint the room in strokes

Night must be made cornflower

& pain must be peopled, weren't lost on

Night must be made cornflower

strands of a very close friend, the whole loss of a lover

& pain must be peopled, weren't lost on

the fight to hold on to her, an empty snifter, the cloudy

strands of a very close friend, the whole loss of a lover

tiffany quartzite sun tired against

the fight to hold on to her, an empty snifter, the cloudy

the parakeet evening

tiffany quartzite sun tired against

the parakeet evening

MOST INDEPENDENT COFFEE HOUSES

Split backs grind down;
 the carobs, cremes, golds, and caramels all
 tamped into the polished silver portafilter, scalds
 to liquid fetish the grounds
 appropriating its hearth, its heart and soul
 for consumption, now poured
 into a fragile white cup, the milky foam
 slices into brown heart like a hot white
 knife, metamorphose
 genes of this espresso. They feel they've given the gift

privileged lactose, I watched this
 barista take that portafilter, hands stained with
 the browns of a moment ago, all
 polished, shined his blotted, rouge mouth
 his thin face opaque in reflected machine, as he dumped all
 those leached grounds out, all
 the richness; he stripped, discarded, the tale typical apathy:
 one day was on top, they all
 loved us, now no longer relevant, no longer in need,
 into garbage, a tub somewhere, strung-out.

The exposed brick on wood, the minimalist
 architecture and the hip-hop of my youth trying to
 escape the appropriation of its culture, but its consoling so I
 asked it to stay.

I can feel their curiosity measuring my nose and
 the crest of my lips, how's and whys of my ashy elbows
 with their eyes to say, "you are different. Maybe, you don't
 belong here."

I count, one two three, don't
 count just
 me.

THE LEFT

The Left
 Has left something,
 little sunflower.
 Egg yolk-disserts
 the white,
 something there was.
 my my my as as as heart soul stomach pit,
 be half as full, it feels my mind is
 Just
 not there anymore, is something right not. Been yanked-
 out wrenched-out stripped-
 out punctured on a skewer then corkscrewed-
 out harpooned and wound-out deserted-
 out character killed off show and written-out a chapter burned-
 out drawn-out and then poached peeled and feasted-out bled-
 out wrung-out hustled and crapped-
 out grown-out pressed-out spent-out rained-
 out drove-out yo-yoed-out inverted-
 out tested-out crawdad and boiled-out left-
 out, withdrew-out toxic tongues and forced-out double standards and lashed-
 out broken and heart stripped-out traumatized and feared-
 out an innocent on trial chided and thrown-
 out. Something was there. Now not. Love to know is also the absence to know of
 it.
 Fusing closure, the absence from, can who?
 How
 Your removal-heart left canyon tissues anguished with a dried-
 out river bed. The stock of this...hmm. Daaamn.
 Its
 so painful, your taxi-
 yellow tongues from that black pupil,
 I keep on seeing in adverts, flower shops and such. Sitting, holding, sitting, holding;
 Flash, flash, flash; tearing-up sun-ups and drinking and drugging sun-downs:
 Crunch, flick, spark, scrape, crack, press, peeeel, peeeeeel! Over bowls and rocks
 glasses; the slush of ice-whiskeys and resin sticky-tar in strawberry pipe this-kind-of-
 pain.
 All I feel is you
 inside dead I'm.

10

Stuck in the middle of this perfect
Case with many faces, I hold the light,
I manipulate it to my pleasure, my body
How it glistens and gleams and sparkles
How it lifts the room, a person's mood,
A person's confidence, I have become the
Perfect accessory, how they drape me
Over their wrists, I became a fixture
for marriage bonds in a religion
that was forced on me, they found me
In the earth, said to have given me life
Said I had no language no birth rite
They desire and worship my body
Some appropriate my look,
They touch me whenever they get the chance
I don't desire to be objectified, lightened my skin,
tried to conceal my curves or accentuate
them more to fulfill a fantasy mysterious
imbedded in fear and fetish, they put down
money and like to call me "sold"
I was good, I was raw, I was uncut,
Until they uprooted my whole existence
In value of net-worth, by my color
My weight, my luster, my shine, sold
To the highest bidder, they like to call me
"asset" the way I dance
And entertain at a ball, the way I turn a
Neck into a dancehall, made to shuck-n-jive
For some blue-eyes. Said life would be better,
Cut down to meet the "civilized" expectations,
A thing to be conquered, a frontier, a continent
To be called, "mine" from a people
who had nothing but the color
Of their skin.

3

Fine moss, juicy ferns Fresh wood, dew coats each green
Thing, each living thing with moisture
Nostrils hold this earth like worlds stuck
Onto its follicles, hexagonal, but round
In another season, this same fertile, juicy,
The harmony of, the wholeness of
Earth, has become yellow, sharp, brittle
Something lost or stripped away, a bad season
A sudden single curious flame, carried over from
A past fire, this
not able to hold moisture in, it doesn't stick, but what does-
The brilliant glow of desperation and
vulnerable spaces for love and acceptance
Seen above it all like the 405 freeway
Diverting paths, the heat is felt even inside the shell.

HAIKUS

River thawing a
Reflection in onyx, furs'
Pine from snow, skies flint.

A fire breathing bowl,
Blue-moon rituals consume
Eyes rotate sky high.

Daisies bloom in corn
Sun masks sliver moon; closer
Look: duct tape wrapped stem.

6

A Mother's Day mug takes up
so much space liquid takes on
the shape its container not by
son's choice, the husbandry of
unhealed trauma, holographic
boundary lines, child-self parentified
how he judges his own life

TRAIN FRIEND

Train Friend

I, rise

Canary blue sky

The amber glow I hold you

On my face and throughout the night

I dreamt what I would say to you on the train

I, forecast

A storm at some point as there are clouds that

I can see on the horizon, the dew

Of your lips and how your smile cracks

Me open where I've tried to seal, you know that I just left a tempest
that drowned me, I was shipwrecked

After collecting myself as sea wood and carving my new images of what
I want to be, I had just begun to polish them and I noticed you

I, leave you

Want to spend more time in your glow, I wonder how

If the nights you have mentioned are true, and in your bed

Isn't a lingering sun you had mentioned died out a while ago

I am so vulnerable and not sure if I should show you like load up

a bright blue flare gun, cock the hammer back, and squeeze

That trigger with abandon, putting myself all out there, the

Fluorescent red and all my arching across your night sky. Something about

the way you warm me, how your light finds me throughout the day also makes me

Want more & scares me. To friend or not to friend and I like playing with

Fire like Cat's Cradle even in the midst of a lightning storm. I am known to rush in

With the quickness.

We, are building

There is a fantasy

and maybe right now

It's cloud castles and golden roads, but something toxic could be brewing

in your sky, I feel a slight chill, I can see some haze. You can sell me on something

Solid, but this heart has become a barometer hyper vigilante and aware.

I, am afraid
of being lost in you, rolling and thrashing around falling
Toward the earth, tumbling through miles of icy wind and force
I barely landed from my last relationship. And it wasn't land,
It was an ocean, I hadn't quite the technique to split the rocking
Swell, I didn't know how deep I would plunge until consecutive nights
And mornings were filled with water erosion, inflammation and tear ducts that
Felt like Salton Sea bass mouth stuck in the gasping position fat lipped and thirsty
For healing, for air, for closure. A scruffy beard. A home askew with
Clothes and dishes piled high. Trails sticky of dried LIQ, a small
City of said liquor bottles, and my hallways lined SAD.
I mentioned I was mad, on the verge of bitterness. And you nodded as the
Train bent spine into an s around this curve
and amber again. I tried to set another date and you said only:
Puede ser

AFTER 'TURIYA & RAMAKRISHNA'

In this space
like the edge of a prophet's robe
cleansed was supposed to be safe
lips eyes smooth righteous
skin a tongue like to wash blindness into

Pentecost new languages
build a new heart through the stomach
unfurl sails the psychedelics of an old mind
to a new regenerate the vibe
aura into why I

Jammed hella diamonds
called it self compassion into your mouth
for me I am still coughing up shard's
chandeliers
in the morning
like a half-worshipped saint

14 AFTER BALDWIN

I crave a secure
 mooring post
 because freedom is too damn
 unbearable

life defined by emotional attachés
 I'm not afraid of losing people
 as much, being afraid of not being tied to
 someone or an idea even is another thing entirely
 the parent-child co-dependency,
 lover to therapist-parent,
 friend to bank account, like a solid wooden post
 dug several feet into subsurface, its surety,
 it's a controlled environment yet I knew
 as a child constant flux
 traffic of parent's lovers, tide in tide out
 one post to the next freedom is fear is
 the horror of loneliness
 being out at sea too long without that
 surety without that grounded,

but it's so necessary now
 not to play it safe, to let go, to uproot
 and burn, to dismantle it all, to not inventing
 something because someone says its right
 I woke up with my mind
 evolution on

slip of mooring line's knot,
 that slow drift from dock
 open blue waters
 the diamond dance of sunlight
 a soft bell will play
 a Yes to life

19

Like the knot in those
doubled-laced L.A. Gears
fused needed strength of jaw,
sharp edge K-9 to begin the
unraveling processes;

Like the scorched dusty throat earth
cracked puckered lips
pressing in and praying
for a fix;

Like the first thing seen
in face of alarm clock
stone but to desperately be
gold bullion;

Like the last joint saved for rainy day
mouth vibrates seethes saliva
makes dick hard
betrays logic
as a yellow flame whips
around the heart.

30

That I opened all the way
turned myself inside out like a levee that broke

That I fell shattered the ice I drowned
became smaller and smaller

That your tongue was like a steel rake scrawling scars
of names reprobate you wanted me to wear openly

That at times I was sun that went super nova too early
Vomiting my pressed down rage on you

That I will never try to hurry up
to heal for anyone else

That my legs were bound strapped down
teeth clinched sometimes just at the sight of you

That I watched as you transformed from tulip to
A colony of fire ants swarming around my orifices

That wolf guide was actually the ferocity to hide
That starry night swirls of hypnotic lamps in awe of us

That old sermon down, white robes, down at the creek
Its mouth, our toes sunk in clay, this was scheduled to be a
baptismal

That I know at times it wasn't just you
An ember takes its last breath and quietly ashes

That I spoke to my scars yesterday and gave
them permission to heal; to dust my ego

That I wish you well to salve
In acreage full of sunflowers

THE HEARTH

Till the hearth
 Self the
 settling
 Ground
 The collecting
 Fire curled
 knees of
 Bleed embers
 Praise the
 steel
 God fire
 Till this hearth
 Collect the
 heart pieces
 Shrapnel
 molten praise
 curls
 Rise
 Pupil fire
 Burn remnants
 don't serve
 Hearth healing
 Ground till self
 Until no late
 traces

LEFT

POEMS FROM THE HEARTH

OVERS

CHARLES SNYDER Charles Snyder is an African-American writer and actor from the San Francisco Bay Area. He was a 2015 VONA Voices poetry fellow. Snyder's work can be found in The Abernathy Magazine, A Gypsy's Journal, and 2Leaf Press' "The Being of America." Charles Snyder now resides in Spain and works as an English teacher.



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