

Dragstripping

I met a stripper on my first visit to the big West,
sitting on a hill in Marin—I was wearing a black red yellow plaid shirt,
she wore something more open, loose,
sleeveless.

Her knees to her chest,
she was pulling at the brown California
grass, throwing it back down.
I loved looking at her plain brown hair falling over the side of her face.
I was still wearing women's clothes and shoes,
but I made myself a believer that day.
Her thick belt, heavy boots—brown eyes.

The way she looked at me until I had to look away.
She was boy and I hadn't met anyone like her yet,
look at her blue shirt, she opened me, the way
she tore at the grass: hard then threw it.
We walked the hills in Marin, I wanted
to be like her, I wanted to be her.
I couldn't even say what she had,
but I wanted it.
Our time lasted only weeks, but her face
still comes to me.

I made myself a queen those days,
inside I felt the turning diamonds
of a life not lived/someone else's life,
now mine: holding the vision, heavy as mud,
I thought: *Just a push?*

in beauty:

I made myself a man watching her:
the stripshot breaks apart
into millions of shotback stars
cutting the night apart
in her crosscut body,
hard and lovely.

Some people say half isn't anything/
but it will drive an ocean back
to the center.
She'll take your money and you'll thank her
in the cage of your body,
drowning in the stripping/
loving the shotback body.

Dear ghost of everything you wanted:

*Jerking you into pleasure, jerking you
into your own story with a stripshot
of ammo to the vulva, triangle of light,
triangle of her: the wrapper, 3 sides of lust,
the fuckfield, the 4th eye.*

I saw the future in her body but I didn't know my questions:
all that came out of my mouth
were birds.

Junkie

*the first day i shot dope
was on a sunday.*

*I had just come
home from church
got mad at my motha
cuz she got mad at me. u dig?*

—Sonia Sanchez

There's light along the stripline tonight: this is your new family, same as the old—cold, not there, spot the dealer at 50 ft, shady deal behind the van/side lot, know the city solitaire—5am light after all-night drugs/don't look straight in the eye/movement to the corner/same as the old/don't acknowledge/who to look at & when/ get the dope don't be stupid friendly/shut up & listen/know the main player/walk away/not too far/the way someone holds their head/behind the van/same as the old/study the movement/don't look like you give a shit/night after night/don't acknowledge/they know you saw them already/behind the van/shut up & listen/walk away/not too far/gangster lean doesn't mean gangster/same as the old. cold, not there/get the dope/walk away

When Rape Was an Ocean,

she became larger in it

In the box apartment off the side road,
she said yes, one drink.

She doesn't remember his face,

just the flat boulders on the sandbar, man-made
for protection:

ocean water coming in/
water going out

Follow the line of shore with a string:

She was dropping down,
her body falling

Before the sky star splits, before the water
rolls back into her—

cutting wires of light
cutting wires of light

The line of shore can't be replicated, the string
now gone, her body marked

How she reads water
in the moment of trauma/
there is cutting and there is light

These are her new directions

Don't pretend you can't see this

She swims headlong away
she wants to *be* ocean, wants
to find the sky

She wants to be sky

She swims headlong and larger
headlong and larger
larger