



REVERIE: A REQUIEM

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*for San Francisco*



## GREEN EYES

Now what I saw was the same but my eyes were different, turned green like my mother's immediately after she died. How did she die? Incrementally. Long gone now ago in some space, historical, as though stretched thinner towards air...

And me too pulled into threads, or you in your smoke drift who have come so far to read the clouds and stars in their formation on a page... I remember corn dogs and bulldogs, dreamsicles and ventricles, leather belts that whistled

and struck, and cabbage soup to soothe the hiss and the strike. Not in sequence but stacked like plates and conflated... And those pinwheel clocks spinning forward *and* back. A boy is a prelude, then an afterthought, then a molten core...

I armed myself with elocution and adorned myself with pride. Like a thief in plain sight I stole gender from the fem-bots and dude-droids, layered my body with faux leather and faux lace, muslin printed with snake sigils,

and saris of indigo denim fit for a wrangler — one with bangles big as cow eyes, that is, lighthouse beams that swept in widening arcs as I twirled, to flame the countryside like a dragon, set the village ablaze as the dragon in drag

I was, on fire, or so the cops thought when they stopped me for flying without a leash and buried my head in their waist-handly hood, by which I retired into the ground with a groan of lavender fumes, which will henceforth be my subtitle

when they exhume me in my marble book. Yes I talk as if I lived, but the fiction of me is merely your pleasure in deconstructing the violent world, so I dance with arms akimbo in an interrogative stance, and sing out of tune

as I do for a music of bent aspirations and uncommon grace. You remember that drinking fountain you led me to, and tipped my face into the black water so I could taste the poison syrup in its full splendor, fragrant as burning shame,

with a nose of infallible encyclicals and notes of medieval edicts tacked to stone walls? Yes, I carried that spice to make the man inside me thirsty for good, un-slaked, with a tongue for negative capability and lips formed to

suck the juice from the bones I raised. Where did the sky come in? When did it sever the present from the past and eat the human terms, the diminutives and endearments? How did the blue start to glow in our hands and

bloom in our faces as we shed our scales, how did the new skin bristle like parchment as we spoke to each other in welts and rashes the new text of the new alphabet of the new history...? If I say “the past” I mean my mother.



If I say “my mother” I mean the boy I was. If I say “I was” I mean something was here condensed from the air with a specific gravity you hung a name on — if that was you hanging names under the eucalyptus leaves in the rain.

I hang on your every word as the city shivers, words like “mortgage,” my beloved, and “high-rise,” my evil twin. The city shivers. The city shivers. Now what I saw was not the same but my green eyes... my mother shivers...

my green eyes... I remember how you tasted bathed in my sweat, I remember how you tasted roasted in my juices, your nipples spurting and your hips flexed on my incline, how could I not remember, an ocean more, more wet,

more rushing, more swells, more salt, of that contribution the verses are written in shivers... my green eyes... remember... And the story about two men in kilts or culottes, the story of two women in jackboots and capes, of four men

and six men and ten men who shivered in silver streetlight in  
contraband rain in communal moonlight till morning shot the city  
with frost or glitter now the city doesn't shiver... The city doesn't  
shiver. In Part II I discover the cure

for allegiance. In Part Seven I dismantle the binary system as a  
scam of chiaroscuro for the rainbow impaired. I drank my coffee  
— elixir of measure — at the sidewalk café, dodging belt-bombs  
and snipers defending their tables

or standing on chairs in an ambush of lectures on right thinking,  
right acting, right killing, right versing and if in the end I was  
beheaded for forgery or failing to inspire my green eyes no longer  
remember... but time slowed

as my mother receded into that space where vectors converging  
unravel like a knot in my heart loosened or hers under surgeon's  
thread pulsing free, an explosion of sorts, and flowed onward... The  
city shivers. That was my home

you sold, my golden nest, my chamber of solace, my secret place of rest, that was my chair for age and my couch for sleep and my desk for sleeplessness and my rug for bedazzlement, that was my work you sold that framed

the walls as if they lived like eyes, green as the lunging trees outside, the city the city the city shivers. Do you remember that hilltop above the hilltops where light fell like water to drench our wide-open faces and the whole thing

spread out before us coast to Bay, rise and fall, as we locked hands to seize and store the image and our lingering kiss drew in the streets and parks and timbered houses and raw incendiary sky as if kissing were breathing,

still breathing, pressed together as one inhalation, the city inside us, rise and fall... my mother breathes... her green eyes... open wide, my same eyes... open wide. The city... shivers, its green eyes... breathe...

||.

## HOUSE OF AIR

How does time with its hammer and tongs... so that invisible... the past invisible... *House of Air*, I said... We were climbing a wooded trail, which may have been a dream or a vision, as if climbing itself were an ark to the visible,

and the red, slick madrones, the twisty manzanita shrubs, clawed through the time or the fog or the curtain of air and refused to back down — surveyors or sentinels — inviolable — rooted in the rank...

Would you bring me back if you could, would you strip the mausoleum to see my happy face again, with its echoing eye-sockets and omni-grinning jaw, would you dust me off, blow out my nostrils, fit me with lips of pearl

to revisit our nacreous kisses, slick as oysters and silver-blue as their shells...? invisible kisses... How does time with its hockey

stick, its crack of polished wood...? Would you call me back to feed  
on your prime...?

She is back at her desk, that sifting machine... She is caught framed  
in the window by a passing gull. She sees what she sees, though  
what proof is that? Against the wall of books — shelves of Honduras  
pine — her silhouette flayed

by the blinds, she lists in sequence the towns burned, the cities  
under water, what she remembers and what she's been told, what  
she's read in *The Book of Slaughter* and *The Book of Stains*, *The  
Codex of Compton*,

and the *Index of Vanishing Holes*, her sifting machine chuffing like  
an engine as her hand moves like a wand... invisible grief... in the  
*House of Air*... on a Thursday afternoon... as though living inside a  
ravenous scroll

that lengthens as she reads, of which she is the author or the scribe she can't tell, and runs her fingers through her hair to slow down the march of time so she can breathe... she breathes... and time slows... and time slows...

Once I was a sailor when the sky was one thing, a blue breath from pole to pole I caught in my wild hair and out-flung hands as if I were the boat I sailed, and streamed on the gleam off the waves to any place I named...

Once under the unified sky that blew itself in gusts of blue that filled my mouth with air that took the shape of names I shouted, and banked into the wild verses that claimed the places I needed to be or go — invisible vision —

by which I traveled to myself and back in a blue cocoon of voices as if I were the sail, the boat, the sky, the wind, the mounting waves and rushing air, the place I wanted to see, the person I wanted to be, I was, once, when, a sailor...

Take her hand as she parts her hair and wipes her brow. Is it a butterfly of thought? Remember what she can't forget. The children with their eyes like dinner plates, the wiggling dog, the imprint on the mattress

and its shape of smells — invisible ardor — How does time with its shovel, its iron clang...? She adds your name to the list. She won't forget you, visitor, denizen, prisoner, supplicant, émigré, traveler, stopping by this house of air...



III.

## BREATHE

My green eyes floating in the dark... And breathed as if the sky were sitting on my lungs. It has to be communal. It has to be beyond remembering or forgetting. The pages need to rustle and turn by themselves,

as if the wind of the arriving news were blowing from start to finish, front to back... Invisible book... My mother reads, her green eyes peel back the letters... And then I just seemed to come apart in my limbs, like a marionette

with strings snipped — and would've fallen to the ground were I not already scraping the ground — my eyes with their retinas lifting away in shock — and the floaters zooming in like drones of the vitreous... Invisible vision...

now, yes, but behind the steel mounds, the hubs of digital clouds or digital air or electric packets delivering shivering sums of shivering sums, the city denuded, the hills leveled and the valleys filled in... I sold my pillow for \$5k...

It has to be collective, it has to be grabbed by the throat and shaken... or was that you shaking me out of slumber, as I woke to clouds of plaster dust circling the room like a tiger, the bricks and timber shattered in the cold... the city

shivering... Which was the real history? Was there more than one? One behind another behind another... Who arrived, who left, who stayed against all odds...? Who danced on the tabletops in a flurry of pastel scarves and three-day stubble

squealing, “*spacioussssss*,” and built a theatre out of Kleenex boxes and nail polish for a musical version of *Long Day’s Journey into Night* — in Pig Latin! — and brought the house down; or sailed away on the barques of the epidemic

from Laredo to ruin with a smile that wouldn't fade and a free pass to a convo with the angels; or got priced out, evicted, and laid off all at once but was saved by her business of hand-made organic shrouds, no irony...

one behind another, not in sequence but stacked like plates and conflated. If I say "I remember," does that mean I made it up? If I say "made it up" was history my evil twin? If I say "history" I mean I dreamed something sifted and resifted

stayed in the bottom of the pan... It has to be cooperative like the wind and the sail... As if time with its telescope or microscope she couldn't tell... slowed in the distance and slowed in the foreground and her hand slowed too

as the list lengthened... I remember... I made it up... Invisible images... Everyone breathe... Once, in the early years, I married the city, on a jagged outcrop on top of a hill with my eyes clear and the air clear

and that blue-jewel horizon and my pledge of intent with my heart  
clear in my deep-breathing chest I take you, I said, and that clarity,  
that northern light, which made everything visible all at once, with  
no clouds no smog

no shiver no shock every cornice and balustrade, every cedar and  
pine, every dizzying hill and dune and tower and scalloped beach  
at the western edge, with the green eyes of my mother, the painter,  
growing into mine,

and time wide open as though stopped or unending — I do —  
and the covenant like a poem wide open and unending... Invisible  
innocence... and the joy of the wind... Everyone breathe... The city  
behind the city...

You were there, I remember, with your velvet tunic embroidered  
with leaves (I coveted) and your straw hair in a ponytail and a gentle  
smile on half your face while the other half courted a lascivious leer,

and both touched me in my hard place... the city shivers... I think we walked all day and talked nonstop for hours till midnight stopped our chatter and my bed swallowed us like a lotus closing and did we wake?

Did that bed ever disgorge us? History is a vision of a version. It has to be a collaboration, it has to be stopped and started in the joy of the wind. My mother shivers... She remembers the fierce clarity of light...

It shows what it needed to show, so she paints what she needs to see. I saw you from a distance: scriptural, and from close up: devotional, and from inside: sacramental. I may have made you up out of necessity. That was my home

they sold... Everything shivers... I said, "I do..." The sky can tell the difference between what's in front and what's behind... My green eyes... Still kissing in the blue blue light... One behind another... Everyone breathe...

