

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Robin Lee Jordan for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Creative Writing presented on April 20, 2009.

Title: Porchless Staircase

Abstract approved:

Karen Holmberg

Porchless Staircase is a collection of poetry investigating a wide range of themes: consumerism, death, sexuality, alcoholism, religion, writing, family, and, most frequently, isolation. At times toying with notions of the sublime and surrealism, the confessional and the imagistic, these poems vary in form, process, and style, but are loosely strung together through their attempt to put to words the unnamable emotions born out of what is both beautiful and terrible. The poems that comprise Porchless Staircase unapologetically refuse to tidy what is difficult; rather they thrive in their inability to compose themselves.

Porchless Staircase

by
Robin Lee Jordan

A THESIS

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Master of Fine Arts thesis of Robin Lee Jordan presented on April 20, 2009.

APPROVED:

Major Professor, representing Creative Writing

Chair of the Department of English

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Robin Lee Jordan, Author

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Porchless Staircase

Before I am lost

everything

must compose

itself quietly,

the bell that clamors

down the granite

steps of the belfry

the shining lining that sticks

to the tenacious branches

of an impossible tree

must pry free

from what clung.

Before I am lost,

everything

must hang itself

back up.

i. The shadows of things

Spoilt remains

A hair, loose, drops past
my ear and I remember the woven
seat of the fat black spider
behind me, how she sways
in the mild air. I am almost afraid.

My feet are propped on the square
edge of the porch railing
to avoid the spoilt remains
of the jack-o-lanterns; the boat-
like fragments have lain there for weeks.

Crow-shapes flash through
patches of sky; I confuse them
for shadows of leaves falling
feeble from darkened branches.

Each leaf is yet a rowboat held still
on an early-morning lake.
A dead evening.

A man breaks into a sprint
down the sidewalk; a neighbor
steps out for a cigarette; bells
chime across town.

[stanza break]

It all gathers around the third floor
window of the apartment facing me:
the silhouette of the girl's head
as she sits at her desk.

I know she's real because she's rocking softly.

Geese don't collide, they said, it's impossible

Above the Willamette
two groups of geese collided.

I wanted a war in the sky.
I wanted to see the weak

slip through the air like dead
birds to the tempestuous water,

not that pathetic confusion—
the stupid shapes they make.

~

A girl watching
wanted what I did.

She said so
on her way to leave.

~

And we all thought of the body
that could have been

beneath the pile of leaves
my feet strew about,

of how I would trip over it
had it been there.

~

Down the path
a raccoon looked

at us briefly then
walked aimlessly past,

his right hind leg
a surprising red.

Jasmine

Latin King cousins: exquisite diversions for the children of a field of townhouses littered behind Wal-Mart. Cheap cul-de-sacs, mishmash of strapped families circulating through interchangeable slivers of home. They think everyone feuds occasional droves of earwigs and cockroaches, querulous neighbors strangling each other on front lawns, crazy men in cammo called Crazy Joe prowling Ely Court with rifles in between fervid bouts of outdoor calisthenics; they think all towns' children hide behind dumpsters to watch the cyclical burgeoning of violence.

Jasmine knew where fights broke open. We crawled toward green hedges to watch three Kings chase a Lord with metal bats; the boys tore through the park; us girls knew to dally. We danced in ways beyond our means, and when there were no flashing lights, someone pointed us to the wet red flash the boy left in the grass, and it was just what we were looking for.

The curse (Eve's)

flies crawl around the blue
blanket of a young couple mashing
lips. he falls face-first past her

into push-ups. she takes off
her sandal and murders hordes
with muted slaps in circles

around him; her red dress
rises with each kill.

near high tide, a father flies
a pink kite beside the breakwater.
his youngest runs to him, just missing

the first wave; the older daughter
does not reach them in time; she clings
to barnacled rocks and screams

and her little skirt goes up
and she wails for her mother,
for saving.

Whiskey beautiful

i.

The percussionist drops
from above and spirals
in long loops around me

but I buy a whiskey for the beautiful
one with a cold, the one in the hipster
jeans who thinks I want into them.

I'll have a nightcap at home
in the dark, fingers numb, knowing
well where the warmth is.

ii.

Shaving thighs in the shower
with drunk languid strokes,
body gently waving
like a hand going away.
I always liked this spot;
everything glistens.

iii.

I lie in bed as the shadow of a spider
dizzies the shape of a bee

behind my back-lit blinds.

I hate the shadows of things;
they always make what's there
seem so much more important.

Hiatus: Olney, Illinois

They took me to the Fireside

a small bar in their small
fuck of a town

I'd never seen such people

One day short
of a week hiatus

I drank
will cheapened

by the greased
the tatter-panted

the hammered-drunk
and horny

Platforms of
bare-faced

overweight

girls in floral

tank tops

dropped it

like it's hot

A disabled woman

on a stool

crowded the bathroom

sick

apologizing

pants undone

The bar

purged them

onto the sidewalk

where they rummaged

through each other

for a good enough match

pressed hard

to the side of pickups

Driving back
summer's first lightning bugs
flirted beside soy fields
and moths sputtered in headlights

I wanted so badly
for them to glow
on their own

Driving one car
going two directions

The cornfields are excited, I mention,
distracted by the sudden need to hold a turtle.
The raindrops on our windows have dressed
like villagers on their way to town hall
to discuss the surplus of pets appalling curbs,
to ask why no one here looks the other in the eye.
It's just the wind, you say.

That's where we met,
among the faces of clouds of people
we've never been.

Midnight mass: Punta Cana, Dominican Republic

We play Egyptian Ratscrew, shielding our cards
with a slick wall of cervezas Presidentes;
girls in assless Christmas costumes dance for Santa

gushing down the aisles in a red swell.
A Dominicana slips a balmy small pink
candle in our hands, waves for us to come.

We're led down rows of lit palms that snake
to a white gazebo through bermudagrass,
a midnight mass; the white chairs turned
from the jabbering shore.

You take my hand; I like how yours feels
here, slightly swollen and dewed
like the clumsy bouquets you used to get me.

We slip to where the black waves throb.
I laugh; your index presses my lips; I place
it on my tongue. Our flame tattles
like a fat-mouthed kid.

The Aeolian Beer

*Methinks, it should have been impossible
Not to love all things in a world so filled;
Where the breeze warbles, and the mute still air
Is Music slumbering on her instrument.*

-Samuel Coleridge

It isn't the sound of waves
I notice our first night
in the Dominican Republic,
but the music my beer makes
when the breeze comes
in just right.

It had been years since
I'd flown, and the descent
felt much closer to falling
than I'd remembered.
The shadows of clouds
were pen leakings.

From below they are the quick
apprehension of a storm. We stop.
You pluck the bottle from my fingers
and I jump on your back to avoid
a small crab, but you've never liked
to carry me. Above us, a cloud
like a black veil slips from the moon's
pock-marked face.

I would have preferred the glance

*If you had let me wait
I had grown from listlessness into peace,
if you had let me rest with the dead,
I had forgot you
and the past.*

-Eurydice by H.D.

Your hair was on fire, Jeff.
It spit chicklings of sparks
that hopped into the overgrown field
behind your house
where they used to grow corn
or grain maybe.

It all lit up.
The chicks found rest
in the musty hay
that carpeted the old barn
you were always painting,
where the sky was always fat
colored drops, where the faces
were always turned away.

I watched the barn sweat colors
down its brittle walls,
turning them white, now red,
soon black.

[stanza break]

You never turned, Jeff;
there was no glance backwards,
just that roaring hair,
the back of your orange t-shirt.

~

This dream is like the wall
you painted beside my bed.
Your back to me, your hands
on your slightly thrust-out hips,
your barely slumped shoulders

that same sad, triumphant way
you stood on the highway shoulder
the time we drove through a blizzard
to Madison. You wouldn't slow down;
I woke to us careening into a ditch.

You got out then
in your t-shirt, stood
with your face exposed
to the infuriated snow.

~

Count yourself lucky, Eurydice,
for you were not forgotten
and you will never forget
that quick glimpse,

those eyes, that nose,
the mouth, that drop of sweat.

As for me and the chicks,
we preen in puddles;
steam rises from our feathers.

Something like regret

In a glass case at a train station:

*a dazed girl sailed back
on a burnt paper scrap.*

*Did you know that waiting for her
was a man with lanky arms
whom she loved, but doesn't love
and can't love again*

*—that she stumbled soft
like a peach down aisles
to avoid the hard settling*

*—that her arms rose above her
as the train dipped down a hill*

*—that something like regret slipped
from the cuff of her sleeve*

*—that she was dazed from the space
between the joy and dread of living*

—that you knew her?

ii. An empty, white chair

Knocking for Bukowski

*I mean if I don't answer
I don't answer, and the reason is
that I am not yet ready to kill you
or love you, or even accept you,
it means I don't want to talk...*

—C.B.

I know you're in there, Bukowski
and I'll keep knocking.
I don't care if you're elbow deep
in your crumpled jeans
looking for last night's
change, or drinking the flat
end of yesterday's beer
or lighting the butts of cigarettes
on your gas stove, or picking
at your peeling butterfly wallpaper.

I'll keep knocking, over
the metal scrape of your
last can of beans prying open,
over the clop of your hooker's
silver heels dropped beneath the kitchen
table, over the hurried thumping
of your \$75-plus-a-chipped-mug-of-Jim-Beam orgasm.

I'll knock until this cheap
door gets an orange-sized dent,
until your Czechoslovakian neighbor

puts his watery-eye to the peephole,
until your landlord limps
down the hallway in her stained
nightie and shouts into my ear
for me to quit, her sagging tits
against my back will be no
bother to me, Bukowski.

I don't want your secrets
or your conversation.
I don't want your garlic
and beans or shitty merlot.

So open up, Charles,
because when I'm finished knocking
I'll start to
pound.

Morning poems

i. Ears

The birds are good for nothing:

moronic quips
card-clap flapping.

They startle me from sleep
the way you woke from falling
all those mornings.

I wish to twitch them
off the house—

seal my ears in envelopes
and send them to you.

ii. Teeth

Perhaps I'm meant to let the birds in.

We'll look out the window together
watching the plant you left to die,
how it shakes with its willing, how its final
leaf spins on its final thread.

[stanza break]

If this is anything like the teeth
I'm losing in my dreams,
I know what's to come:

the clouds move faster

I roll down the blinds

shut the curtains

I never see it fall

iii. Eyeballs

You will rouse to the sound of them as they let
drop my eyeballs like marbles at your door
my eyeballs will be the love
marbles in your hand

Bill Knott, do you like my glasses?

Bill Knott, I find myself wondering tonight
if you would like my new glasses.

I've seen yours.
They were in a book;

they were thick and round,
like the bottom of this glass.

Would you like mine better in context?

I'm alone in the Jewish, hippy
couple's bed whose house I'm sitting.

Their daughter and her friends
sit on dewy car hoods in the drive.

She isn't allowed in anymore.

I took her keys from the brown leather
jacket in the coatroom.

I snooped for you in the drawers.

I'm in pajamas and my hair
is unwashed. The glasses are maroon.

[stanza break]

I've been reading you.

Your bio sounds lonely,
but you get laid alright
in your poems.

Bill, would you have liked
sharing plaster between us;
me dying my hair black for you?

Down the garden path

i.

chop of celery

Strung around her neck
like preschool beads:

boil of water

rat terrier shit on her lawn

spit of oil

neighborly pity

hiss of sauce

his back's sheer face
in their dark bed.

sear of meat

ii.

War jingles
loose inside her

vintage leather
handbag.

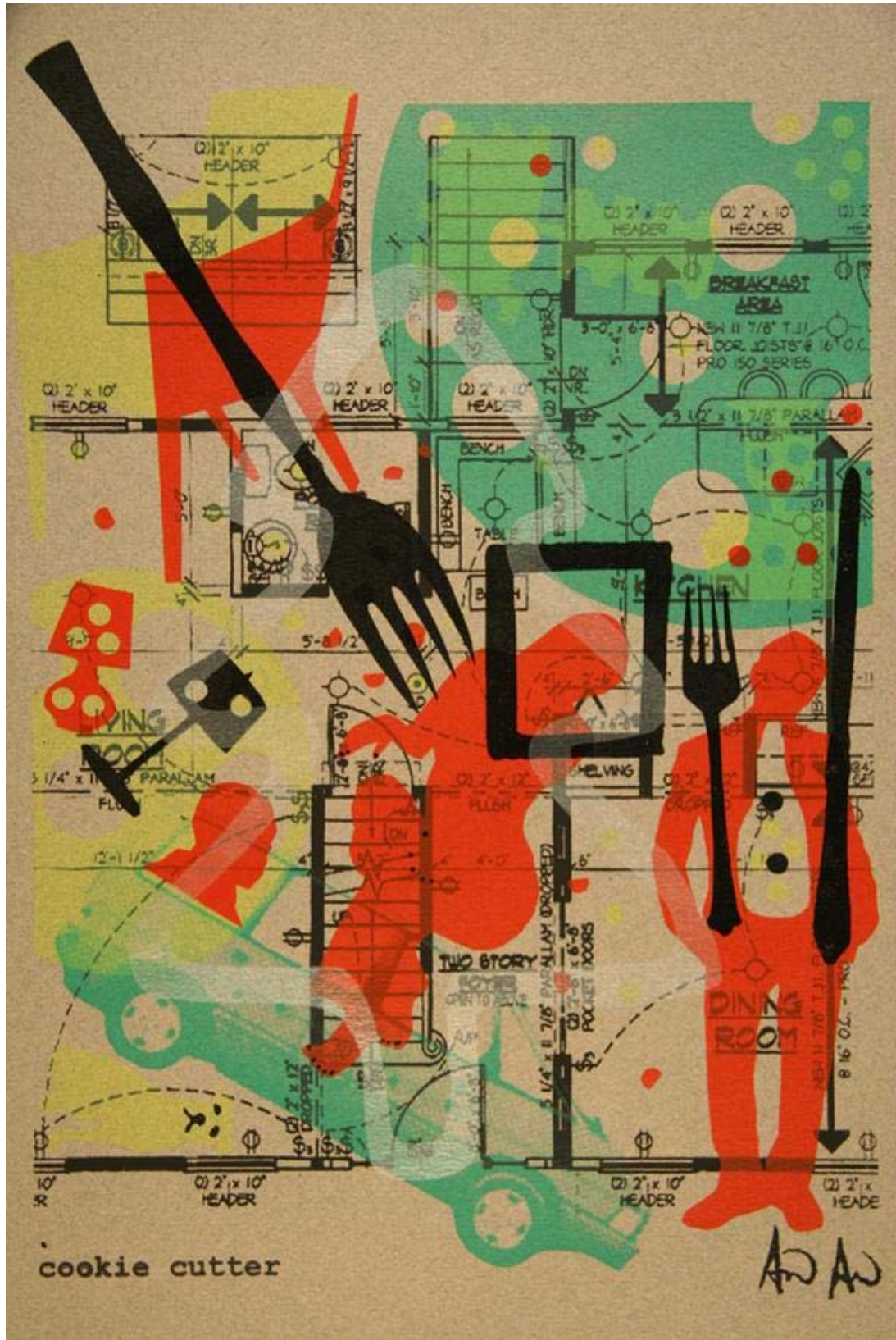
Kitchen knife stabs
lavender lotion;

gore glues grocery
store receipts to matches.

iii.

His elbow catches on the edge of his desk;
papers flutter from his hands like moths

startled in a field of purple flowers
he never liked the smell of.



Cookie Cutter by Andrew Auble

Cookie cutter: a found poem*

Someone living in a blank canvas doesn't really know how to create a home

i. The formula for good living

Debutante Divorcees, Husband
Huntresses, and Socialite Babies:

your secret to a happy

antiquepinksatin—rosyview
inhersittingroom—upholsteredchairs
andottoman

town home:

- flowerfilledlamps
- a splendor worthy a modern-day Marie Antoinette

ii. A degree of superiority: the power to visualize often resulting in much adulation from
your guests

“it’s so flattering sitting on a pink sofa”

i envisaged

it makes myskin look amazing

i imagined

fingers through the tissue thin wallpaper as he was hanging it

i nodded my head

the chandelier a steal mother's curtains

i said i wanted

lily of the valley falling down the walls

i wanted

heavenly white leather chair from Venfield in Bleeker Street

i want

football pitch size terrace

i wanted lots

sauna steam room state of the art coffee machine

once i realized

hot pink silk taffeta half chair and floral ottoman

i couldn't buy

two incredible lamps

what i wanted

iii. The feeling of total joy: complete comfort

although we had the lovely
sofa the beautiful chairs and ottoman
the room wasn't quite right

white rooms look like you
never moved in

i promised there would
be no more pink

if you've ever painted a room
a new color and then stepped back

to discover a wholly different space
you understand

i ordered the paint and had it done

even with the fire crackling
it felt cold

**Text found in "A Home of Her Own" by Plum Sykes (Vogue), an elementhomes advertisement,
and a Lancôme advertisement.*

Write about making tea

It is not everyone...who has your passion for dead leaves.

—Jane Austen

for Mike Madonick

i.

You said use *coffee* first,
but I've never drunk it.
Tea will do, you said,
it doesn't matter.

This house is drafty;
the old wood floor numbs
toes, the tile feels colder.
I like to be alone.

Because my roommate's
mug is big and not mine,
I fill it with water.
The microwave is lined
with gore. I decide on black
tea, a bag of sugar
from the pantry, hold
a spoon in my hand.

I've never owned a teapot.

ii.

The door springs open.
I take the water to the triangle
of light that has fallen
from the window above
the sink onto the floor—

a lesson from my first
dog, the warmth of her
fur. I stand in the triangle
of heat; lift, lower, slowly
in, then quickly out.

It exhales.

The spoon gets wet
cupping the tea
to the trash; the sugar
is a white sputter
spat straight from the bag;
I can feel it melt.

I'm scared; it's hot;
my lips dip in.

You'll notice all the sex in here.

iii.

My bed is soft this year;
there is no headboard.

*Dali's Female Figure
with Head of Flowers*
is tacked to the wall
so I can see it when my tea
rests on my stomach.

Am I the female with the head
of flowers, or the girl
in the background losing
her red scarf to the wind?

The sky is painted the color
of the leaves that blow past
the window like sunlight;
a single leaf sticks
to the screen and smiles;

You'll say I covet my melancholy.

No, Madonick, I tend it.

In bed

*Off, off, eely tentacle!**Medusa* by Sylvia Plath

The residue of
too many dreams
keeps me awake
this morning.

My man rolls, lops his
freckled arm across
my chest, beard
chafing as his thumb
begins to pace
my left nipple,

a raw welt.

I press my back
to the mattress,

her book drops to the carpet.

Finger swirling
like a nervous eel,
he swipes a glass
of water to the floor
with my nightshirt.

[stanza break]

The book steeps.

I look at him then.

He doesn't like to read my poetry

We will talk about this
half past twelve on August 22nd.

I will be in Minoqua with you
on a plastic dock, feet dangling

over the lake. A loon will cry
from the middle of the black water

somewhere. The sound will make me
think of the soft, perfect babies I don't want.

It will smell of live fish and pine.

The message

Gaby, the need to tell you this presses
like a full bladder. It is a quarter til two

and I would prefer to be in Libertyville
with you, again, in your father's backyard.

There was this white staircase,
let me explain... I was heading

for Chicago, had stopped. A woman
drove past a patch of wild poppies

sprouted near the highway. She ignored
them, but I could have sworn I heard

them howling. You should have seen
how they whorled for her, like when we tried

on prom dresses for hours to avoid
our fathers, and just like that fight

with Nicole Manna and her friends on the United
States map painted on the playground pavement,

Do you remember how they spread
between New York and Pennsylvania?

How, from California, we called them
stupid sluts and dared them to walk past Utah?

I wanted to blacken her eyes,
but the bitch kept driving.

I caught glimpses of the poppies through the passing cars;
their reddish flashes reminded me of neglected answering machines.

Gaby, I saw a mosquito at your cheek, once,
in the flash of your lighter and didn't tell you, I'm sorry.

The swelling was remarkable. Three exits down
that same highway a green meadow curled.

I wanted to log-roll down its hips,
paint myself green with it,

and there wasn't a goddamn thing in sight
to stop me, except on the belly of one of its

hills, an empty, white chair facing the road
as if someone was watching. I heard laughter.

A little girl smiled in the next lane,
waved through her open window.

Sometimes, with the glass pipe
in my hand, I think of baby whales.

I took a detour through the countryside.

My arm out the window, I flicked buildings

from the horizon, one by one, until I was tucked
between the crests of farmland near the ledge of Monticello.

Abandoned on the side of the road
was a white, porchless staircase;

it was perched on the golden edge
of a winter wheat field.

Four painted, wooden steps led to the tips
of the blurred yellow crop.

A crow burst to the surface
like a black-winged flying fish,

I turned my middle and index fingers into feet,
two child-like legs that ran and through the air

climbed each rickety step,
one by one until

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

When I tell you this, you will
ask why I never told.

Everyone else would have said it led nowhere,
but you and I...well, we've always known better.

I'm not angry

My mother wants me to call the uncle
who doesn't like me because he's sixty,

but I wasn't invited to the party, and I've just thrown
up my favorite barbeque because I took a Tylenol

with Codeine for my migraine. Instead I'm on the porch
on an itchy couch, watching all the words from *Book of My Nights*

by Li-Young Lee get pounded off the page by the wrench
my neighbor swings against the frame of a broken bike.

I'm not angry; it's that I meant to write about my first ferry ride
in Seattle, how I made friends there with an old man's dog.

She was shedding so I went to the boat's windy side
to get her hair off, but I wasn't angry at her.

I wanted it to end with the little boy who threw
bits of bread to the seagulls from his father's arms,

them hovering beside him, catching it with their beaks,
with him screaming wildly, or laughing, I mean.

iii. Doors, bushes

The dock

*How privileged you are, to be still passionately
clinging to what you love;
the forfeit of hope has not destroyed you.*

–Louise Glück

Was it here?

Did the night,
the dark water,
the numb glint of the stars

make you better?

This is where you finally came
to terms with your father's dying,
your mother's loneliness,

the dissatisfactions of living.

When did you realize
that nothing was the matter,
that they didn't listen?

The black,
the lake,
those little lights;

they don't ever listen.

And when you got up to go,
you didn't have to look,
because you knew,

as you've always,

that what was there now
was there before,
just as it would be

a little while after.

A girl, her family, a retirement home

the weathering of their brittle little bodies
 then the suicides, the callused brains

that won't scrape from the ceiling—
 a gray smatter a young girl shows off to friends

even her favorite resident
 surrendered reading the menu for a blind
 swede and a confused german who eat food
 now they don't really like

—used a gun—

—as her father will—

some jumped from ledges in nighties
 after they ate cottage cheese
 and apple sauce

some threw fake tits at the father
 let loose their balls on the girl's
 older sister who'd never seen any

*(the younger is almost as pretty
 as her, some say during dinner)*

some still fucked
 the confused ones especially
 and some still swore and giggled
 some may have been happy

[stanza break]

most begged to be let go

and everyone and none of them
had ever seen themselves before

and the family fought
and the father drank
and the oldest ran off
with an older man
and the old kept dying
and the little one stopped lying

told everyone they knew where their place was
and that none of them had ever seen it before

The night before Christmas

a church in the dark
is like a bar in the light

.

the man at the pulpit
says i'm a desiccate stick

.

my mother entrusts her purse
to my lap, squeezes past
my legs to communion

.

i clog the pew with the decrepit

.

when she returns, my faithlessness
makes my mother cry¹

1

I was very upset

*when you said you believe
in the colors of the sunset
the deep of the woods*

you don't see beauty

*He is the only One
no matter what name
He may be called*

.

she drops her cracker in her juice

.

the man at the pulpit beckons
a girl in her christmas dress

.

she touches the biggest candle
to hers, tip-toes back to her mother

.

light drips through the cracks
of her cupped hand

.

as the flame spreads down the rows
my candle burns and the wax
leaks and leaks and leaks

*anyone who claims to worship
a rose worships their egos*

*between you
the ravings of a madman
and God*

Save yourself

*He did not allow us the choice
of riding the fence in the middle*

He is what He said He is

So I wrote this for you

tough-skinned tears
meld into a bulbous blister
i can't stop fingering
.

I'm atop a mountain— a vulturous spiral

I belt the sun
to lay it back
behind the hills—

they grow darker.

Mom, the trees
have fat fingers
that waggle;

someone's painted a dragon eye
on the mountain's side;
someone yawned and fiery
clouds came out.

Mom, I won't tell you

that there were little cruci-
fixes on the tips of the fir

or that taillights appeared
then didn't at the end
of the curve's craned neck.

Old playgrounds, Oxeyes darken all around us

*They asked me where all the other kids were.
Dead, I didn't tell them, they're all dead now.*

My children slip into the woods
like pointless needles into dark fur.

Trees splay, steer them towards a yellowed
prairie; they vanish into barbed grass.

A cardinal slits a gash
down the gray sky;

he lands on the rotted fence
of a playground everyone's forgotten.

Ticks perch like peppercorns atop its edges.
The fence has a wound that is big enough to crawl through.

~

Miss Mary Mack Mack Mack

The sun startles nails pounded haphazardly into wood;

All dressed in black Black Black

metal winks as my children spin
shrieks from the merry-go-round;

With silver buttons Buttons Buttons

round, white faces flash past like moons.

It's the stench of their shouting that stagnates,
that keeps the leaves from shuddering.

All down her back Back Back

~

The swings are lifeless arms
that beckon my children.

They jumped so high High High

They hang from their bellies, hair
covers their faces, drags on the ground.

They reached the sky Sky Sky

That's how they latch on, dears, I didn't tell them.
I held their necks down later, lit a match.

White daisies, oxeeye, I think,
darken all around us.

My children begin to sing.

What mourning is

And it was there in the baobab,
a rifle quiet upon his father's knees,
that the boy came to understand.

The elephants surrounded the dead
one in the clearing, prodded his body

with their trunks, one nudged his head
from the ground. Others wailed.

[The boy thought he recognized the sound,
but his father would not turn to him.]

The herd stayed until dark, big
faces reluctant, guilty. And when
they finally left, the stars were on him,

their dead. They glanced back
to see if he would follow.

~

Many nights the boy climbs
to the top of the tree.

On the night the sun sets earliest
he hears the desperate scrape of bark,

a rustling that makes the hollow
of his stomach shake. It pulls itself

to the branch beside him. It is sweating;
it is his father.

When he regains his breath, he does not
turn to his son, but says, *When you die*

*they should write upon your gravestone
words like 'lawns' and 'dancing.'*

And when his father stands, a limb blocks his face.
For a moment he stretches into a "Y." It is the night

the moon comes earliest, and just before his father swan dives
to the ground, he explains, *I have never wanted 'courage' or 'faith.'*

~

The elephant's funeral was more tragic
for the boy than this one.

Here, they do not prod and wail;
they do not seem so confused.

Bleeding hearts grown limp

God knows for how long
she's worked tea
stains from that mug,

thinking of her daughter going away,
of her sick husband, a dead
friend and money.

The animals comfort her,
shed fur around the calves
of her splattered sweats.

She wants to ride bikes.
She wants to write stories
about a boy and a pack of wolves.

She wants grandchildren
and horses. She wants to go
rollerskating.

The neighbor kids laugh
in the driveway, throwing tiny pears
they pulled from her tree at each other,

Out front, she sees the bleeding
hearts have grown limp.

Going home

unbroken clay pots
 nested on
 a tin of moldy cupcakes
 a container of frosting
 those candles that never go out

big homespun eggs
 little notes in them
 from my father
 the ugliest green
 with browned meringue
 holds the sweetest
 I think of you always.

his writing is the slop of a child's

~

the treasure hunt after
 the noise his dresser made
 when swept of its clutter

my hand ran
 over the carpet
 hoped to find
 what he was looking for

i suppress the urge to throw things
just the sound it looks in air
the letting go

not anger no

sometimes anger

~

a glass bowl soars
through the living
room towards my father's
face on his birthday

popcorn like fat
rain to the rose-print rug

he tapes his glasses back together
with thick fingers
thickening cheek

the mess is swept to the trash
she opens a bag of chips

~

he got eight weeks
worth of booze
for his 12 string

i used to hide listening
behind bushes doors

i moved my mouth like his to the song
that made my sister cry

it's court tv now
cigarettes cheap tequila
an oxygen tank

flames shot up
his nose in the dark
with a loud pop
that made the dog bark
the living room brighten

~

their phone is cut off again
she calls between counting
pills at the pharmacy

the last time her voice
was that of a sheep
a bludgeoned bleat

tell your father you need him
melodramatic depressed hopeless

and maybe he won't blow his brains out
my mother was a writer you see

~

i come home and look at it close
no doors or bushes
their misery

and they scream
until i can't breathe

my father
clutches
my chest
is toothless
without glasses

and i loved them as much as i could

my mother just needs
three zanax
some water
a pillow
she will sleep
in the car

and i loved them as much as i could

The view of Earth from real high

My mother wakes him and he holds me there,
a safety rail between us, the plump grit of his hands
on my back pushes us past sterile walls
I lie on the bottom bunk
his fingers gallop through
my shoulder blades like the white
horses he said I'd ride through Heaven's
billowy outskirts
where slipped through clouds, saddles
fall like dead birds to the cold earth

When he lets go
he spreads his favorite
glass beads out on his chest
tells me to pick.

One looks like the view
of Earth from real high
what a bird must see
and I don't want it.

*though small against the black,
small against the formless rocks,
hell must break before I am lost;*

*before I am lost,
hell must open like a red rose
for the dead to pass.*

-Eurydice by H.D.