*version 8.16.2019*

**THRENOS**

*text by Dora Malech*

I. Litany

II. Consideration

III. Perseveration

IV. Declension

V. Invocation

VI. Expiation

VII. Retreat

**I. LITANY**

We seek to remake a promise made by proxy then forgotten—

We reach to recognize and reckon with that which pours forth to ink the earth and stain the drain—

This is when we claim we see you as you were and say we see you as you are as if our eyes could follow the flow of you into darkness—

And claim we see you as you were and say we see you as you are as if we hung suspended in infinity’s affinities and so and so and so and so—

\*

We draw the arterial tree—

We draw blood from the body’s trees—

We draw you suspended far from us and hold you far beyond arm’s length—

We draw and say and figure using as always ourselves as our favorite measure—

We draw you hung as if from a distant limb and therefore what we think we know to be below us is above us and—

We turn our faces to what falls like rain as in an up as in a down is always an away and always in the way is always an away and always in the way is all ways—

*and always in the way is all ways an away*

\*

We claim we see the sea when we render a river diverted—

A rush of blood that cannot reach the head hung upside-down redacts instead the line the blind blade made—

We hold that it’s for you that the blood insists insist we share the blood insists insists in systole and in diastole and clenches like a fist—

And that the blood in each river’s embouchure empties itself of itself—

And minus that last breath still adds its song to flow and to follow as it sings ostinatostinatostinato—

Ashamed and ashamed for being ashamed we look away and ask for you to do the same—

We ask to redact vision’s aversion then follow your gaze again to recognize and reckon with that which pours forth to ink the earth and stain the drain again—

*ashamed and ashamed for being ashamed*

\*

We close our eyes around an always and imagine we are imagining you—

As if for you the light against our faces renders our eyelids a pair of red veils we wear to see you more or less or more—

We follow where your body went and what your body wants in an attempt to temper our own wents and wants and tamp down the empty stare our mouths make each day upon opening—

A look initiated by the gullet and the nostrils and the inside acids burning—

A longing for intention set to strip to skin knowing we will not strip ourselves to skin knowing if we tore our clothes in mourning we would pause before the scalding—

As if this line this blind this blade this body is the best we can as in: *It follows, itself. It follows itself. I am. I follow. I follow myself. I am (in following) myself—*

If we were to follow a line of questioning in search of another voicing would you then still say that we pursued you in that so-called calling—

We ask you if you would twist your tongue to scream louder if you sensed in us a veiled reviled apology—

*a look up close we close our eyes up close we look*

*as another twists its tongue inside of you*

\*

A promise made by proxy fattens as an abscess full of what came after—

A toothless promise gums hungry against the bars of its own breaking—

A promise metastasizes compromised as the paid hands palpate elsewhere—

As a promise spies aroma, odor, stench and follows there to wallow in its making—

The bloated oath throws its weight against each opening door—

The vow throws its voice back and back in its own face reflected in the mental puddle of another other—

The pledge sighs and scratches its own neck absentmindedly and scratches the surface of its own absence—

This bond doesn’t try to scrub the black scythes from beneath its nails any longer—

It follows the bloodstream to carry its poisons even to organs and ends that never knew the story of the first forced entry—

It follows that without a splint the shards of bone can’t knit themselves to one again and so keep breaking back at that first fracture—

It follows through on its no closure as it licks its stitches open as it throws sand in an eye as if to make a blind pearl from the blinking friction—

It follows after ever after in a hall of warped mirrors where a story’s ending hangs on its own last words—

Can’t promise any longer says the promise unburdening itself of itself and disappearing down a dark chute—

It tries to excise abscess cut an incision and drain decision to a slow drip of the shunt—

Put pressure on some swelling and it subsides in time but press on press on press on another swelling and it bursts—

The promise seeps in its sleep the promise tries to opine itself empty the promise keeps weeping like an open sore—

*weeping like an open sore keeps*

Keeps crowding at the keyhole cramming into a falling feeling signs of sighs of forced entry a sentry sleeping at post and dreaming—

Of a lost last chance a different lifeless different lie less different eyeless looking into a fitting falling feeling at the keyhole—

Siege-starved and crowding the refuge of the so-called keep or seasick in the so-called hold—

Calling out for a holding over of a different order’s false white flag waved as truss in trust to call a crate a cradle—

and the flank a forethought—

and the knee a knowing—

and the scald a seeking—

and the hold a healing—

and the blade a blessing—

and the gush a guiding—

and the neck annulment—

and the stain a solace—

and the cut a compass—

and the tail a trying—

and the trail a trial—

and the truss a telling—

and the blow embracing—

and the form a first step—

and the flesh forgiven—

and the failure faultless—

and the sockets saviors—

and the stunning sudden—

and the systems serving—

and the tether touching—

and the pressure peaceful—

and the passing prescient—

and the kneading softer—

and the senses slipping—

and the head a homestead—

and the heat a haven—

and the fearing fortune—

and the anger asked for—

and the violence vital—

and the hunger holy—

and the wretching regal—

and the wreck reunion—

and the pain protection—

and the swelling sacred—

and the biting bidden—

and the eyelids lowered—

and the curtains closing—

and the word withholding—

and the dull divining—

and the spit anointing—

and the warm breath willing—

and the skin unriven—

and the chasm chosen—

and the footing fallen—

and the gag a given—

and the gorge a guardian—

and the knuckles knowledge—

and the lesion lesson—

and the breeding barter—

and the fracture author—

and the muscle meeker—

and the panic purer—

and the parting pardon—

and the fever fonder—

and the tremor tender—

and the pieces eager—

and the heartbeat harmless—

and the bright light blameless—

and the stifle spoken—

and the bloodstream steady—

and the study sundered—

and the mind unwinding—

with the vow unbinding—

and the sound is stricken

though the gullet glistens as it listens—

and the wet mouth sighs

and the wet hand buys

while the lie replies

that the blood is a balm

to the body and the body

is unburdened in its ending—

**II: CONSIDERATION**

*as another weeping washes over*

*we close our eyes up close we look close we close our eyes*

*against a longing for intention set to strip to skin*

*the blood is a*

*the body is a*

*we turn our faces to what falls like rain*

**III: PERSEVERATION**

—blink back and ask what vessels burst loose rope thrown over into pull a call into an accord rewound to when we found our mind in your unvoicing of an order to—

**IV. DECLENSION**

all we take

from you is you

all we all take 

is all of you

no all new

inside of you

all we knew

to do with you

we knew to take

you from you

we all knew to take

inside of you

**V. INVOCATION**

A vein opens in voice

**VI. EXPIATION**

I carved the air to make two doorways  
Each hinge was a name I’d known

I split the lips of buried vessels  
Left no marker and alone  
  
I stirred pictures out of red dust  
Then blew and bade each form forgive

I cleared a path through years of leavings   
Led back to a given hour

As a rope I stretched myself  
I could feel steady breath at both ends

What passed through me was bound to me  
I cut a part for no mouth  
The yield lit by a bright word

Each question was answered in ash

Viscera told time in stories  
Time told stories of its own

The minutes weren’t mine to keep  
I slept the sleep of the certain

Night pressed its lines in my skin

A tally of the parts I still owed  
Older hinges were held by red rust

I cried to pry them open  
I called for affirmation  
Each question was answered in ache

A net cast over sunset

Limbs bound beyond hold a law upheld

Skin stitched itself with a sharpened word

Last word’s consolation

Grafted to the sky the open eye

Met and held up at each beginning

And the bandage unwound as I walked backwards

The sun flashed its signal off a sharpened edge

A flag given to the wind

Reduced to one thread a fine line over

Stone set on stone on shaking stone

Note tucked under the tongue

All bled together all bled to one bled into one

Breath is bound to its beginning

And the bandage unwound as I walked backwards

The sun flashed its signal off a sharpened edge

The wound unbound wept beyond consolation

A day turned toward its center

Wielding the night’s tremor night yielding me

A knife a neck a day again

Day turned inside outward

I took my meantime it took my eyes my eyes mistook me

Each night proffering its throats

And the bandage unwound as I walked backwards

The sun flashed its signal off a sharpened edge

The wound unbound wept beyond consolation

The moths nursed the slash leaving nectar

A loose tourniquet a lost truth

A vain etiquette a false choice  
A loose grip and a blade bade  
 A lost cause in motion

Tracing margins with no center

All hollowed to vow

All given to air

Led to the edge

Bleeding the void

*\* \* \**

(voice)

The old rush arrives pounding present over

Each stream conscripted forgets it dreamed other ends

The least current can’t escape past pressure

Slim passages pry themselves to a vast horizon

The new vow rips loose from its anchor

The last bend bursts beneath the pressure

And each tongue troubles its dark canker

As another vein opens in voice

**VII. RETREAT**

fray the seam

break the stone

break the hold

break the gaze

break the old stricture

see the sum

take the bones

take the taste

take the wait

take the last burden

weigh the hour

line un-burn

line un-grind

line relearn

line resist skyward

know the gap

between eyes

between nerves

between thoughts

between swing and equation

grow the lend

let us turn

let us rise

let us bend

let us heal

let us melt into sweeter marrow

lay the earth

fill the hole

fill the mouth

fill the vent

fill the space

fill the empty occasion

sew the limb

make a bridge

make a road

make a way

make a line

make a breath

make a mine

make a door

make a hinge disassembled

stay the fell

rinse the glass

rinse the wound

rinse the room

rinse the stain

rinse the prints smeared over reflection

*mark another path*

*into every death*

*hold our hands free*

*forever still we breathe*

draw a map

stir the dirt

stir the shards

stir the motes

stir the loss

stir the roots’ sleeping comfort

say it’s gone

cover path

cover sign

cover chart

cover plot

cover scale and instruction

tie a net

raise a branch

raise the eyes

raise the stars

raise the rain

raise a yes

raise the fall

raise the toll

raise the cloth

raise a wingspan’s reach lost beyond bearing

try our sway

lose the hoist

lose the pull

lose the hook

lose the loop

break the ledge

lose the scrape

lose the cog

lose the hitch

let us break our turns and return reassembled

*mark another path*

*into every death*

*hold our hands free*

*forever still we breathe*