

Women's Poetry

I, too, dislike it.

However,

I was trying to not think
when out of the gaping wound
of the car-detailing garage (smells like metallic sex)
came a Nissan GT-R fitted with an oversized spoiler.
Backing out sounded like clearing the throat of god.
A gold snake zizzed around the license plate.
Sunburst hubcaps, fancy undercarriage installation
casting a pool of violet light on the pocked pavement
of gum blots. Was it this that filled me with desire?

Midnight Feeding

The open shed on the lawn's far side stinks of gas from the hateful mower that pulls me where it wants when I mow, which is seldom. I rip up grass. Humid night's moon's nothing-halo; the lawn pretends to candy floss. Black-white dud roses dead since June, alive enough to scratch my bare legs. I'm wearing nothing but underpants, flipflops. Arms full, I stumble out, flashlight in my mouth, turn my head to choose what's lit. Inside the dirt-floor shed, I fill bowls: Dry bits, tuna slop. The flashlight hurts my mouth till I drop it, dwindles into its cone where it falls to blight a denticular leaf.

“Raphael! Gabriel! Lucifer!” Feral kittens come running, vicious, filthy. Hum of the road. Uriel shines his reflector-eyes from among mower parts in the shed's darkest corner. Disgust shakes his paw. He won't get close since wild La Mamma ran off weeks ago. My three-month daughter cries on the baby monitor I wear like a Miss America sash. She'll wait, Uriel must eat. Can't leave them. Coons or coyotes would get the food and kittens too. My fur rises on my arms. What a bad mom! Also, I refuse to look at the stars. There are too many stars in poems you have to get drunk to write.

Kissinger at the Louvre (Three Drafts)

I

Kissinger in black-tie shuffles to the town car
idling at the museum complex edge
between where the glum Pei pyramid rises
and the gardens begin. “Is that—” I say,
and “Yes,” says Jim, baby in his arms,
me shoving the empty stroller to get home
by naptime. Nobody notices, clicking
at each other through camera phones, Kissinger
looking matchlessly neat, clean, ugly and
dressed by servants. His driver’s at the door,
arms stretched wide as in a fish-this-big tall tale
in welcome. The ear-wired bodyguard,
hand on Kissinger’s gray-fur head so it won’t
scrape the door-frame, bends him into the car.

If I were a different kind of poet, I’d put
Kissinger in front of *The Raft of the Medusa*
blinking at the father weeping for his son
lying dead over his lap as the sails
of the ship that will rescue them are
sighted on the horizon and the top man
in the spout of survivors waves his ragged
undershirt. Or I’d put him gazing reflectively
at *The Death of Sardanapalus*, a Potentate
presiding amid an exorbitance of fabrics
over his imminent suicide by fire,
slaves bringing in, in order of importance,
horses, gems, plate and favored concubines
for slaughter. I’m not that kind of poet.

2

Kissinger totters befuddled by culpability,
luncheon champagne and dotage. The car

eats him. I won't pretend the bodyguard's Vietnamese or Cambodian, though that's the obvious truth-in-lies move—he's French, that ratface-handsome, smoked-out look—and doesn't care *merde* for history. He makes the old man bow, same move with which the beat cop, our public servant, submits the petty criminal to the patrol car, same move the anguished teenager got—half-protective, half-corrective or coercive, half-kind—after the arraignment for leaving her newborn to die in a rest stop dumpster.

Anybody can understand the girl, and even the purse-snatcher. Bodyguard bends Kissinger gently in, portly little Kissinger, gloves his head—anything hurt will be the hand of the servant. Ecru upholstery with oxblood accents, minibar something like a safe, CNN muted to newscrawl and the anchor's frozen-flesh face. The latest assistant, gender irrelevant, busy with a BlackBerry across from him, root beer-colored eyes and preternaturally neat hair of *La belle ferronnière*, keeps the lap desk, emergency Magic Wand Stain Remover Stick, eyebrow brush and dossier of Opinions in what looks like “the football”—the nuclear war plan suitcase Presidential aides carry at all times—but isn't.

3

The one camera flash as he got in gave Kissinger a headache. As they start for his Avenue du President Wilson hotel, the Rue de Rivoli sliding by in a haze, he falls uncomfortably asleep to the anodyne

glow and murmur (“*tournez à gauche*”) of the driver’s
GPS device. The relieved assistant
opens an Imagist anthology. In Osaka, Oslo or Wasilla,
Alaska some weeks later, a woman at her kitchen table
uploads Paris vacation photos to her laptop.
“Who’s that behind me?” A dark figure. “He looks familiar.”
“How should I know,” says her husband.
“I’m trying to get Baby to eat more potato.”
“Oh well. I look fat in it,” she says. And deletes.

Thrash

Twenty years ago, I squeezed
onto the edge of the Knights of Columbus
stage to escape a lot of leaping, bashing bodies
as Hüsker Du did “Eight Miles High”
and Jeff shielded May with his tallish
body and she slam-danced inside the frame
of him. That’s all. Afterwards on the liquid
city street the screeching still running
up and down my veins, I was going to help
May when she was going to smash her head
into the belly of a frat boy who laughed
at us except after all he didn’t
want to get into it and walked away.
The world’s repeatedly saved by people
whether right or wrong just goddammit
not wanting to get into it.

Econo Motel, Ocean City

Korean monster movie on the SyFy channel,
lurid Dora the Explorer blanket draped tentlike
over Baby's portacrib to shield us from unearned
innocence. The monster slings its carapace
in reverse swan dive up the embankment, triple-jointed bug legs
clattering, bathroom door ajar, exhaust roaring,
both of us naked, monster chomps
fast food stands, all that quilted aluminum, eats through streams
of running people, the promiscuously cheerful guilty American
scientist dies horribly. Grease-dusted ceiling fan
paddles erratically, two spars missing. Sheets whirled
to the polluted rug. I reach under the bed, fish out
somebody else's crunched beer can, my forearm comes out
dirty. Monster brachiates from bridge girders like a gibbon
looping round and around uneven bars, those are your fingers
in my tangles or my fingers, my head hangs
half off the king-size, monster takes tiny child actor
to its bone stash. Pillow's wet. The warped ceiling mirror
makes us look like fat porno dwarfs
in centripetal silver nitrate ripples. My glasses on the side table
tipped onto scratchproof lenses, earpieces sticking up
like arms out of disaster rubble. Your feet hooked over my feet. What
miasma
lays gold dander down on forms of temporary
survivors wandering the promenade? You pull Dora
back over us—Baby's dead to the world—intrude
your propagandistic intimacy jokes,
unforgiving. "What, in a motel room?" I say.
Purple clouds roll back to reveal Armageddon
a dream in bad digital unreality. Explosions repeat patterns like
fake flames dance on fake fireplace logs. Sad Armageddon
of marriage: how pretty much nice
we meant to be, and couldn't make a difference.

Ippopotamo

assisted readymade, La Specola, Florence

You are looking to a specimen
whose exact age is unknown,
but it must be ca. 300 years old
as it probably lived in the Boboli Gardens
during the reign of Cosimo III de' Medici
(1670–1723).

It is still visible the mark of the rope,
the sign of its captivity,
around its neck.

The hippopotamus is reported
in the Giovanni Targioni Tozzetti's catalogue,
compiled in 1763, and it is almost certainly
one of the oldest specimens
displayed in the Museum.

Its age is also revealed
by the clumsy execution
of the stuffing and mounting,
and through the animal's expression.

It was likely not observed alive
as the legs are mounted as a plantigrade
walks with entire sole of the foot
touching the ground
although it is a digitigrade
walks so that only toes
touch the ground

Detritus of empire,
mouth awkwardly gaped,
threatening, the corners
beginning to tear, too many teeth shoved in.