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Statehood in Selves

Maren Schiffer

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STATEHOOD IN SELVES

By

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Thesis

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Creative Writing

Statehood in Selves

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STATEHOOD IN SELVES

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“One of the maxims of practical education that governed my childhood:
‘Don’t eat with your mouth open.’”
--Colette, *Prisons et paradis*

“The imagination penetrates life.”
--Wallace Stevens

I.
Punishments

Picturesque Punishments

When I pay attention to the fact that my imagination is a man,
will you stop paying attention to me?

Startle your imagination awake, yes, across the field so it

cannot sleep the little

trigger might bring out the holy

my ears and my blood at once

a pricked circle

I struck a knife in my poem and came out with a man

I need more imagination in my poems. More body outside the body,
more outside in the body

You slept in today, again

Last night Molly was my student. I said, "Well this is awkward Molly,
you know that I like you. We're just going to have to pretend that I'm
evaluating you." Her hair was as straight as it's ever been.

Dreams don't count. If you strike a bleeding heart, this poem may work.

An organ throbs in my palm, I don't know whose.

Good, but throb? Follow the rules of strangeness, and you will
obtain me.

Tommy told me he's noticed that I don't write when something is
triggering me politically.

My cunt is cold and there are not two fish swimming up and down
inside of me (one red and one blue) from my head to my toes.

I have lost my train of thought.

If there is a train of thought, that would mean my mind is inside of it.
Yes? My body is in my mind is aboard the train is in my mind.
If there is a train of thought, I imagine it's a toy one. My fingers crack
its plastic wheels off, bend the front ones off their course.
It is red and yellow, primary.

What do primary colors signal in the brain?

I categorize their feelings and their politics.

Is it a masculine achievement, to solve the rubik's cube?

My cunt is cold and there are no longer two fish swimming up and down
inside of me (one red and one blue) from my head to my toes.
The dirt outside is dampening, and it is dark in the morning
when I need to wake.

I imagine my body being taken being taken.

This morning I walked to the writing desk
and dishes spilled out.

If you listen to the birds, they will tell you.

The crows are picking on the lame one's wing.

Sometimes I think you do not choose me.

You have never washed my hair or woven my beard
into your blankets. You are too rooted in yourself.

When you took my body to the desk, I had the window.

Last night, when I brought my body to the liquor store

I thought about the poet

spilling her feeble guts elegantly by a river

collecting them in her arms

offering them to female lovers

thinking them scarce and lacking.

I considered an imitation there

a devotion outside of the stomach, the intestines

something to say, now my turn.

But there was no need.

When I imagined summoning you, I imagined
your hands descending, and your light.
I imagined what you wanted, and I opened myself.

You were with someone else.

Why is it that we use “endure” for winter?
A coming out as an end when there isn’t one.

Where is the magnificence?

Before I sat at the desk, I sat in my Volkswagon and listened to the radio. My neighbor walked out barefoot and took a picture of the house's exterior. "Who is it for?" "A beginning," he said.

You are losing your sight of direction and end.
Why do you turn to me for healing?

The posture rests its teeth on my torso.

When I talk to the imagination, I understand

imagination is the figure wrapping plastic around the body my

to follow the morning routine.

My docile body reaches for guidance.

The docile body believes in its need for guidance.

Imagination tells me to find strategic control.

Our contract is not available to me when I am not good.

I am guilty for tending the garden I don't have, and for dragging a mop on the floor I do.

I am guilty for reaching my finger into my lover's mouth and feeling around in this long
generosity.

I am guilty for not tending the garden I have, and for dragging a mop on the floor I don't.

My Garden Far From the Beach

My garden is getting very perfect.
The parsnips spit leaves, worms opening
dirt. These worms.

My hand has asked me to perform.

If I grasp

the edges of my ribs on the shoulders, am I back in myself, kissing

myself. If I grasp the pointed mollusk

it will fall.

My garden far from the beach

Growth in the humid summer. When fire I let the tomatoes die.
Pick them green for frying.

If there were a goat, he would eat the dead.

I offer my lips to my torso.

This is what I wanted but it is not an outward offering.

I would have liked a real garden for my baby.

My baby I had too young and carried with me

I forgot her in a gathering of people. I sacrificed my body
to a rocket play, almost.

Test run.

I backed out before being shot

out. I drew anger. My baby.

The audience was disappointed in me, considering

that after I backed out

none of the other volunteers were blown apart by the fire.

Please Disregard the Leaves

I want to walk alone and let my fingers get stiff in the cold.

I want to get to the city and manipulate my torso through crowds, even though
I have nowhere to be.

As I walk, I want my body's momentum to open men's blazers
without touching.

The other night we cut apart pumpkins, and I forgot the procedure.
Pulp clung to my skin, needy

Thank you for breathing, I whisper to my intimates.

There is chaos in the order of demands. You pour the drink calmly.
Three runners in opalescent vests.

A white supremacist smashed someone's skull in. My aunt said
praise Trump and Kissinger is proof. In Cambodia, he.

Mountain snow yesterday, running dogs in its arrival.

It has become increasingly difficult to shave my head. Each time I try, a
man appears with a razor and asks, are you sure. He opens the car door
to a backseat full of products for bald heads. It is the waiting that gets
me, his pants pressed, hair short on the sides. This is not what I meant
by shaving.

I am sorry for abandoning you with our meal.

We Go to a Hot Springs

conversation coming at me, I take razor to bony outers, inners
before outers, pointers to my cunt.

Or, I shave the inside of the bony outers
in a blue tiled shower in which the water tastes of rust.

The armpits and the legs are forgiven, I say.

It is hard to strip three parts of the body, which is warm.

To undress, to find soap, find razor, clean blade, let the water run hot.

In the shower, my hairs drag on hot springs pool, skimming surface from above.

Time is in my jaws and I know it and am made to know it.

We Go to a Falls

Charred trees, outsides only.

Snow below and not in town.

I heard geese rise, pushing two logs together

as a result of their rising. You laughed.

I was frightened by geese. No, I was frightened

by the force of logs hitting each other

in a space of creatures hiding.

The isolation of our presences. Why is it the butt of the joke to be startled?

Bunny runs in front, dumb bunny. Go bunny. Bunny freeze.

Not to deviate, but.

A rabbit runs in front, dumb rabbit. Go rabbit. Rabbit freeze. Is it a cute one or a.

I want to make it cute.

Startle rabbit imagine in bed. Cocaine rabbit run. Move rabbit. Rabbit go.

I am sick of rabbits. If you open my labia and insert cocaine, will a rabbit emerge? I will not move no. The curtain is closed.

II. Autonomy

Mission

“Santa Barbara Mission has been designated a registered National Historic Landmark. Under the provisions of the historic site act of August 21, 1935 this site possesses exceptional value in commemorating and illustrating the history of the United States. U.S. Department of the Interior. 1961”

Some days, it's easier to speak

in statehoods than in selves.

I was in one place and now

I am in another.

I was in one place and now

another belongs to me.

In California, there is a trail

of buildings that I was taught

to follow. Some are even so lucky

as to employ the use of a yellow bus

to facilitate this following

of trail from one end of coastline

to another.

The trail suggests a forward

motion, an accomplishment

of obtaining knowledge.

A scavenger hunt can be bought

in the form of flattened pennies,

building imprinted on “head.”

Interior imprinted on “tail.”

On the grounds

of the buildings, Latin

and Spanish are rolled out

as tarps.

Underneath the tarps

there was language.

The name of these buildings

is mission, but the word so early on

becomes like church and like bank

only with an air of distinction.

Church and bank.

How mission wants to be sedentary

once it was accomplished.

What is the interior value.

People are always on

to the next big thing

like where is the art and the beauty.

I want the art and the beauty.

I'm tired of blank statehood,

which is not a metaphor

for the internal state.

What is rolled over.

What is commemorated.

Autonomy

Autonomy, say it four times fast

of a region
of a country

condition the right or
the condition of
self-government

a country
a region
a particular sphere

a country
or a region
a self governing
a plural noun

from control
a freedom
from external influence

"the rebels called for regional autonomy
and self-government"

In searching for our regional autonomy
I have found more abstract terms in sand.

The self-government of the self by the self

self-government for the self of the self

They withhold the focused hand
the direction and its origins blurred
stop when has it myself
an outside self to obey

At the Institution in Crisis

The marching band is playing Weezer with all of their horns, and I am doing everything I can to keep from crying on this milked lawn with scattered strangers. They cut money away, again. Yesterday, my student wrote about her dance studio as her refuge. It smells like dirty feet, and it's dark and calm, and I can leave myself behind. She was standing above the crowd today. I chastised her for checking her email in class last week, and I hate myself for it. Was I out of reach, of solidarity? The band lifts their horns, and some people are celebrating their music, dancing as an awkward and expected duty.

In the bathroom, I update myself on votes. Jeff Flake may or may not be a glimmer. Steve Daines declares that the great people of Montana are standing behind him as he votes for Kavanaugh. I comment on his post. There are women, scattered, saying I stand with Kavanaugh. I want to say, You dirty fucking scumbag, I hope the elk on the wall in your office tramples you. Or rather I want to stab something like a carrot into his heart. I don't. I want to write "complicit" on all the "We are griz" flags on campus. I don't.

A man I met told me he pinned a teenager against a wall for vandalizing an advertisement. "What was the advertisement for?" "I don't remember." I would like to let my nails grow.

I go outside, look for my student in her aviators and sweats and knee-length sweater. Hope to see her dancing, but the crowd has dispersed.

Jeff Flake is Sleeping Right Now

In my kitchen, I think of Rhio

muscle wrapped intently

over a pole

Yesterday, I could not fall asleep

I texted my lovers in desperation

I miss you. I am thinking of your time zone

My body is a pool of zucchini butter

sweeter than one would expect

still no one to witness

Last week, Evan

in Greenough Park said rose hips

We each filled a palm

They rotted in our fridge

Senators are on my body in my body

I call them one by one into my kitchen

When they understand I will beg

they elect one to reach down my throat

and feel for the bladder

What is gained from getting close?

I place my hand flat on the wood table

Through blinds, can I be seen?

Three Mornings
after Philip Whalen

I

My alarm goes off and it's the news. I lie there for an hour, and when it switches to children's programming I keep it on to ccccccoooooommmmmfort myself. I stink. I want to fuck myself, or slip myself into a side-angled wall shelf to sleep alternatively, in another space moved. I curse myself for letting myself not operate.

2

The bed the clock the bed and I am Steve Inskeep. I am Steve Inskeep. Blinds lip and my upstairs neighbor grinds coffee, Kerry, a comfort, and runs in front of my window to her car without seeing me.

3

I shower and I need it. I will wear pajamas today. Dark, already, and Evan's spoon viciously hits the bowl as it attempts to pierce yogurt. I woke up sweat, entangled, yesterday not so. Yesterday a pressure on cold, a breakfast, I missed you. Today is back to today. Today the sour coffee, but I want the sour, and my upstairs neighbor's shower pulls down the ceiling just enough and it is light and I am here with my keyboard, my water, my touch—no, my goosebumps. There's a movie in which an old man grabs a cold piece of toast and with urgency goes for a walk in green fields. Many mornings, he is my moral compass in difference, as I put my toast back in the oven to warm it, and I am not my toast, and I am not the man, and I am not Kerry (though sometimes I pretend), and I am not and so on. A kid pauses at the chain link fence and turns her eyes mischievous as she runs across our lawn.

I Took the Quiet Way Home

I came out to my dad in his old VW, scraps of unmoved life from the center console: museum nametag, mints, an assortment of broken pens.

The upholstery has ripped.

When he talks of gayness, he talks of Pema Chodron.

Hope and fear come from feeling that we lack something: they come from a sense of poverty. We can't simply relax with ourselves.

I run my index finger over the vents, over and over, greying with dust. Dusting.

Theism is a deep-seated conviction that there's some hand to hold: if we just do the right things, someone will appreciate us and take care of us.

And yet we are here, watching the lawn brown and ice, squirrels a mechanistic clockwork. Up and down, chase, chatter.

By the Mississippi River, Vonda teased: If you pass a funeral motorcade, then you must relinquish one year of your life.

I say: If you come out at age 57, then you must come out to everyone.

KayceeWyomingKayceeWyomingWyoming

If you come out at age 57, then you must fear your daughter's opinions.

If you fear your daughter's opinions, then you cannot answer her questions.

If you are his daughter, you must ask, was time wasted.

If you are his daughter, you must be objective.

If you are subjective, you are granted permission to mourn the liberation your father did not receive.

If you are subjective, you are granted permission to mourn the liberation your mother did not receive.

Barack Obama in 2008 said, "I believe marriage is between a man and a woman. I am not in favor of gay marriage."

My uncle in 2015 said, Look look. Over there. Go back.

If you want to go back, you are reactionary. If you are reactionary, progress is make-believe.

If you are reactionary, you are oriented in a loop of longing.

My dad in 2015 said, Let the horse feel your breath, she'll remember you next year.

Instigator

I'm sorry.

Kindnesses

What frightens me is when language becomes barren. When I see the open plain of what I want and what they want and it's laid out in front. Then I have to look at it instead of being in it. I have to admire the matter-of-factness.

I am on field, clutching a horse's
ribs between adductors of thighs leaning
over to encompass his neck and pull warmth
from his neck. Letting his gamed body
and hairs into my nostrils and thus
body. Letting him lower his neck to eat wet
grass but not too much, listening to squares
of layered and decaying skeleton pulverizing the sweet
at last unthinking but for joy
Using his body to let go of my body

My aunt posted on facebook: “ ‘we must never forget, every time we sit on a horse, what an extraordinary privilege it is: to be able to unite one's body with that of another sentient being, one that is stronger, faster and more agile by far than we are, and uncommonly forgiving.’ ”
–William Steinkraus

My aunt posted on facebook: pull the lever.

The government has still not found the eighty children it has lost.

Tonight, the woman
at the coffee shop gave me
warm, bitter coffee, didn't ask questions.
She wrapped the extra pastries in plastic
and lined them on the windowsill outside.

I took a picture, didn't see someone behind me waiting for me to move to grab a pastry.
Regretted picture. Unkindness.

There is the corner, the forest garbage, the green and hazy streetlight. My car to go into.

Let the horse feel your breath, she'll remember you next year.

At Night, Thought is Time

I'm a little girl playing with a small dollhouse. I familiarize myself with the small furniture, the reversible rug the size of my palm. Touching the small objects ignites in me a craving, greed. I want to handle them again, stick my head inside a room that I can manipulate with my fingers.

This morning, I say thought is time. Thought and time are an investment. I say, you are an asset. Your ideas are valuable.

I watch a bad sitcom that parodies telenovelas but more so inhabits and honors the telenovela mindset. It invests in it. It bets on it.

A guy in his late teens loves Nike. He's invested in it. He says that in their ads, they've always used race in a risky way. When I ask him to invest more time thinking about this, he doesn't want to.

Sometimes I worry that I'll squeeze an animal, or shake it. Sarah talks about the wire wrapping around the head, the torso, constricting the skin as much as it can be. Cutting into. I worry that when the investments in me have begun to wrap, have begun to cut, I will shake an animal to death.

Respond as Wyoming

1. Who is Mike Enzi?
2. What beauty in waiting for cattle to cross the road?
3. Family is family?
4. When do you put elbow grease into it?
5. But who does he think, a loft in Venice Beach?
6. In what ways can you make a horse love you?
7. Why aren't the liberals?
8. Who is Mike Enzi?
9. Tell me the story of how Missions were built.
10. What did it feel like to ride Ladybug?
11. Why are the coastals so--?
12. When you glide over meadowgrass, is it?
13. Mom, what am I memorizing here?
14. Who is Mike Enzi?
15. I remember the color of dirt at the ranch.
16. What words can we eat here?
17. What will you wear today?
18. Who is Matthew Shepherd?
19. Who is Mike Enzi?
20. What is a tutu?
21. In Orange County, it was just an accident.
22. It's not the same if I, is it?
23. Why are cows afraid of larkspur?

Respond as California

1. Who is Mike Enzi?
2. What beauty in waiting for cattle to cross the road?
3. Family is family?
4. When do you put elbow grease into it?
5. But who does he think, a loft in Venice Beach?
6. In what ways can you make a horse love you?
7. Why aren't the liberals?
8. Who is Mike Enzi?
9. Tell me the story of how Missions were built.
10. What did it feel like to ride Ladybug?
11. Why are the coastals so--?
12. When you glide over meadowgrass, is it?
13. Mom, what am I memorizing here?
14. Who is Mike Enzi?
15. I remember the color of dirt at the ranch.
16. What words can we eat here?
17. What will you wear today?
18. Who is Matthew Shepherd?
19. Who is Mike Enzi?
20. What is a tutu?
21. In Orange County, it was just an accident.
22. It's not the same if I, is it?
23. Why are cows afraid of larkspur?

Tasks from On Top of a Horse

I could write about larkspur.

How I can never remember its name or what it looks like.

At least I can't hold the two simultaneously.

Larkspur bobs in the wind, etc. etc.

Larkspur kills cattle, Dad reminds Gram reminds.

Let's say we were to list its qualities, just for fun.

Let's say the first and the last qualities we think of are the only ones that matter.

Let's say one outweighs the other.

Let's say violet, downward, bobbing, violent.

A Man Attempted to Scam My Mom on match.com

He used language like “trustworthy” “loving” and “honesty”
and that is how she knew.

“You have such a beautiful smile,” he wrote.

A ponytailed man said he was my friend. Gave me dust-frosted
grapes, tried to put one in my mouth and I turned.

I don’t see him, his hand is on the small of my back.

The grapes, they sat in my fridge looming toxic. Their sugars
began to infiltrate my perfect raw chicken.

Who’s to judge me if I step on them and throw them in the alley.
I want them out, and I let them stay.

If you wanted in to my paypal
you didn’t ask.

If you wanted in to my chicken soup
you didn’t ask.

The grapes are making me cry, and I swear it’s not the grapes, it’s
completely the grapes.

“I see you’re an artist. Tell me about your art.”

If you take my money, will you want my left lacrimal, too?
From behind the left eye, thin and scale.

If you take my money, will you want my femur, too?

To prepare marrow, saw the femur lengthwise

and in thirds. Roast and serve on a wooden plank with bread.

I did it to a cow once.
Made a tender meal.

Eating marrow requires scraping softness from cortical bone,
from the small of my back, from my aching bank account.

I don't want to write about marrows.

You imagine my skeleton, my skeleton walks hierarchical.

On Relatability

I went to a reading where a man wrote from the perspective of murderers who held a woman hostage on the side of a road, somewhere in Texas, with oil jobs. He is a writer and does not have an oil job. He noted that her sports bra was especially sweat-trailed in the back between her blades and in the front, dripping into her breasts. Was this a moment of relief in the plot? I have recreated it.

My clothing has formed a deep trail through my bedroom and into the hallway because the apartment is empty of people besides me. I have been here before. I hear the bubbles rise behind me, shocking my own ears with their force.

Many articles came out after Netflix released a series about Ted Bundy's victims. They came out to use the pleasure of looking at his symmetrical face for self-entertainment, and they came out to talk about this pleasure. They came out to say, he got away with it, and you are his alibi. Information and pornography are the same.

I can see into my neighbors' kitchen, and when their light is off, I can see into their neighbors' kitchen, too. Their refrigerator is covered with magnets and pictures, like mine. A relief. It is hard to distinguish who is and who is not an autodidact.

When I say I often live to please people, what I mean is that it is easy to remain calm in the bounds of this room, to hunch my posture enough to relax them.

There is no end to looking away from one another when we are all occupying our kitchens.

A Landscape, What Gives

When I was in summer the corn fields were open
suffocating would you say this is correct

I am saying if we follow each other
from cornfield to cornfield is this suffocation or freedom

We are dying here but we tend to our stomachs

which have been growling so relentlessly lately
I am beginning to wonder what they are predicting

Everything I do is a sidestep in a dance
I cannot master

Even the leaves I have been collecting on the dresser
are moving despite my intentions

One thing I think of my sex it will never
be comfortable more than twice a month

Figueroa mountain has poppies yes I haven't
been My game is to plan trips there

only to find poppies elsewhere and never realize
the trip This is how it goes

the radiator setting stays the same

I would like to make you a feast
of sweet corn salted so precisely it hurts the tongue

Is it for me or for you?
Both of us yes the frost is growing

When I am explained to about the cotton
I once put between my legs I see this is what hurt is

On my phone screen I see a wide red bowling shirt
I proclaim it a shirt I am near my ribcage almost

I am happy to smoke alone
though surely I know you will join me please

A different white woman explained colonization today
fury only felt with distance I know it well

this northern state aches under wind

I wonder Do you see
we are not sewing anything okay

I would like to throw glass soda cans
against the building

Will you join me in the dark
when it's done

Second Thought Poem

it was late afternoon
near an avocado box.
She held my hand and let
go to feel the fruit, the smooth
skins. That song by the Doors
was playing and she thought
about mentioning lipmarks
on the singer's grave,
a phenomenon empty
in its romance.

Indoor Poem

house in which dead leaves
bundle under their tree
I worry it hasn't grown
since I've taken over
my neighbor pulls in
his truck looking
especially tired, I wave
and he smokes his cigarette
while asking his friend
on the phone
if it's foggy also in Detroit.

Indoor Poem II

the pine tree across the street
is too tall for this window's
perspective. It drops cones
and other green parts
onto the neighbor's gravel.
The long-limbed boy
runs by, looking forward,
dribbles his ball toward a hoop.

No Big Deal Poem

The laundry spins dry
clothes falling as the basket slows

someone says
they can make clouds into keyboards

another person says that's false
It is still too cold for lying outside

and yet my sister sings open
like it's not a problem

My water has tasted of milk
It must be the start of a season

Savings

Being harassed by a banker feels worse
than it sounds in a story.

Maybe when I survey the street
in snow another night
something will be different
and remind me of location's
temporality or the fragility of
neighborhoods.

When a nearby house
caught on fire there was a buzz
of clues but no one wanted
to bother the neighbors.

The fact that
no one was harmed
made it all a little better
or should I say
we grew comfortable
in our excitement.

We never did ask for direct
states of the situation.

My sister has an extra rib
and I like to bring it up
to say yes my peripheral identity
is cohesive and strange
but not too strange.

I haven't brought up the rib
in quite a long
time as I have been preoccupied
by other things, for example
what is acceptable sustenance

and does the ice harden as it melts.
This vitamin d capsule
has turned my perspective
around and while my pee is neon
I believe this is an optimistic sign
of things turning around,
regaining control
from named and unnamed
authorities. I will name one, the endless clouds
over our town. I will name another,
these airport walls.
I am beginning to understand
that selling sincerity may not be a viable
source of income, especially not
at the markets I frequent in summer.
I don't mourn this. Perhaps
I've been saved from unnecessary
disappointment.
Can one's sincerity
remain blissful when it has been
questioned? There are still
directly sincere questions
to be asked. Like, why
when I consider my money
do I account for financial losses
by indebting future time?
Soon I will have a dog
in the house to jump
on the couch by the window
when I come home, making me account
for the hours I have left him alone
with nothing to do.

Last Rabbit

Anna is living in Paris a man followed her with his
dick out and this is I forgot something that happens
happens when I went out in Paris and a man
approaches to say you are ugly or follows you for fun
The bicycle at night is powerful until a man stops it
with his hands his other body part being the tongue out
You wonder why I like women so much
and the man in my life it is true is exceptional

When we made paella Carlos
butchered a rabbit I didn't want to perform
Lean hunch this creature looks like he resigned
for survival which is death his teeth I imagine
would have been quite straightforward the previous
butcher didn't leave them

In a circle of people I proposed the presence of city rabbit
the right word the only word for the little rabbits in our
dying / survived industrial city it was never mine
A man said city rabbit like country mouse and I thought
not quite I would though like you to write us a nursery
I think finally rabbits are growing old for me in my poems

The snow is
building up on the sidewalk and no one has moved it
It is already clean my neighbor gets paid yes I was nice
once or twice though and her labor inside me uncomfortable
but I would like to be paid to clean snow I only am generous
when I need to apologize or when I did a cruel thing
to a different creature It's a theory but many theories are true
given the right circumstances Kate said an actor
left people he loved by the river or by their failed relationship
being a too calm park at night and so that is why he dances
with strangers I have never left anyone by the river
What is uncharacteristic is easy I have forgotten
it is easy for people to say one is not cruel that one being me

When you situate the light

When I love you, the lyric appears:

In the afternoon, contentedness settles

I position my toes around a sun-warmed towel

and you feed me chips as I write. Then you feed yourself,

crunching one chip and a few

and then self-restraint.

At night, bed is not bed without you.

The thawed lawn is wet, and its lack of cold keeps us there until.

In light, I see you, your body disrupting the nothing.

Your body responding to cold kitchen windows

now steamed, to buds, minute and alive, on the apple tree outside.

Your body greets the dog as she wags ferociously, begs for you.

Begs the dog greet you so ferocious

I beg the light, the wag, the you.

You receive my song

in what is a lull

or a fervor

a patient occupant.

Can't Sonnet

My student wants his guns to write of guns.
His guns dirt-playing, his guns at range, panting.
Guns have their business plans and dreams, they swing
their circle mouths, their conversations won.

I'm not equipped to give revelation
clung sticky thick to a child's tiled skull, can't
give him what I want to give him. Can't
rhetoric. Can't reciprocation.

Can't eye. Can't for an eye. Can't for a mouth.
Can't eardrum snap the nose the empty cave
no snot. Can't gun the gun. Can't no one save.

No room. Grip squeeze the sweaty torso now
unfold. The kneecap unhinge clench. Now shave
the body's face. Which body is a face.

Upon Waking

to taste what isn't in any way so exceptional: I sat
in a tall leather chair and waited to be served: I put oil
in my hair and let it fall heavy: my veins pumped with lack
of moving: I didn't dream: I felt that yes my responsibilities
in life were categorical: the pressure eddied: yell:
yell into dry alfalfa: yell into the cooling plate: this wood
table is much larger than it seems: the knife and fork
made of tin: I longed to let my ears pop in water: I swam
to Big Sur: I was not afraid of the swells: I smelled pine
in the green, green water: I went to the gynecologist:
she said my cysts were only mild: she said the hormones
yes would only need to continue temporarily: I tasted dirt
from my childhood home and it was certainly much drier
than before: I ran out of the old car into the hot sun: I did not
let my legs stick to leather: I felt no I will not need to shiver
today: I visited a parking garage: I walked up all of the levels,
following car routes this time: I saw no one: I felt invincible
only every other moment: I saw my writing desk in the parking garage:
it said I am here to serve, not to be disposed of: I am just trying
to do what I can, it said: I did what I could

NOTES

p. 16: The idea of wrapping saran wrap around the body is from *Viability*, by Sarah Vap.

p. 43: Lines 5-6 and 8-9 are Pema Chodron's.

p. 47: The last stanza is referring to Sarah Vap and *Viability*.

p. 53: "Information and pornography are the same" is from *Garments Against Women*, by Anne Boyer.

