

## Trench

I am always & never a pacifist. In spherical geometry,  
 a triangle can have three right angles. The wrong  
 people have the guns. The waves rise higher  
 & higher before crashing,  
 the whitecaps brighter & more luminous  
 & someone will sell this to me as *progress*  
 & maybe they are right—this churning, this indefinite sense

of floating, confident of human waste. Or else  
 its opposite—how we bend ourselves straight  
 like the lines connecting any three  
 points on the globe, three cities  
 with looming disasters. A perpetual  
 apocalypse machine. Always & never  
 I long for the engine's total failure. I have lived

in three states but always the water belonged to someone,  
 to the TVA or the condo developers. Here  
 NIMBYs look out over their balconies at the spectacular  
 view, or park rangers shine their flashlights  
 into tents, blinding the inhabitants, who are relegated  
 to liminal space, doorways to sleep  
 in or this, the edge of it all. Pink clouds

over Los Angeles today. There's a shooting  
 range by the beach. You can watch the sea-birds  
 fly out over the horizon, & their paths appear straight,  
 though parallel to the curve of the earth.

It's thrilling to watch them dive & yet  
 I'm heartbroken all the time. I'm looking for  
 the low point of the world.

## Collectivism

Here is the joy of the spirit. You are in church & you catch it. You, Diana, & Michelle hold hands. You run together with the joy of the spirit. A path at the edge of the room. Someone grabs your arm to stop you but Diana & Michelle pull you on. They are homeschooled, built like spindly colts. You are built more inefficient but you run & you run like the horses in the etching as they plunge over the cliff. Your sister is dancing in blue liturgical robes leftover from Mary in the creche & you run. Your mother is speaking in tongues & you run. God is the death drive of horses. You will not look back at your father. You will not look back until you cannot run, & when you look back you look back at empty chairs. The congregation is running. They are full of the spirit. They run holding hands, with you, with you, & together you throw yourselves over

**“windows of anxiety”**

my senator's on speed dial, ring of salt  
we come holding our slips of paper above our heads

a man comes whistling a song about the wobblies  
& he cannot cross the ring

I meant to built a place that mercy like a cat could crawl into  
past bottles in a line by the door

the hour of this  
made bad & still a slow dissipation

the night more dun than any other color  
somewhere there is a ring I cannot cross

we smash long lightbulbs on the street like children  
like children we wade out into the glass

the door is neither open nor closed but still material  
we are comforted by its tangible form

its feral mass bounding away from us  
a hole blown clean through to the other side

my senator operates the machinery  
a place holding less than a teaspoon

accountant I come whistling a song about the wobblies  
two fingers tapping the lip of the glass, ring of salt

we pile them in corners & wander around  
what stings when applied to the skin

### Three Guineas

All men below forty count as enemy combatants—  
this is how we keep the civilian death rate low. I'm naive,  
I suppose—I don't see why we can't try kindness  
as a diplomatic force. Say sorry sorry sorry. Pitch in  
for the washing up. One way to test narcissism  
is to ask *would the world be better if you were in charge*,  
but listen, I'd pick any of us first for kickball  
or conflict resolution. Our leaders are dramatic,  
they never learned to apologize properly  
or turn their houseplants to face the light. Pragmatic,  
to say what you mean, to spend your pocket money  
on sundries & dog food & ethical porn.  
I keep a clean house. I try not to hurt people.  
Once I was sexually harassed by drone & naturally  
think ill of all their machinations. Why not be didactic?  
What did subtlety ever do for you? I cannot  
remember a world before endless war. Maybe  
it never was, & the glow in old photographs is a trick  
of the eye that covers the insignia on the uniforms.  
Still, to touch a kind of warmth without the necessary  
presence of a smile on the page. If I ever felt peace  
I would bask in it. I would let it bury me.

## Virginia Woolf as Queer Icon

I don't feel any different now that I can marry.  
I'm ambivalent about acceptance, how smug  
people look when they're accepting me.

I went to Pride in San Francisco & we cheered  
the Bank of America float. It was all straight  
couples making out. It was all rainbow shirts

& glitter & shit we bought off Amazon for cheap.  
It was so well lit. We pretended that was the way  
with our souls, our shared neuroses bright bright bright.

Or else we put our sadness up for sale,  
buy something about it. Where does the dark go?  
Why can't I smile for the camera?

I'd rather be hated. I feel hated anyways.  
O you rapturous partiers, why won't you  
antagonize me? My houseplants are dying,

they burnt in full sun. I put oil on their leaves  
to make them shine. I sweep up the dead ones. When  
I'm done they look pretty enough to be fake.

## Virginia Woolf as Feminist

If it can't reach my mother, what good is it really?  
She sends my sister razors in the mail.  
Mama feared growing ugly & so married up up up,  
each new lover with a bigger boat & better beer.  
I feared growing ugly & so consciously became it.  
I let my teeth turn dull. We are one way  
or the other with death.

## Virginia Woolf as Pacifist

I keep a clean house. I try not to hurt people.  
I have a sad story about a dog—doesn't everyone?  
My mother believes we are liberators  
because only her children will tell her otherwise.  
A friend from high school drinks too much  
& screams kill kill kill into the bowl of the toilet.  
I used to call him *theater nerd* but the uniform  
& haircut made him handsome, taller somehow,  
& men give up their seats to him. He says  
*thank you for your tax dollars* in reply every time.  
We all pretend my father is dead, the whole town  
pretends & grieves & moves on. My mother  
believes we are liberators because gas is so cheap  
there. Out among acres of pasture, it's hard  
to imagine America means anything  
but happy meals, hymnals, & freedom. Hard  
to imagine how different alone means  
in a studio apartment, a crumbling urban landscape,  
how different we treat our dogs there.  
My mother finds an arrowhead in the creek.  
She strings it on a necklace & shows me—  
*look here, look at this what I've made*—& the crickets  
begin to sing out in the green hills, more numerous  
& louder than I remembered, so loud it's as if  
a swarm is descending on the house, so loud  
it's like an explosion.

**Ryszard Siwiec**

Accountant, make the measure of me.  
I loved people & lost them in crowds,  
transfixed by some new spectacle,  
cold punctures in the rubber. This is the story—  
everything is still, we have no money,  
& I am marking down the ledger,  
snapping matchsticks for the decimal points,  
& I was alone when I was a child  
but that part of the story has changed.  
It's raining. I went out because  
I could not bear the fever or another  
protest brimming with children or  
the children living in cages now. Accountant,  
let us stand on the front steps. Love  
big enough to change the world is always  
suicidal. Let me offer it up on the pyre.