

Dennis Hinrichsen



-Chris Whitley, "Altitude"

Matthew 13:45

In the dream, bitter cold. Two men
sawing

at ice
until large chunks can be lifted,

carried to a flatbed truck, laid on straw.

Again
and again down the incline,

to be penniless.
The lake is a kingdom and so they harvest,

until the bed is full
and

they climb in,
drive away.

†

The men park on a hill
overlooking the surface,

watch eagles
one by one

unlock themselves from the hammered sky,
f utter

in,
tear and feed.

†

I know the structure cannot hold

but as long as it does
it is sheened.

The straw soaked through—
a drowned man's hair.

The impossible gem melting down—

striations
that for awhile resemble knives,

bleeding pearls.

As for the deer, it is scraped
to bone.

Emptiness where the eyes were set.

Ribs still holding
their curve.

my cloud shape, my incidental, somewhere
there is a child
standing in dirt,

shitting its ankles, but you are
running
again in that Canadian field, tight

along the fence rail,
so that your speed
matches mine

and it is not the speed of an old woman
swatting
flies from an open

cut, or the move (since I am well-fed)
from wound
to blossom

to wound and I am birthed again
in sunlight,
freed from my shadow.

Your pinto high-step whispers,
your proud
pounding

for no good reason. The bold tower
of losses
that on earth

conveys our misery just one more silo
of grain
in an Ontario field.

And still you run. Over the fence rail,
 around the curve,
 and back

again where you bed down
 and whinny,
 roll

on your back. I have seen you there,
 pointing
 belly at sky,

all that shining muscular roundness.
 I have seen
 the crisp,

rudimentary hooves.
 Where was I
 going that was so important

that I could not stop
 and place a hand
 on your broad,

f at skull, consider your huge
 eyes—
 not all broken glass,

pieces of cloud, but
 jeweled, encompassed,
 as if packed with stone.

Somewhere a man imagines
 his wife's
 cancer as small islands forever

butt-headed, twin-pronged,
rip
fesh. And still you run, so far

to the edge of the feld,
it is memory,
horizon,

and I am walking to the fence,
my body
the consistency

of balsa and myth,
the angle of my leaning
like a lure

to heaven. I wonder: When I f nally
see
the god face, will it be you, a horse?

There was a river in her head that kept flowing
and so she

sang
at a piano built

from air,

hands
frail and spotted with match heads.

Strange singer she was,

mask
forcing pressure

into a failing heart
so the external lung that kept pumping

was nearly opera

in the room, grand, scaled—
La Scala—

and the chambers of her dying

its box
and voice.

But no sound came. Plank
on plank

she kept building,

reaching out,
leaning,

bridging some lumber in her head

with deeper wood.

I thought fear

would take her

dying,
to get a glass of cooling tea...

Reader,
it was morphine.

I let them wand her heart

to disconnect it,
and then we pumped the slurry in.

Nobody winced

because it was beautiful and smooth,
a fat,

controllable lightning,
cured

with honey.

How it serenely sleeved the wires of her brain,
the nerves,

the cheekbones I saw yellowed

with jaundice,
that Taj Mahal of heresy and belief

we call the self
come crashing down,

zone

by zone, reduced, relaxed,
surrendered

to one thin hand caressing a cold dead leg.

...then seizure again, that
blue clot, level

of the larynx,
can't breathe, can't

speak, don't want to,
heron long gone

(where?), no longer
perfecting its one

slant move:

its throat (no cry)
muscle of f n

and writhing, all
I dream

is blue weather,
blue snow

on a blue roof,
Rilke's zombie angels

f xed in this world
for now, sharp,

angular ice,
halfway down the river

f shooks, sundown:
last red wash of emptiness,

The first time I ever reeled from my family's stink I was in the basement of the Paramount Theater, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, taking a piss. My uncle, nineteen,

—
that's what we called it then—was next
to me.

We had just seen a John Wayne film and were heading home.
I was working hard, nine years old, to drill the urinal but could only
manage a pale yellow rope

that splayed
and went feathery
at the end.

Uncle, for his part, was all bull.
Something powerful and amber coming out of the pizzle he held
with both hands.

Eyes glazed, mind elsewhere. At peace with it—

reek of armpit and
groin
like the air

around a farm.

I could smell in it the drench of decaying skin cell, money, failure,
honeyed ear wax, the genetic rubs that contained my mother (but not my
father).

And so I quailed, zippered up:

boy child, idiot
uncle. Minotaur,
blue baby...

Why

until I re-entered this shining
world
all snot

and dripping phlegm, a scabbed child turning

†

blue: "hue of illness and nobility, the rarest color in nature."

Why did they give him up?

(it's easy now—
Nazis, Pearl
Harbor, there was
metal to save,
sugar
to ration, he
was the fourth child/
fesh issued
damaged
from the mother's
genius womb):

†

cell for cell our own body...

Now age seventy, they have him tethered down, they think he's
crazy, they have the feeding tube sutured in.

His eyes, my mother's eyes, f ash
white
above palsied

vocal chords.

He blinks to remember: the ten or so cars we owned, where we
lived, who was oldest, who kept him in chocolate, how his pa died and his

ma went crazy, half her head shaved off because she fell down the stairs,
then forgot everything, even his name.

And those mean dogs that bit us
and

ran away.

Miami Drive, 2019 D Avenue.

The house on Bonita...man-child stumbling in the labyrinths of
our play.

That ring of silence I held my breath in when I was a kid so I
could be as dumb as him

just one more useless dodge
to
what they always

told me:

how when I was born they put
my
crooked body in his open arms

and he cooed my name.