

## Kneeling Self-Portrait

Fluencies of light dally  
with olive groves, pensive  
green and silver leaves reflect on  
noon lies. Unlovely Nemesis loves Narcissus

forced into fruitless bloom, and visits on him  
the sins of bees. Strange boy  
adoring water's nothing, shadows  
water captivates: this stream

shatters glass for every stone. Mirrors  
are evil, held overhead as sky.  
Persephone's heralds string their gold  
and black through pollen-addled air, singing

without respite, stinging light  
into food for dead gods.  
He doesn't recognize his body  
has no rights, no luck with bees.

## At the End of Outside

Summer opens its caesura  
in the year, a pause between winter  
and winter. He is more of a waiting, outline  
where something almost happens

yesterday, late wind's insomnia.  
The glare outside the body is cut through  
by rain when there is no rain for weeks.  
Meaning happens in him every afternoon,

turning like difference or the names  
of things, the hours' long attentive  
syllables brought to light, a white  
mistaken for horizon. He doesn't move,

but along the way there are birds  
narrating his future as he remembers it.  
He's forgotten the word for swallow,  
nightingale or any singing in the trees.

An earth utters its green everywhere,  
punctuated by wildflowers and other  
complementary colors, as though leaves  
were too much. Things diminish

day to day, the days diminishing  
toward December, the trees also . . .

## Antibody

I've heard that blood will always tell:  
tell me then, antigen, declining white cell count  
answer, who wouldn't die for beauty  
if he could? Microbe of mine, you don't have me  
in mind. (The man fan-dancing from 1978  
hit me with a feather's edge across the face, ghost  
of a kiss. It burned.) Men who have paid  
their brilliant bodies for soul's desire, a night  
or hour, fifteen minutes of skin brushed against  
bright skin, burn down to smoke and cinders  
shaken over backyard gardens, charred  
bone bits sieved out over water. The flat earth  
loves them even contaminated, turned over  
for no one's spring. Iris and gentian  
spring up like blue flames, discard those parts  
more perishable: lips, penises, testicles,  
a lick of semen on the tongue, and other things  
in the vicinity of sex. Up and down the sidewalk  
stroll local gods (see also: saunter, promenade,  
parade of possibilities, virtues at play: Sunday  
afternoons before tea dance, off-white  
evenings kneeling at public urinals, consumed  
by what confuses, consuming it  
too). Time in its burn is any  
life, those hours, afternoons, buildings  
smudged with soot and city residues. Later  
they take your blood, that tells secrets  
it doesn't know, bodies can refuse

their being such, rushing into someone's  
wish not to be. My babbling blood.  
What's left of burning  
burns as well: me down to blackened  
glass, an offering in anthracite,  
the darkest glitter smoldering underground  
until it consumes the earth  
which loves me anyway, I'm sure.

## Another Unclassical Eclogue

*Where were you when I was for sail,  
broken love spilled on a sprawl of winter  
rocks? Pollen stamps damp gold on fevered  
afternoons, summer hands its haze of petals  
over. My body was never my property.  
I didn't want to spare you  
anything. You ran laughing and lavish  
with sand from white combers: caught up  
with spendthrift heat. I never asked  
to spend the width of oceans drinking salt  
from your skin. Stranger with ash  
for fingertips. You burned away  
the mortal parts. I forgot the heel that bruised  
my forehead. Poured through midnights  
dripping illegible stars, if I was happy  
I hadn't a clue. Wolfsbane, monkshood,  
demon lover's black corsage. December  
suddenly: now I can sleep. You never asked  
my name. You answered when I called you  
archipelago, sandbar, volcanic reef days broke  
against. Sleeping with shadows  
shaped like a man, you called yourself  
bride. I took myself mapless  
through unfeatured weeks: I was never the man  
you were. You're wrapped  
in others' feelings like a shroud. I recognize  
that song. The song's gone out of me.  
You never heard the words. There never*

*was a song. White noise played  
on a puzzled radio all night. I was the sky  
and you were the spire, you were  
the bough and I was the cradle. I  
was the apple, you were the knife.  
Sing me past music this time. I never  
asked for anything.*

## Placet Futile

*long after Mallarmé*

*Rise up, my love.* This is the unmasked-for morning  
you must marry, some idle sunlight humming against  
white blinds. Here is your name, salt on the tongue, here is  
your face, a mirror fogged with steam: anything  
that can't be clearly seen, kingdoms of unrequited  
clouds. You keep this absence in an amber locket,  
a map of years sketched on your palm: you think  
there are no borders there. I won't propose the scene again.

You'd like to write something down about noon, how white  
notes of some motet light winds relay  
float weightless across an immaculate sky, how he glances  
and it's summer, a picnic by the polluted river with a  
stranger.  
Singing, even.

Appoint him shepherd of these signs.  
When you wake among mirrors you'll ask more than harm.

## The Beautiful

incertitudes are buying shirts  
across the street, shopping for another  
guise, layer of gauze, mottle  
across the mystery of no anyone  
in any light. All power lacking

matter, gods (decoys of gods)  
that approximate: ghost bodies  
somewhat like men. Who wouldn't  
own such excellence, own up to damage  
done already? Flushed out

of yellowed brick and stone  
by attention's blue smoke,  
the visible world stumbles  
into form: a grammar of wander  
and spectacle sidewalks learn

from newsprint and pasted petals  
that precede the leaves, flimmer  
from branch to ground. To walk behind  
beauty as a shadow at noon, perfected  
perpendicular, is difference, sundial

gnomon's pain (the manifest  
pinned to pure principle, Mediterranean  
rêve): proximate loss left in the other



life, where body arrests its tasks  
to break for the last instance

but one. (Bracket this, boy murdered  
in old paper, asleep across the fold's  
spoiled ink: chest open  
for inspection, three-color separation  
blood soiling the reading

fingertips. Bees build a honeycomb  
to seal his halted-open mouth, his carrion  
tongue, an eloquence of liquid light  
seeps out of bloated lips the clumsy gods  
have broken into.) The gods

go home alone, a lake's  
translucent body reiterates my face  
in dissolve: smudge of stigma blotting  
day's remains, a surf of stuttering  
stars singing *I'll never fall.*