

Odes

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Lake

Measure me. I am wide with the sorrow
of the world. Have you grown

this way too? Broadening as lakes do, each rivulet and stream
unmasking the water it feeds to reveal
what must become you? You think you can wash

yourself this way. You think each
morning that this sun
will do you good.

You hope that what rain carried over

you in the night can be ignored, or
forgotten, or misplaced—that all
that you are is already enough.

~

Wind

When the air that travels

the planet without end finds you,

there is nothing to do but breath. No moment
is less than this. It is soaked with the words

of lovers, thick with final wishes, chilled
in parts by hidden glaciers, even shared along
its formless edges by everything
that no one remembers.

Nothing escapes the wind.

You will want it to give
these secrets away, to finally break
open with all that it knows like wood
cracks, then splits to free
the fire it hides. And it has tried.

The water that rushed
at you in apocalypse waves

one day on the violent shore—

the wind brought it to you, shrieking
a thousand miles over distant
ocean. Arriving in sounds
of thunder like an ancient

voice revealed, tearing its words
out of nothing and charging the coast
with everything you wished to know.

Did you not hear it? Were you afraid?

~

Forest

Nothing in the night
is darker. Here the heavy

absence of light is twofold:
without and within.

Without is the lost moon,

carried away by all the forces
you cannot understand. You may pretend
there is reason—that something wants
the light somewhere else, that the moon is only

gone because you are not able
to see where it is. These are the comforts
we seek, occurrence

and their cause. But within is how
the colors of forest

are dark from beginning. The redwood did not want
the shadowed hues of its soft bark to soak
itself into the night as it did, bleeding
black into the air. The tall ferns waving

in silence over dead

dry needles still pray
for a secret
luminescence of which
they were told
otherwise, yet no thing that pushes

out from the damp brown earth

can bring with it
light. That is for something
else. The manzanita

knows this already, it has no desires for
anything it is not. Look at how it sheds its subtle
bark to go naked
in maroon, a red that plummets
the dark of its narrow
twisted trunks, so smooth that even in
the lightless night you know its cool
skin by the touch— can feel

from the surface what pale green it keeps beneath,

untrue until spring. And when they find you here,

knocked loose from yourself by the weight of the dark
like a limb grown too heavy too far
from the tree, what will you tell them?

They will hear none of it.

You will have to trust that only the forest
has heard. It is better that way. This is what
you will tell yourself.

~

Plains

Distance can have
no sound. It is an action
in silence. From its center of the tall

grasses the plains will catapult

you to every edge in one
motion—vision, length, horizon

and back to where you are. This can be
learned in the giant light of midday, but the sun
will make you its fool
if you try, will convince you that the place
you are is whole. Distance here is

best practiced in dusk, when you must know
that everything is further
than you. For when the light begs to stay
but can't, it will carry you with it instead. And though

this happens anywhere

that light leaves, it is only the land
that allows it. The soft wide expanses of untethered
earth will give falling light all it
needs to cascade, to roll flat away as a sea of orange

mist recoiling to the
other side. Like a fear

of heights brought about
by open space, the plains
will offer you

up to the waning sky. Do not look
down. Distance
is everywhere.

~

Twig

Some part of you has been lost to the earth.

Pretend
it means nothing. This has happened

so often, there is little left
to say. What love you spent on
something so small cannot have
purpose. But it will not be

this way. The cruelty
is infinite, that you cannot

mention. Listen as it cracks
under foot. Can you hear
how the world began? Watch how the sound

passes by, meant for somewhere

else—you could not
believe—it would have
been too much.

~

Fog

It was the coast
that brought you both here,
each arriving with every
intention to stay. The fog

will suggest that you find
its beginning, then precede you
in the night—coming on as a dream and leaving

like memory. You cannot help but be
inside it, surrounded
by a cool gray
evidence of water.

It may even

become you, consuming
the places
you depart,
filling in

where your thoughts leave off.

In its static pose the fog makes
believe that it is going
nowhere, that it can be

this way forever. But that is not
the case. An illusion learned
from time—being in one
place yet always

moving on—it is all it can do, to pretend
it is not mortal. Watch

how it lingers, falling on
sand, caressing tall bluffs of rock, patiently
cloaking every crevice of earth until you

forget that you have been
at all. Where was
it you stood? Who were
you then?

~

Valley

At sunrise, when
the world blinks
itself awake
in strands of light that lean
out over the hills and lazily come
to rest in the valley,
you may believe that you
are the first
one to arrive. Does each

beginning owe itself
the thought of rarity? It may be

the flowers. The flowers

are blinding. In every tiny mirror color, each
singular petal of soft
life unfolded, so much is shown
that you cannot know
how to look. Should you linger

on the white sparkles of azalea or the plunging
grace of the spare wild lilies? Can anything
take your glance from the trees at edge that shudder
in breeze like time shaking loose
from the day? In the moist bed of meadow the water
at your feet soaks with
the thirst of birth, seeking
to quench each unanswerable

truth as if they had never
been sought out before. The valley will beg
for you to live here. It will need
you to know. It will unveil

the comfort of its adjacent hills—the way

each slope angles only
toward you, here, where you are, among
the stems and grass.

What have you ever
done to reason against it? The morning,
in its cool, gentle candor, will make
no argument for you. This,
in the valley, can only be seen.

~

Snow

This is what
you have waited for. Transformation
brought on by stillness, when
the water makes

no move except to be caught in drift—

all that it is
captured
in the sudden descent of cold.

Amongst the shroud of its broad,
white, immaculate sameness
you must know who
you are; it is
what will save

you. You

are the human
in the center of the snow. You are
time's vessel making
way through the frozen

world. In a place where wind defines
all motion, you are the only
thing that moves
on its own.

You are singularity,
temporary, momentarily
endless—like a cloud of breath
expelled and joined
into the chilling sheaths of the limitless air.

~

Ocean

I have always been
the last of our kind. Water
becomes me. You are

all water. Empathy
makes one of everything in the world.

Do you remember?

We began together. We discovered
time. It was a pleasure—finding that things would not be
the same, that there were days and
nights, that the sky

could change. And we filled
the world with ourselves. All that frolicked and died
came again. Time was kind, allowed most
anything to happen.

It was a warm and magnificent day.

It was cold and bitter on every
inch of earth. The miles
and years were nothing.

There was so much that you
were forced into smallness, just to understand
the difference in things, the width of the

world, the ocean. Come see. Look
at the water's enormous
depth, the steepest
ravines

plunge in the planet itself, diving like a knife into
the earth—a body so grand that it does not even know
where this wound begins or ends. What untouched
places are buried under ocean here? How many dark
coves wash themselves each night with the cold black
salty water that will find them once more in a thousand
years, here, in the crevices of the sea? And the currents.

The currents that howl between humbling ocean canyon
walls like the voice of all the unheard weary, surging through
the water, travelling the world, again, and again and again and
again. You may believe this is endless,

that the water must go on, as it appears to, from the edge of shore fading
deep and deathly blue past all thought far into the infinite horizon.

But you have not been listening.

It is the final wish of the world to depart as it arrived: one
small bare stone in the universe, purely
itself and covered in all of the odd rugged
shapes that suggest what it will and may have
been. I was everything in between. In
between. Before and after
me. I was so long.
And it was barely
a moment at
all.

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