

ease, talking to no one in the tall grass on Montrose  
there are a few cycles I am exploring

tics hiding, but they are damp today and obvious  
brushing my lotioned fingertips over my shoulder

I find a seething red mass, that's where I was keeping it  
or that's where I was keeping all of the butter from this week

or whipped in the butter is where I was keeping it  
this is that reckoning with anger you mentioned would come

I credit a few indigo spirits  
it's a feeling of being loved enough

I put on the green coat with green buttons with a little more white in them  
a little more white than the green in the coat

expose the wrists, mine are transparent  
February is a mist colored moon, warmer than a fog colored moon

it is the week you forget to check your horoscope

I dragged my right scapula closer to my hip  
my ribs are clipped together

archived in the messy drawer under my armpit  
I am surfeited; you have silenced me enough for now

there is no need to be saturated with the pieces of you  
that require I second guess my basic goodness

am I too blue? I have an answer  
I will broaden that flesh

## Free Silence III

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Works from End of 2016-Spring 2017  
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birth is awakening  
from the tempest sleep of souls  
do you too feel a birthing  
each time you awake  
I do not quite return  
though bursting again I recall the story of my life  
starting from that first grey writhing moment  
I almost choke on my kale  
realizing this may have been more exciting  
in my mind  
never you mind  
where my mind soars  
deep lakes, dusk woodland, unspeakably distant  
from this basement  
yet when I visit  
I am completely there  
that it why there is a hole  
in each of my eyes

**revisiting Audre Lorde, listening to readings of “Sister Outsider,” remembering to write it down**

The urge to reel back, to retreat into what once was:  
I have experienced the film just under the varnish of the present peeling back,  
rotting like an unwashed scab.  
Fear makes this rattling noise under my eyes,  
but there is more to it than that.  
I am unsure of the path, and that uncertainty,  
answering to it,  
inventing ways to dance with it,  
is what I seldom remember is the true, encompassing path  
for any truth-seeker.  
The rest of my flesh should be enough of a force to surround and engulf the pieces  
where the doubt has pierced through.  
I think of my flesh as a graph of the resistance, the bleeding is a dying nationalism.  
My good bacteria is eating it whole with microscopic fangs  
and hearts. The recovery is the discipline  
but today I address where my mind seeks to feed the blisters  
while I work at the law center,  
learning about scraps of disability income,  
about prison guards wrapping plastic bags  
over the nostrils of the segregated and mentally ill  
just to remind them of the silence they are bound to  
should they dare whisper through a letter.  
Wishing to work mindlessly again, to work with my friends,  
to laugh through this learning, to have life as it was  
before the harshness of now.  
And I have given it away to myself, again: I have the choice  
to step out of the sickness which,  
much like the truth of the path, is the symptom of the bigger sickness:  
that some of us have this choice  
while others are completely condemned,  
body, spirit, voice, by a lack of it.

it will be so, that I am always starting over  
patterns in the dish of my eye

a fishtail, houndstooth, each addition  
holding space for the invisible next

with years I have picked up scattered feathers  
grey and unmellowed

one fist at a time, pressured into a glass jar  
I seal it with a baubled lid

in my dream the calendar reminds me of the full moon  
the jar belongs on the stony ledge where she waits for me

the enormous shadow,  
the things I have collected—condensed

I am a furry lady,  
I say to Tim. He is helping me close the shop tonight.

One time a furry man shaved the breadth of his pelvic area  
before having sex with me.

I felt courted like an empress  
by the offering of catered buttery balls.

Milk and peaches below the navel.  
Why did he do that? I did not mind but

to what inspiration did I owe the pleasure?  
Sarah was the perfect human in seventh grade.

She had thick, curly eyelashes and breasts  
that bloomed forth from turbulent seeds,

faster than anyone else's aching nubs.  
I tell Tim that one day Sarah came to school with shaved arms.

I went home and, in panicked, shameful solitude,  
shaved everything—wiping black razors from the linoleum

with soggy toilet paper before my mom could see.  
An eel with swollen nipples.

The hair grew back blunt, irritated, endless.  
An episode of abandonment,

an early disconnect with something solid.  
I resisted a bit of me that is infinite, there is no negotiation

for omission of these parts, all of them, however benign.  
I am beginning to know that

but a knife in place from the past, it gets in the way.  
What is it? Like empathy, like infection,

taking on another's intentions.  
Is it stealing? But it hurts.

How often do I conclude that whatever they are doing  
it must be better than this.

There are only two answers to the questions  
this hour puts forth: yes or no.

On the eve I carry a plastic tray for blackberries  
to the recycling bin. A mighty wind in the gangway,

a charged current that almost blows the trash from my hands.  
It feels decisive, it is knowing.

Twelve hours later thoughts hiss like bubbles  
in a thick pot of salty grits. A fatty mind

full of clumps, sticky wells, holes.  
I am sitting at a coffee shop, the sunny seat. I am cold.

In my line of sight a black and white  
Photograph—maybe 80 or 90 white boys with bikes.

They pose in front of a store window,  
“prizes for the road race, this Monday 3:30 pm!”

There is rage in their faces. How else might they mobilize,  
where does this misfired glare into my breakfast,

into the future, initiate?  
It is hard for me to hold onto a thought today.

Maybe it has been this way for a week.  
Maybe it has been this way since I was a child.

Maybe there is a static in all of our minds  
from a cloud of charged particles

like invisible heat from a solar flare,  
radiation from a chemical weapon,

infection from an inheritance.  
Veiled, mutating, cancerous.

In a city like Chicago I did not realize  
to what extent a bedrock of ignorance was the future,

was present. I am present with it,  
its presence crawled into bed with us

when the alarm beeped at 7am, I put a hand  
on your stomach where it might hurt you first,

and told you he had won.  
There is a toxic shit ready to leave my body

### **emancipated surrender**

emancipated into the same sheets: it is evening again  
not quite night,  
here in winter early darkness blindfolds the options  
I feel your hands cue the transition  
taking off my bra (if I am wearing one) and let me tumble  
on the quilt squares like soft potatoes landing, muffled

I feel as though I have not slept  
in this bed on the rug in months, perhaps ever  
though I was here less than a half days worth before  
is your body mostly warm

or chilled, like a window  
open, surrendered to the elements  
a whole days worth is not worth the heft of my fall  
I weigh more than I should in my shoulders, in my mind

thin lightening raps on a window  
a hailstorm in the balmy rapture  
February should not be this warm  
so we love in the interim, laying down to our survival game  
of wait and see

**how many moons**

once I saw a painting of a computer screen  
with two windows

I wish I could peel this document back  
turning a page

I ask for an end because I am through  
peering in for more where there is none

asking for more when I already know better  
I want Ratna

richness, riches of communication  
I have cycles to sunder

come love and help me lift this wrench  
to take a crack against this pipe

to make soft, transparent paper  
where there has only been glass

there is a violence that is about to pierce a tapestry,  
still on the loom, of protection.

There are rageful spirits  
that will be beckoned from their hiding places

to hunt, massacre, deport,  
deny, divest, to reap for their god.

They will pose with their guns for the photograph  
and we will be forced to gaze into their rotting eyes.

To love and protect,  
I want to love and protect.

I know what side I'm on  
and I want to support the work.

An unnatural warmth glimmers through yellow November leaves.  
Before I learn to fight

I must live in furious truth,  
setting traps for stray particles of confusion

in the spaces between me and you  
so that together we will win.

once there was a man with a microphone at his heart  
beat the loop it is all nothing right out of your mind  
a me on my back I count the breath in my belly  
backwards until numbers, the structure dissolves  
a rhythm occupying space—it is how I know we are here—  
but why so fraught with our shadows,  
the shadows of what we choose to ignore  
the sound is so sweet, but its mark: blood in the air  
your ribs are a blinking Sagittarius, my jugular,  
a creek humming through a cut in a hay-colored valley  
of a home we righteously silence

my heart like an elastic balloon  
hot water bottle, supple rubber

sipping in vibrations in  
the air, the fire, the hot trash

expansive to the point of chatter  
I lash at you

this frequency cannot adjust to the news  
to the disappointment

a pinprick of honesty  
I tell the truth: penetration

through polychloroprene  
a rubber cup suction the muscles

left of the scoliosis curve  
and the garbage spills out

ground coffee from a punctured filter  
time to dissolve

into the truth of my dark moon  
what else has slipped out

at the end of this year  
bathing in its own pool of piss

mold grows under a ceramic dish in the corner of the shower  
grey splotches spread under the wet clay belly of my heart

*Candor—my Preceptor—is the only wile*

Emily Dickinson 1876

there are ancients in the soil  
they wore their hairs more than two ways

in the depths they are not separate from the soil  
I mean springing forth—I mean they have always been

as an orchid, as moss  
as your spirit living inside one face and the next

there are two ways to listen to the song  
Angel from Montgomery

what it does to hear Prine sing this one—  
a yellow light gathers, halo in my ear

he is an old woman  
named after his mother

I am waiting without wile  
for the moment I am certain I can withdraw from woman

for the duration of a song  
for as long as I live with this face

for a reason other than misogyny living inside  
give me one thing that I can hold onto

candor of my flesh-soil  
that I am one of them

epsom salt bath, a moist soil,  
my transparent shower curtain is a garden bag

specters of water splatter dry like salty tears

now that I am a year older  
I am at eye level with the smallest of grey mountains

I surrender an idea that I know the next valley  
but I can carry seeds

I too was a seed, a seed even when my mother was a seed  
toted in the pocket of nana's ovary

perhaps this is why I am obsessed with calendars  
the compulsion has not faded but I am a little wiser

planning is not foreseeing  
and to perform foreseeing is to not reckon with living

I planted squash with you under a summer moon  
it has grown in two directions

a buoyant flower, peeling back, aroused  
and fruit is the weight,

it strikes the soil, it is nourishment  
it is your stillness humming with what must be your soul

on the far of my bed on the ground

there is a limit to what I can give  
I have not thought about the moon in two

or three days  
we spent most shifts together

talking about her, her shifts,  
sips of laughter in a push through seven or eight hours

now I am alone in a room with no window  
sorting out why

some people, torch bearers,  
can do so much and then take on more

my boundaries like a persian cat's neck pouf  
I tire like a sun bath, a silk negligee

slinking off a stool  
it is time to search for the momentum

can I work hard enough  
to make my heart kinetic, shifting

beat so loudly my hands twitch  
and flip on the light