

Praise song with coyotes and foxes

For the trees of course their secrets their lives  
like old spreading deltas a long clock ticking on  
their indifference distain even their stalwart nature  
courage of root and rock their raucous brief birds  
resident moths praise for later their ice-burdened  
deaths their deaths in thunder crack and shatter

how water can do so much with so little add acid  
and even these words become invisible water  
in the lungs water for the boats water in the boat of  
the body thick in its tidal blue tubes how rain how  
the rain-laden clouds turn us luminous as old paintings  
sad and sadly beautiful

praise too for the future

its greedy infants their time-turned backs strange  
fashions for the way they'll mutter and nod over our  
dry bones our teeth full of poison and meat

praise

for the foxes who curl asleep in my daydreams who  
are questions vivid as fire vivid as heat who scream  
in the night praise too for those darknesses when  
the tide of sleep carries everyone else far from here

so that the foxes and I alone keep vigil awake with  
the stars

praise for of course my beloved stars  
their faint light their deaths the news of which will be  
kept from us for years for the light years and the dark  
for those hours when what you love has already died  
but the news is slow to arrive for the unbreakable speed  
of light speed of sound for each and every silent minute  
silent hour when you continue on as if nothing awful  
had not already happened

for the phone call the one  
that said she had been gone already a long time  
whole hours while for once I slept in the welter wreckage  
and joy of facile dreams for those moments when  
the coyotes woke me as if they already knew and were  
made sad as if they knew the same moment her house knew  
the moment it felt the body's sudden vacancy felt the body  
falling in quiet thunder the shock wave immediate and  
unthinkable the death recorded here in their dirge as if  
the echo of this would not go on arriving for all the remaining years

Shipwreck [Domestic]

It's like in tinkling the whiskey inside the bell  
of its tumbler in blending sugar fruit cream  
and cold we think of ice as domestic as a tool  
as a tool we use for delight a tool to delight this  
tongue awkward at its own party it's like we look  
at this glass in our hands at what we can make  
of sand and fire at what contains and what cannot  
be kept we look at what bears our burdens on  
between the ice and this polished deck this deck  
of treated oak over water it's like the bright steel  
laid for dinner thick in its handles its sunward shine  
its liquid silver pretty as a pool of poison and starlight  
it's like we don't even think of the vessels  
of our bodies of how much we live inside a wreck  
inside this cold impossible falling

[A prayer for our mortality]

To begin think of wind river sand silk the various strands  
currents how falling moving how leaving can be exactly  
that benign a cessation of resistance a species of quiet  
abnegation think then of a flame on its wick flickering  
in the drift of air stubborn and still alight holding on  
in the draft that sifts through a summer screen the leaves  
greenly afire on their piers their waxy wicks the sleeve's  
small collapse against your arm in the breeze think  
of the current of time how it too swirls eddies and then  
abates as sticky afternoon slips into sticky dusk itself  
slipping into moonrise into full dark think of the lit window  
and you candled there you inside the moving the breaking  
heart of this thing think of the glass doing its invisible best  
the shell the egg of your dwelling the way it cradles you  
how soft the body's flesh how there are two of you  
the unformed fetal you asleep innocent as weather and  
the you that paces in all that yolk light the light that spills  
thick and angular through screen and glass the light  
that falls across the trimmed the orderly lawn the way  
your shadow hushes the crickets afraid there in the sudden  
dark the way it releases them as you vanish into song

This is the letter that I would write you

I would call it *Zugunruhe* and know that though I cannot you can pronounce that word perfectly

I would say today rain the hum and splash of white noise the silvery gray of a sky obscured and suffering

Today the dogs tucked under comforters slumbering how they always get sleepy and still in bad weather like ancient tides rise inside their sturdy bodies

like their tall-grass circles before sleep to have a memory that long to remember

Dark chocolate and hot tea the cradle of an oak drawer full of lace full of delicate made things

What does an oak tree love is it the sun torching the metabolic fires is it the thin tubes raising water like a sacrament golden cup held to the light is it the good dirt crumbling at the root is it the rain

How the rain flows around solids creating them in a fluid sliding in vacancies when I stand in the rain I am

not cleansed nor made wet I am simply a shape an absence

I remember sometimes being a child and yet my body is not the same body the same shape the bones

How is it that I love you

You could find salt stains the muted smooth beach pebbles taken into my mouth the ocean like the rain leaving only a slight shine in its absence

the shine and the salt my own spin cycle listen I was a child

the first time now I am that restlessness before migration the way my body

in the rain turns toward where it thinks you might be how the drops gleam at the pine's small needles how I reach and take one shining drop on my tongue how it tastes

of impossible distances even as reflexively I swallow even as distances both collapse and

lengthen into the afternoon into the white noise is this feeling so slight so fleeting as all that

Listen every love story has a difficult ending every love is a story listen

It might never stop raining

This is what I would say to you

I would tell you how the world retreats as the light fades  
the birds hush as they find their perches their pews here  
in the church of the coming dark safe for once as houses  
safe enough for sleep how the dark erases first the far off  
then the nearby until your ability to see becomes limitless  
the insistent world pushed back the whole thing on pause  
this is the gift I wish for you benediction of a withdrawn  
region the night's silences the way nothing requires touch  
nothing wants it the way the lake cracks open the forest  
the way the lake struck rough with moonlight cracks open  
your ribcage and yet nothing needs to leave nothing wants  
more than this to be here enclosed and opened and how  
not that far away the vacant bodies curl in their labeled  
their windowed cages how their polished teeth gleam  
in the dim light of their fear how it's so quiet that when  
the snow starts you can hear each branch etched in whispers  
hear each round whole note of bird spoken by the snow  
hear this hymn this lullaby shaped like a tree shaped like  
the woods like the hissing rippled lake shaped like what  
it is evensong vespers shaped exactly like a prayer