

A call to attention

Tonight it's the undemanding company of situation comedy. On the news break apocalyptic images from the latest oil spill call me back to attention. I am reminded that water makes up two thirds of the earth's surface and over fifty percent of mine. That my home is powered by non-renewable fossil fuels. A blackened pelican struggles to raise a wing tip; unable to fly or fish.

oil-slicked ocean
too much time spent
washing hands

Stars

my daughters once touched me for love or luck or merely
to survive tiny fingers like thirsty roots forced to surface
tore at my clothes hair skin my optimistic frame of bone
all this to get to the heart of me revealing again and again
what it is to choose life I named every existing thing
between us we invented the rest when they come to me
now these grown women felled and fallen in ways I cannot
mend or pretend away I see their eyes have become stars
whole galaxies depend on for light and warmth even hope
yes that too perhaps that most of all still the question
remains how is it they have come to think of me as wise
when truly I am unable to tell them where we come from

On entering the city of possibilities

Cry a little. People expect it. It will show you are happy to be there.

Reach out; touch all you can before it's frowned upon, before you are accused of appropriation (any imprint you leave will have some historical value).

Learn the language. Learn how to speak it with your eyes, with your hands. Lose your accent incrementally - too slow and you're not trying hard enough, too fast and who do you think you are?

Experiment with suspension of disbelief as if any city could be the city of possibilities.

Don't forget to breathe.

Search for meaning. Briefly. It's not worth the grief.

Turn your deep longing for something more into art, into the opposite of neutral territory.

Fall apart. Pull yourself together. Fall apart. Don't make a habit of it.

Break all the rules but not all at once.

Remember you are just visiting. Try not to get too attached.

When you're ready, come home. I've left a light burning in the ruins.

Thirst

having made it once again through the night
and into the morning after and her still with him
he tilts his head sunward looking comforted
even a little cocky outside the supermarket
where they could be any young couple
bold and full of plans and just starting out
she hands him a bread roll from a pack of six
licks the crumbs from the back of her hand
they both smile a little dreamily slide down
against the sheen of someone else's car sit there
on the warming concrete in just another moment
they'll agree in half sated whispers that this
is the life that everything else is fucked
and he'll wring the neck of the silver wine bladder
and she'll rip the ring from the diet coke can
rows of empty shopping trolleys shimmering
in the semiprecious middle distance

Buds

little fists
of maimed ballerinas
whose dumb choir stills morning
with its one brilliant promise
will shock with sudden life
any day now
little hoodwinkers
contained and brave as monks
whose secret will turn them
unblinking into the burning
eye of God

Welfare

among the lunch hour execs catching a few rays
a young man with cyclonic eyes aware only of this
fast becoming another day without and what to do
about it breathing through clenched fists the trigger
for anything more taking the usual form
an absent-minded brush from a suit filing back
into the system that has failed him yet again or this
incandescent sunlight bouncing off silver buckled
shoes tempting as a free lunch unleashing weeks
of inertia honed into the heels of his own redundant
work boots as he sprints jumps lands hard
on target then simply walks lighter now
uninterrupted through parting briefcases
ever mindful of his Ps and Qs

New Year's Eve

This year home is an airless bedsit. I leave everything open, but the heat, only two degrees below the record is claustrophobic drawing out a melancholic champagne sweat and the saddest memories. My brain slothful is in need of a feed. My heart too. When the thunderstorm hits I run out onto the street, soak it all up – this covenant that things and people get better. A neighbour sheltered in his doorway smokes and looks on and on ...

the garden grows
no trace of you