ARMATURES

Armatures

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Steel and other Elastics.

With steel, I look for welded seams. I like the epithelial crawl of two joining edges, like the permanent welt of an over-healed wound. On my first weld, I fell into a trance. My eyes stuck to that fizzing sliver where my gun met steel. I wore no helmet, its weight and size too much like a bladder on a stick, he said. That time my eyes became blood-filled, sheets of tears but I didn't care. I swam lachrymose in those molten alloys of opioids, cortisol and other arousing inner substances. This is why alone I will press my cheek against a plate of steel to breathe deeply its cold blood smell and impress this memory deeper. At times, I am troubled by steel used in sculpture - the misogyny of minmalism and all that - which is to say usually male, usually large, usually in the 1970s (but what a time for a lover of steel!). Steel is so elastic you can't budge it, said Tait in her poem from 1959. I followed that thread in bed, watching factory footage. Watching a time before obsolescence became another assembled part, before assembly workers were replaced by machines made of steel. Then today, I saw a knife in the sink and thought of the Trident submarines waiting in the river. Lying flat now, I weave my way back to when text was textile, when iron and carbon combined, when embers fell, when I said nothing. The process of becoming begins on a bed, where

thoughts contract to when I gave birth and bifurcated
half-woman half-machine into a room of glinting steel, extruding pink and annealing hot an ingot out bloodied raw and full of rage then washed and hushed inside a sink

Rue Blomet, Paris,1983

She stands on the roll of carpet
trussed with string in the gutter. In waiting, a gush
of water from the *bouches de lavage*
sluiced through her jelly-sandaled toes, it's been two years
since she last spoke. A break in the traffic opens
and with a little skip, she slips and squeaks across the road.

Ensō

dumb the tongue
stir the pot
a pencil line of light
draw breath in
the charcoal dark

remember now
dumb the tongue
stir the pot

exhale in a circle

soft wrists ouroboral
stir the tongue
a pencil in the darkness

stir the pot
forgetting to

exhale in a circle

Day Moon

Echoes now
of bounce on chalk
of bending strings
of aspen
of clinking ice in crystal glass
imprinted there, a coral lip is bared.

Between one side and the other
a net separates, the breeze
and a pale day moon.

Along what's left of the sideline, you mock-walk
on tightrope, heel-to-toe to the edge
while the fence looks on
with diamond eyes, wide open.

Down there on the other side, a phosphorous ball lies
abandoned. On your belly with elbows rooted
you push two yearning fingers through
a chain link eye, spitting bluebells from your mouth.

As the ball sits waiting (your fingers splaying
recall, that snail eyes are often mistaken for antenna).
Till out of reach and beaten, you fall in grass blades
one hand behind your head, lost
to the day
becoming night.

Remembered left-over
emulsion in a dented tin, it's rim prised open with a screw-
driver.
A gang of sticks mix
with plans of forty-eight right angles.
Painted lines unplug fist-sized lumps of Tarmac
you volley them with shrieks
back and forth, over the double-fitted sheet. Your heart-
sized witness (that ruin a ball of cork and hair)
remains, unblinking through the fence.

You both dream for a bit
of flying high and swimming pools, till in your hand
another ball is conjured.

You mime a throw
and watch your phantom arc
above the trees
high
against a lilac sky, city-lit and tender.

We carry the weight

We carry my mothers' mother
heavy in her coffin.
Side by side
my mother and I
shouldered her feet
fallen open like a book, her little dead toes
bouncing at our ears.

I hear an intake of breath, rows of elbows
nudge. Heads turn backward towards us,
two women carrying a coffin.

Later, she told me
though weak with grief
she felt alive in that moment.
Something about being strong enough
to carry the weight.

In the wake of slackened jaws
I glanced at my mother carrying
her mother, when her eye caught mine
and she missed a step
that was when I felt
all that we had carried.

Automata

then tilted off-axis, a vacant tugging
scraping in frenzy, this movement is muted — or so it seemed,
infused in petrichor and torqued at last
to a concertina of steel

encased within this human-sized space,
under eyelids a box of apples is remembered
with it the metallic taste of a cavity — an absence, dropped
upside down amidst the roots

such a sweet dumb chunk!
now of all times, of all time gone
that the taut red skin of an apple remains
there, where language ends

this machine is not my lover, my long-lost mother,
not a womb nor a phallus no! Headlights are not eyes,
speed not necessarily a death-drive. This mess is unthinking —
it does
not decide

Driving by, others slow to observe a living doll
sitting, glassy-eyed ‘ah!’ is all she replied.
Cold and serene with the indicator blinking, the wheel
feels ten taut shellac nails, set in red
at ten-to-two.

After Orta

look towards the walls
the weight of the bricks
the bricks of the building
the bricks that were carried
the building is bricks
the building is weight
a weight that was carried
bricks held in the hand
the weight of the walls
was carried
the building was held
held in the hand

This one is beginning
This one is one being one
This one is breathing
This one is carrying breath
This one has weight
This one is dancing breath
This one carries the weight
This one is breathing to
begin

This one is one who has
been one, by dancing

look to the floor
to the golden feet
where secrets are
to the shadows, also danc-
ing
to remember
It's not a line
its a folded edge

the hand is weight
the weight of a building
the lines of a hand
are a folded edge

beginning a line
is beginning a building
the line of an arm
and inside the hand
This one is being
being is dancing
the building is being

the brick is dancing
to remember the hand
the hand that carried
the breath and the weight
placed
the foot of the building
a hand on the wall
breathe
with the building
the one
that is dancing

Facets of a quest narrative

Brother! look before you leap
and while the leap echos, he turns his back.
Slivers of mirror from a shattered unknown glint
in shards at his sliding toes. Fragments:
where golden stars, and blue refract.

> What has he left us? I weep an ocean
> at the distance between us, recalling that time
> we danced death away and intoxicated
> by the shadow-play that fused our lengthening
> limbs to land.

Where are we going? I survey the terrain of vanishing points
and find my wayward twin - a Titan stumbling, through grids
and horizons in quest for not one, but another Tabula Rasa.
Freed maybe, from beat and measure I see that only the whites
of his eyes are alive to that blank expanse
and the sweet, numb amnesia of feet.

Ellipses

Smooth this cambered flesh

Reshape that sagging jaw

Tune the discord in these eyes

retouch

finger pinch open
tap
tap
open, tap to

whiten

(Now you see me)

Like my peach
Like my rose
Like my filtered toes

Share my feast
Share my lips
Share my boomeranged pose
    Follow me
    Follow my almond eyes
    Follow where I go

Threads

Spin
Measure
Cut

She cuts a thread and pulls it through
the needle's eye, mid-blinking. In her lap, a circle
in calico waits thinking of a future. Soon a rhythm
of pierce and pull begin and her existence is marked assured
by a threaded line
(oblique not horizontal)
Blanket, Fern and Feather, from these stitches she coaxes
her language, made in blossom. A repertoire of roses, tell
of struggle, of loyalty and betrayal
a wordless declaration
sewn in Lazy Daisy.
I mime to my sister, the threading of a needle (this ballet,
our shorthand for endeavour). And with our mother and
her mothers mother, we weave
in a cats cradle of human arms
a new birth, a stitch
brine-scented.

Criss-crossing paths tether eye to hand while that
Dilettante destiny flits helplessly between. And at the end
I bit my thread and held aloft this life — in full bloom,
a blood red rose sewn in Blanket, Fern and Feather.

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