

like being born

and the things of a house are made of sand,
of soil, of lime, of water and wax
of soil and stone and wood

there are things we live among : date. bean. rind. & fire forced from the furnace below :
an old oak presses the fence, shoots from the roots of the property line, like animus—
A pretty girl is iron now, so blasted :
or she's oil from olive and olive from twigs
twined as if combatants *and to know them*

is to know ourselves

“I is a word I put on my mouth” as I kiss you and hold
the blood in your body, wax is what the moon has done
in a cold far-away unknow : we'll make a war to gird our name
to force our heat while Rosie and Ma
run the foodbank with numbers rapid speech and boxes :
onions, sprouting potatoes, baby
food for Burmese babies and bread
from warehouse ovens on a highway. I fold the cloth, I lay the cloth, I hang the clothes
for women.

I pray, O

I was just learning how to see. And what I saw, as if through fog or smoke—surrogate mouths, belonging to no one, wet from a sadness that had no cause. In the west where women wear white, in the east where the sun is red, in the European gardens with their lines and lawns, the uncountable absences, the gaping holes: an archivist's assistant, a boy pouring mescal, a gathering of mothers holding vessels, and my own mother five years underground. I was just learning to see, having passed over a massive highway like a hawk. Like other women, I'd been raped, and like other children, I'd been hit. The air is always filling some other body, a body younger and drunker than mine, for the bellows, like a book, are never done.

My mother threw a pot of boiling water at my father's face. She grabbed hold of a cutting board and hurled it at his feet. I see these things though I never saw them. The best bookstores are the ones in which all of the books are written in languages you cannot read.

As Veronica and I walked through the woods, she told me of Guillermo's grief. Two months later, Guillermo corroborated the tale. He'd been left by a woman in Boston. Homesick and alone, he was too afraid to board a plane to return. When finally he managed it (with drugs), he wanted only to leave again. Now that he had written two books, he no longer wanted to be a writer. Instead he would re-issue the old humorous novels that had gone out of print. There are, he tells us, very few funny Mexican novelists; his mission is to keep those few from falling into oblivion.

It takes a very sad man to care so much for the jokes of the dead.

I was just learning how to see my life as if from a vantage point far off or above. There are too many books, Guillermo says, even as he labors to restore them. A woman in a zebra-striped jumpsuit fakes an animated conversation for a camera. The man who films her will soon be dead, just like me. With a popsicle stick in his back pocket, he will hang his head, resting his elbows on his knees.

on the eyes

scandal

hides

the crumb

torsion

tastes

so craven

filial

pleasures

slow

wanting

slivers

love

what life

could have

been

Spectacular Leap

The hard thing lifts with you in it.
What is this air but a delivery service for less

Medicaid, SNAP, housing
The thing I'm in humps the chill above snowed-up mounds of dirt and
stone, her make-up-kit jumps her lap

Cords twine in their readiness to move
word of cold

cuts to your ear, less
mediocre care for whoever hasn't got

a home or
job or bone.

Untitled

White sheen licks
the west side of a pole.
Shadow gifts

the east with blur.
A small pull on the inner
wrist where the strong blue

vein falls in under flesh.
I am steadily erect—a
bottle with a fish mouth

gaping to the grid.
Horses with hooves stilled
in planetary sawdust are

what the flat fan-blades resting
are. I'm reluctant to un-
fog the window's face

for the woman adjusting her
strings at her neck
I am slow.

She doesn't hold on
any more than I do
to the knot at her throat, she lets

it go. The other one walking
into her sunglasses passes by language meant
to make us want

beer.

Untitled

The Real world blew laws
across an old hidden world

Bars of war forced by laws
lie thick as men

mere men, struck men

bands of old men in bars
Slow as all hell
but firm