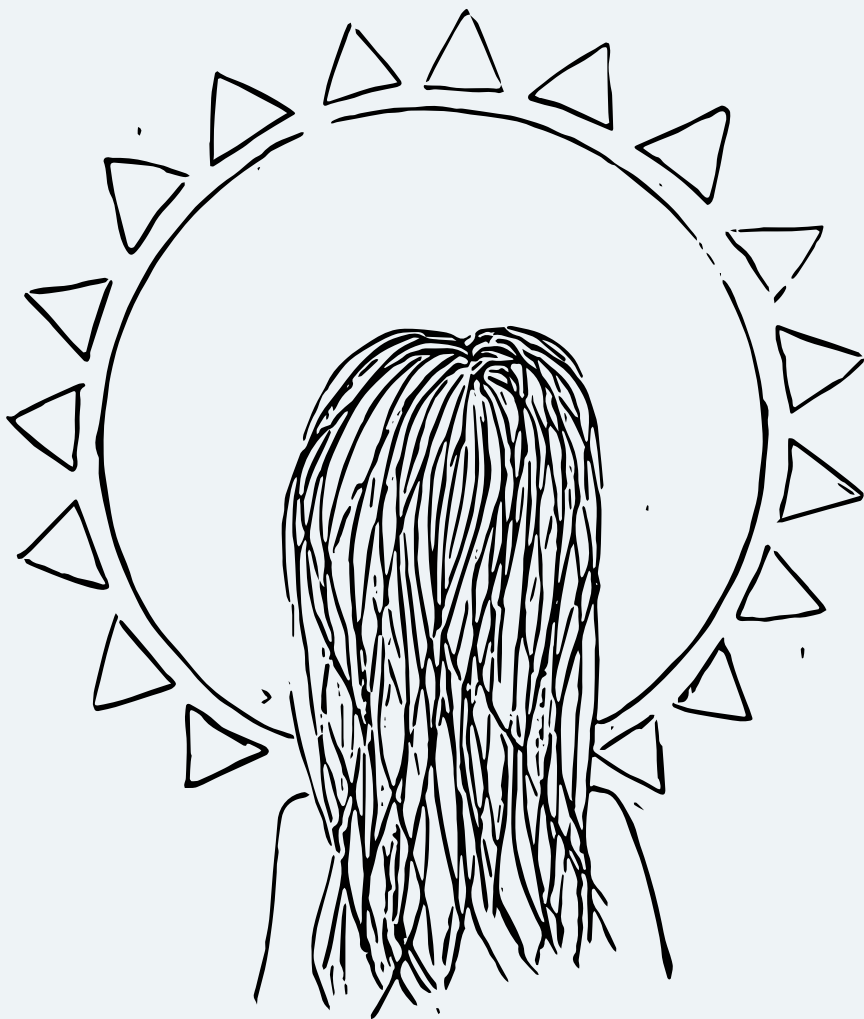


Cæsura

2018



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Is a caesura a quiet hallway
in a church? Is it a silence
with commandments to *hush*,
listen?

— Carolina Ebeid, “Weight”

THE PROPHETS COME TO HONOLULU

Molly Mercado

They tell us that God
will swallow up
all the days of sand

sticking in our scalps, of pink
sweetly summoned to our cheeks
by our lover, the sun,

who'd grin crookedly and say,
"devil may care"
just charmingly enough

that we'd leave the sunscreen on the shelf
with the chemicals we keep
out of our children's reach.

My eyes do not close as the prophets pray
for a new earth,
and for the soul of the girl
whose body the ocean tumbled
like the beer bottles
it spits out in frosted fragments.

She died in her Mother's arms, we say.
With sand in her lungs,
and the sun grinning down.

SERPENT

Meagan Shelley

Flee from me
pagan boy.
I am
the tireless song
that comes in the night
to drink of your ineptitudes
and pour the blood
from your palms
into wine glasses
for those who deem themselves
worthy.

Flee from me
righteous one.
I am
the burning refuse of
your grand offerings,
set aflame on open graves
you polish with white
recycled from those you maim
to please more yourselves
than the creed which binds
souls.

Flee from me
apostate.
I am
the nameless blight
that opens beating hearts
besetting death
once eyes fade to quartz
and mouth slit,
to honor crimes committed
in your cruel
birth.

Flee from me
little gods.
I am
the great robber,
I have stolen
Life, and what future you
may have as more
than men, then mortal,
laugh and be glad,
you will smile for me
one way or the other.

EMPTY FULLNESS

Esther Karram

The land cries out;
We stand, heads
bowed.
It gasps for breath
Calling
Begging
Pleading
For relief.
We pour more drink;
It shrinks, skin
drenched.
We give more red
Rivers
Channels
Oceans.
All endless.
Rocks stained in blood
We drop from hands.
We wonder.

MY SINAI

Drake DeOrnellis

It was October.
And the trees gently smoldered as I
Lay back in the grass,
And my soul wandered, and lay,
Barefoot
in the sky.

And in that moment I knew
I had never seen blue
Before.

Blue fire is hottest,
And never before had I scalded my eyes
Against its heat.
Never before had I blistered from sheer brilliance,
And wanted to,
Or had to blink and hide my face
From the fierceness of its purity.
The sky hurt my eyes.

When I was young I asked Mom why we can't see God,
Peeling blazing leaves from trees
And tramping my shoes through moldy embers.

Now I think blue is the color of holiness,
And I know why we can't see God.
Yet I wonder if I saw Him today,
And if it was His hand covering me as He passed.

A BIRD, HUDDLED IN A STOPLIGHT

Philip Thomas Sitterding

A voice skips from the speaker
above my head: an announcement, likely,
in a language I don't understand.
I toss a look at the other passenger, who
hasn't returned one since 23:13.
It's quarter-til. Her glasses
mirror the kaleidoscope of her touch
screen. Mine has already given me a headache.

The train whines
about the unfairness of domestication
as it shudders to a stop
and dry heaves onto the platform.
I stumble out into the same fluorescent
light I just left and blink
at the handful of ghosts who stride up the stairs
as if they know
already where they're going.

WINTER

Sarah Bee

icy blue
dazzling white
eyes ache
cold, bright.

then
flick of red
cardinal's wing
its joyous song -

Spring!

ANONYMOUS

Jessica Orton

It's funny.
How I can be so far
Claim the hundred sodden stones
With my tennis shoes,
How I sit happily in the shop
A warm brown box, sweating coffee

I bend into my seat
Crinkle
I am bubble-wrapped perfection
Smile and nod like every other shadow
I can be that beautiful no one
Through which everyone wants to see

I can fly through my fluttering paperwork
I can clock out on the dot
Balance on my stilts of success
Wobble through the grey
Wrap the clouds around my head
Never make eye contact with the sun

At the end cascade into my bed
Finally face the world through my handheld window
A race of stories, faces, animals
That I just have to see
Look here, here, here

MOVEMENT OF COLD

Allison Lowther

let's play with heartbreak
ought to be daring
worth something – lasting –
the enemy of the armchair;

let's tease the clock
it can find room
and the adventure – will it listen –
the enemy of warmth;

let's divorce familiar
boring, lukewarm
our selves will survive – advance –
the enemy of calm;

let's play with heartbreak
find peace without
warm water – sustain –
the enemy of finality

BELOVED

Rebecca Olsen

Loving her is like swallowing the stars
until you cannot breathe, until you drown
in stardust, drunk at some celestial bar
where suns explode and light filters down.
Even when you are sober, you can see
the angel wings sprouting from her back,
feathers gracing wherever she may be,
but her feet are numb and her eyes lack
and falter. Sleepless moonless nights haunt her
until her bones weaken, and suddenly
loving her is heavy. Your own bones burn
as you beg God for His ability
to not only heal but restore-
resurrect ashes to beauty once more.

THE DIG

Preston Gibbs

Unfold here
Please
Read carefully
You're formally invited
For Deaths funeral
To see

At 3 o'clock
When: this Saturday
Forecast says
Rain
Dress appropriately

What you'll need
Rain coat
Umbrella
And maybe a spade
If you're going to join the dig
Arrangements'll be made.

TO A WEARY SAINT: ON SCARS

Esther Eaton

The scars laid on you these years—
Ragged flesh wrenched with
Brokenness and humanness, which are one,
Turning slowly to pink and white ridges
Which pang still with old pain
And striped over with new wounds—
The scars will be the thin places
Where glory blazes through your skin
Chorusing the Name loud
To burst from your center with the heaviness of light
What you have suffered for will be shown all fire and beauty

COARSE HANDS COLLECT ROCKS

filling buckets to the brim
piled in a field of earth's core
form a line
we march across
from daffodils and weathered fence
to the barrier of water's edge
horses run wild in captivity
charging as we lift
we push on
digging now
pulling up sharp secrets
to be formally introduced to the sun
rising high over the mountains
we tear down trees
uproot their stumps
throwing everything into the hole
all for a tractor
we'll never see
so we cease our once willing efforts
and eat our chili on log benches
opposite the field

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