

Ad Perpetuam  
Rei Memorium  
2002-2003

Michelle Greenblatt  
2005 chapbook  
Scars Publications

# Table of Contents

Copyright information .....	2	Another Skin .....	23
Images from Scars Publications....	4	The Topped Garbage Can .....	24
Dedication.....	5	Scissors .....	25
Ad Perpetuum Rei Memorium ....	7	Dead Summer .....	27
Yellow Wildflowers .....	8	Autobiography .....	28
The Blood on My Lips and Thighs.....	10	Exhaled by the First Breath of Day .....	30
Lincoln Turnpike (October 12, 2000- March 21, 2001) .....	11	The Snake.....	31
Nauseous .....	12	God Visits Me In A Dream I Have Of You .....	32
Homes I - III .....	13	Living With You in the Ginger-Bread House ....	33
The Proximal Cold of Infinite Density.....	15	Me as a Metamorphic Rock .....	35
Light on Your Wet Eyes .....	18	A White Death Before a Blue Future .....	39
Eat .....	20	Familiar Orbit .....	41
Silica Shells Cracking.....	21		
Encased in Sky .....	22		

Ad Perpetuum Rei Memorium

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I have lived this once  
I will live this again

*to the perpetual remembrance of the thing*

Done by the dead.  
Discovery learned it.  
And the living?

- Muriel Rukeyser



# Image Archive

- Front Cover: Bark photographed in Austria, May 2003.  
Page 03: Old painted concrete photographed in Austria, May 2003.  
Page 04: Waterfall at el Yunque Tropical Rain Forst, Puerto Rico, 12/16/03.  
Page 05: Tower at el Yunque Tropical Rain Forst, Puerto Rico, 12/16/03.  
Page 06: Collage of 4 images. Top and second images are from Arlington National Cemetery, photographed 08/27/04. The third image is from Gettysburg, photographed 08/25/04. The bottom image is another image from Arlington National Cemetery, from 10/25/03.  
Page 08: Wildflowers photographed in el Yunque Tropical Rain Forst, Puerto Rico, 12/16/03.  
Page 09: This Canyonland hummingbird image photographed by Pearl Goldman July 20, 2004.  
Page 11: A country road in Urbana, Illinois, as the background of a black and white portrait of Brad. Photographed 1990.  
Page 12: Tara, sitting by a window, Champaign Illinois, 1990.  
Page 13: This "dream house" was photographed in Rhode Island, 1990.  
Page 14: Beachfront at Lake Michigan in Michigan, 1988.  
Page 15: Two airplanes were photographed in Naples, Florida, ~1989.  
Page 16: Andy at a cemetery, Urbana Illinois, 1988.  
Page 18-19: This rock photograph was taken in Austria, May 2003.  
Page 20: David, in Naples, Florida (~1990).  
Page 21: Top image: Mount McKinley, Alaska 2002. Bottom image: Tumultuous beach front in San Juan, Puerto Rico 2003.  
Page 24: The scissors were photographed 02/12/05.  
Page 25: Tunnel, Pompeii, Italy, May 18, 2003.  
Page 27: Clearcuts photographed in the Western states in 2001.  
Page 30: Top image of Everglades swamps, Florida. Middle image of flags flying in Tainanmen Square, Beijing, China 03/11/04. Bottom computer-edited images of photographs of two sets of clouds from a 747 airplane in 2003.  
Page 31: Snake from a forest in South Carolina, photographed 1996.  
Page 35: This rock, displayed at the Summer Palace, Beijing, China, was photographed March 11, 2004.  
Page 36: Rock formation photographed at the Confucius Temple, Shanghai, China, March 9, 2004.  
Page 37: Wall of rocks photographed In San Juan, Puerto Rico 12/18/03.  
Page 38: Both images photographed at the Confucius Temple, Shanghai, China, March 9, 2004.  
Page 42-43: Left image of bark, right image of paint chipping from a bench painted red in Austria, May 2003.  
Back Cover: Boarded back door, Austria, May 2003.

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*this book is dedicated to  
doris & oscar goldman, naomi greenblatt*

# Ad Perpetuam Rei Memorium

I move w/ a dream usually  
found in graveyards, headstones  
walking  
off to greet one another & holding

a tragic séance for the living,  
motion,  
the static life. go. then stop.  
where are you? they ask, and why

have you not come to see me?  
first of all, grope the stone far down  
under your bliss & dumbly the glory

of death still surpasses the woman  
you gnawed open, the one you loved  
most. the most tragic dance

of all. where is she? rinsing the  
night  
mare from her hair, galloping into  
daytime, measureless Times you have

beaten her & won but now who  
has been pushed down, down  
(under)?  
where are you? where is she? rose



plum cheeks speaking the  
graveyard  
vernacular; she has come to  
visit  
you many times—it has been

sifting bodies shivering  
blonde hairs  
parted like rocks every numb  
vision  
of you now turned to stone.

1.15.2005



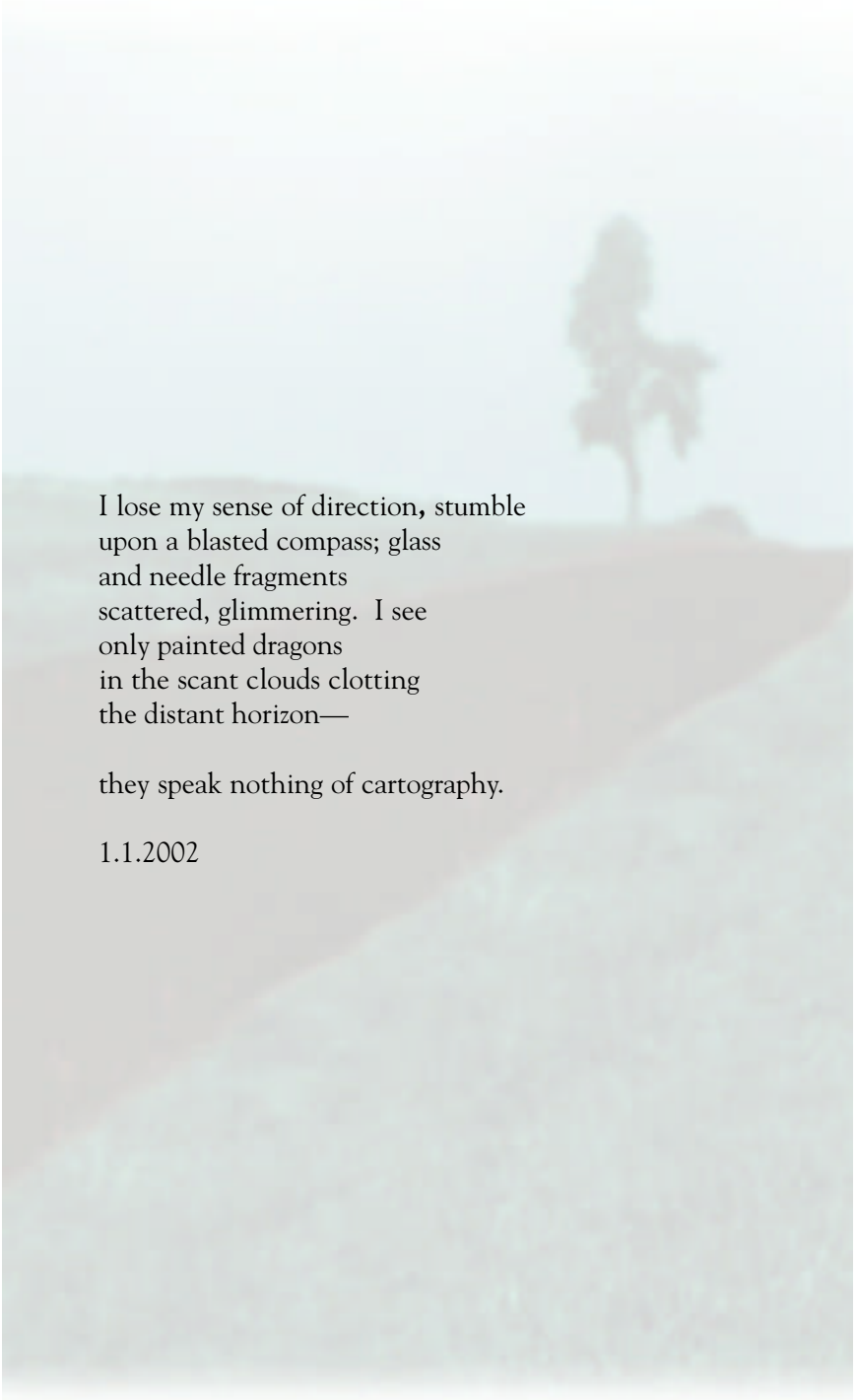
# Yellow Wildflowers

I'm walking among trees, yellow  
wildflowers bending  
in the wind. although I don't know  
the significance of  
the furrowed ground in  
the air, the missing space  
in the sky

I record everything within  
the photographic pocket  
of my mind, noting all  
ablutions as I run  
my hands through  
lucid streams and  
viscous sky.

(I know I should keep  
walking, though  
backward  
was not the way  
recommended)

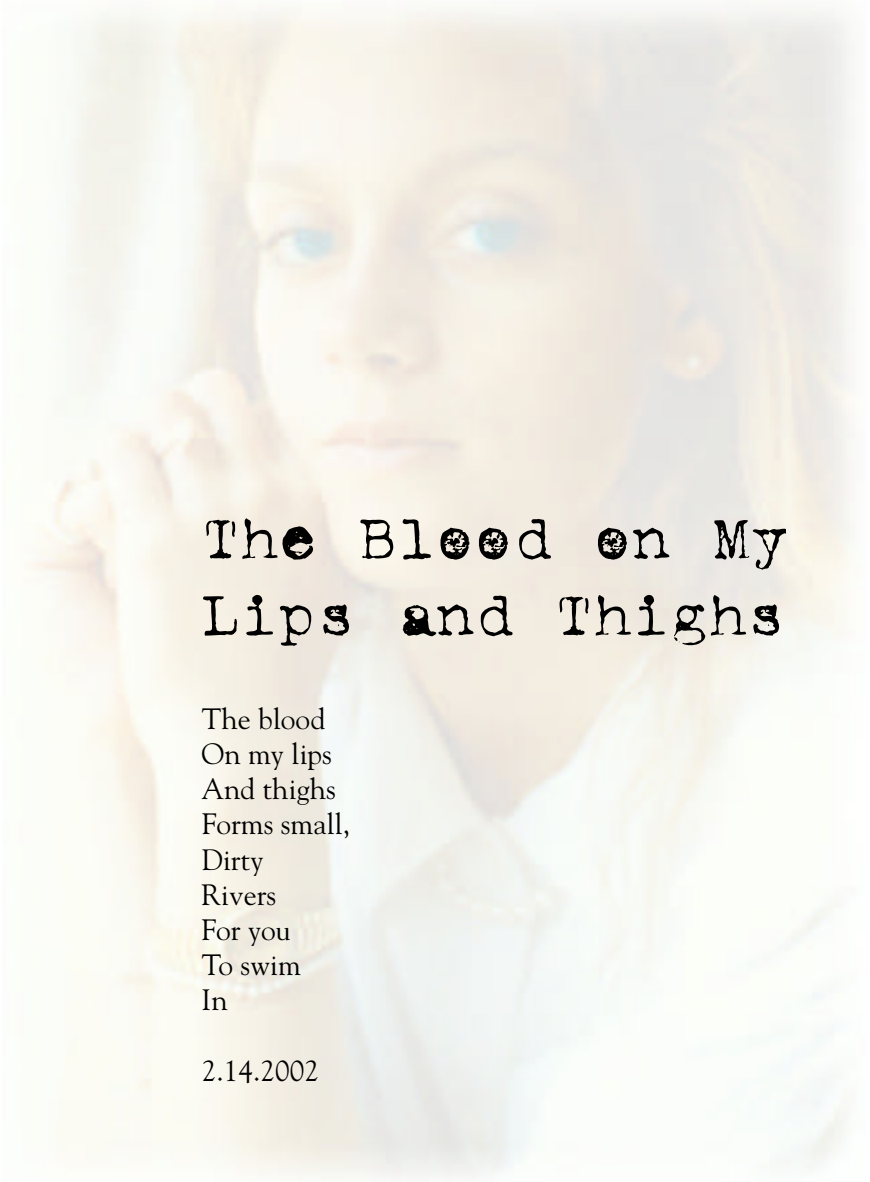
—it was sun blood that  
made these mountains, skulls  
of slaughtered lions, disintegrating  
into dust puddles that grab  
my feet as I'm sprinting—

A blurred, sepia-toned landscape. In the foreground, there are rolling hills or dunes. In the middle ground, a single, dark silhouette of a tree stands on a small rise. The background is a pale, hazy sky. The overall mood is desolate and atmospheric.

I lose my sense of direction, stumble  
upon a blasted compass; glass  
and needle fragments  
scattered, glimmering. I see  
only painted dragons  
in the scant clouds clotting  
the distant horizon—

they speak nothing of cartography.

1.1.2002



The Blood on My  
Lips and Thighs

The blood  
On my lips  
And thighs  
Forms small,  
Dirty  
Rivers  
For you  
To swim  
In

2.14.2002



# Lincoln Turnpike (October 12, 2000- March 21, 2001)

the horizon is  
endless, which she likes.  
to keep driving, past old  
trees, broken  
clouds, Sun rising high  
over mile markers and endless  
fields of grass. she thinks:

Yesterday looks like death  
to me, porous  
mountains and crumbling rinds  
of sunshine— I am more  
tired than I have ever been  
before, but I remember  
clearly what you deny:

*Arsonist, I said, keep out of my garden.*

still I capitulated  
slowly into the last  
winter, into  
the lies you told because

of Philadelphia, into  
a colder moon, suddenly  
swallowed by sky.

4.29.2002

# Nauseous

I'm vaguely nauseous all the time  
like you are at the back of my throat  
stickydripping trickle  
and I can't swallow;

like I'm watching from a window  
watching myself  
watching.

6.6.2002

# Homes I-III

for C

our first home: kitchen to the right;  
I almost forgot that, living room to the left.  
mannequin: no head, no arms, just torso



neck and breasts, black el  
her nipples: your roommat  
an. he is dying, bitter. to  
, lit at night with red and  
s. I do not reconstruct thi  
ect it with memories; it sim  
ape forming, computer at



of your bed, keyboard which felt more of your fingers  
than I did.



our second home (he is still  
alive; you have parted ways) you are  
proud of; diamond-checked blanket  
over large couch facing the television. nights  
you tell me to sit in the corner and shut  
up; your friends  
there, watching; I think,

this is not as I willed it,  
not as I wanted it  
not as I dreamed it  
to be



our third home is the beach: (he is dead, you were  
high, missed his funeral) our limbs stretching, etched with sand,  
bodies rocking on a bench, toes clenched, sky getting darker,  
then lighter, eyelids growing heavier; still we stay past 5:30, 6:00,  
until we cannot share the vision of sun reminding us  
it is a new day, and we have to come to  
see it with each other, a new day

not as we willed it  
not as we wanted it  
not as we dreamed it  
to be

6.8.2002



# The Proximal Cold of Infinite Density

i.

Nervous Animal

my mother sits  
on the airplane, paging  
through the Delta Sky

magazine, wishing  
we weren't here  
like this.

I'm slightly drugged  
off benzodiazepines. we are  
shapeless, up

to our foreheads in  
the proximal cold  
of infinite density.

each syllable I utter is  
wrong, each choked  
word a bullet forcing

its way into her gut, making  
her eyes more hot, heavy.  
I am ragged, my self

-absorbed gasps barely  
heard over the roar  
of the 747.

snatches of conversation around me:  
*“her eyes are big and she’s nervous.  
sometimes she tries to dig her way out.”*

*Somewhere over the Atlantic, 11.9. 2002*



ii.

Funeral, Kehal Israel, Dollard des Ormeaux

when they lowered you  
down

lowered you  
down

I heard my mother  
sob as she had

sobbed  
ten years before

Paperman and Sons  
umbrellas clustered

together in the rain  
black orbs of afternoon

mourning gelid wet wind  
on my cheeks

the sound of the dirt  
crunching

falling  
landing

enough to make someone go  
mad if they listened long

enough the wailing  
muted I thought

of falling in just  
momentarily---but long

enough to believe my feet  
couldn't keep me on the ground

10.10.2002



iii.

Shiva House, Town of Mount Royal, Oakdale Street

when the boys came to  
-night they brought a degree

of normalcy the party  
sandwiches seemed

like party sandwiches  
the cake seemed like cake.

I sat with two jackets  
wrapped around

my mourning body  
on the late autumn

porch one black wool one  
red leather smoking

cigarettes by myself clarity  
reached through

the glaze for a moment  
then splintered

10.10.2002

# Light on Your Wet Eyes

i.

the horizon slopes down seraphic  
light on your wet eyes we depart yet

neither of us moves  
frozen in

the same place the same  
raucous grin painted

on again behind the scrim  
of your astringent

eyes cacophony  
of words breeding there

ii.

everything shifts  
in and out of focus

the loci of your pupils  
scattered around

like bad photographs the  
plains of my face splitting

in the cavernous  
apex of daytime

we are lost in diaphanous  
caves I followed

as long as I could  
put my hand on the dark

mossy stone walls wet  
with slime used

my little red flash  
light with the dying

battery to make traces  
of yellow in the black air.

iii.

I have lived this once,  
I will live it again

I have opened as a flower  
would waiting for you

my centripetal pupils  
following your footsteps

I have returned to the house  
we once lived in everything

upside down all the furniture  
missing curtains shredded

it looks as if we never  
stayed here at all

12.31.2002

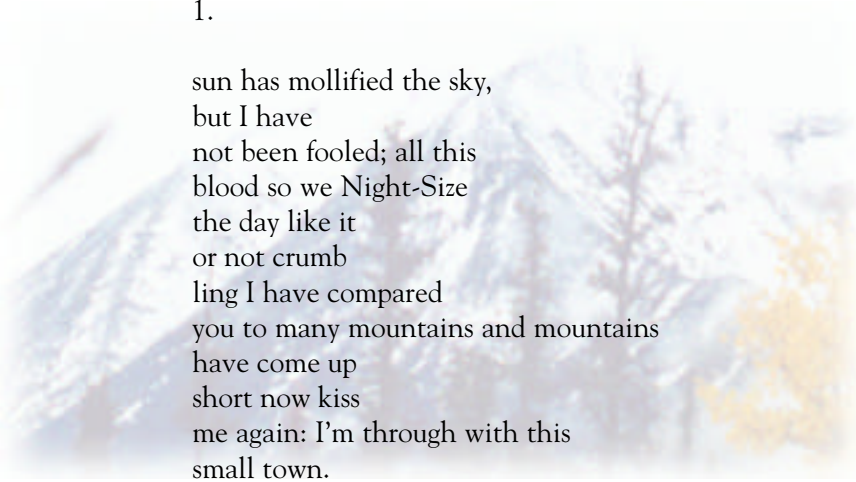
## Eat

tongues can whisper the sweetest dreams (may I ask when I was dreaming?)  
and your (ventifact &  
(full of moonlight)) face spilling over the corners of your undulant mouth  
*trickery* it tells me I was supposed to have learned the sugarsweet  
lies of not the first day but maybe the 100<sup>th</sup> slippery sliding  
between cracks *saywhatyoumean* you would command although  
I thought I was speaking perfectly clearly apparently the birds were  
chirping right out of my mouth so I guess it made sense some-  
times starting from the end working backwards can be the best  
onetwothree of it all to keep moving to keep going forward this  
is the only way to leave you behind but holding out your hands,  
*go on, eat, you say, eat.*

1.3.2003

# Silica Shells Cracking

1.

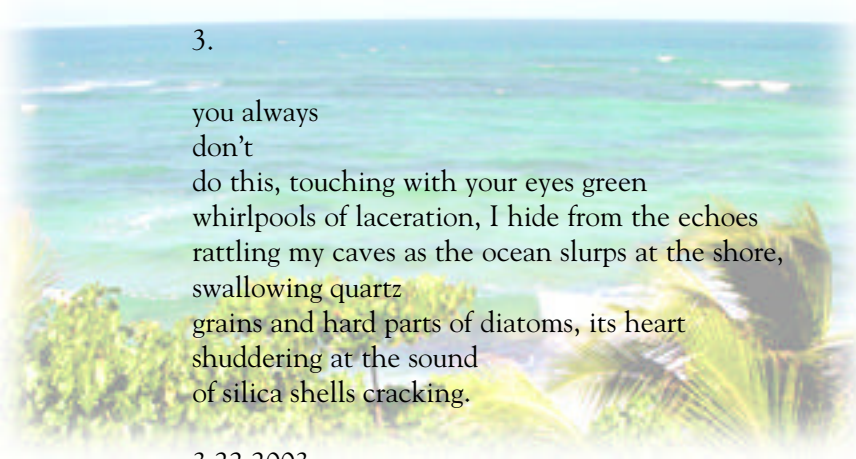


sun has mollified the sky,  
but I have  
not been fooled; all this  
blood so we Night-Size  
the day like it  
or not crumb  
ling I have compared  
you to many mountains and mountains  
have come up  
short now kiss  
me again: I'm through with this  
small town.

2.

good morning to  
you at dusk you say most simply this time  
of day is hardest to see in.

3.



you always  
don't  
do this, touching with your eyes green  
whirlpools of laceration, I hide from the echoes  
rattling my caves as the ocean slurps at the shore,  
swallowing quartz  
grains and hard parts of diatoms, its heart  
shuddering at the sound  
of silica shells cracking.

3.22.2003

# Encased in Sky

The sun resonates  
(with) bloody noise.  
I write you listless  
letters, coded,  
fragmented which multiply  
in syncopated, silent  
caesuras.

I never heal, bite marks  
infected, beckoning  
maggots. You call  
this inevitable, pull time  
into an eternal  
pause. Encased in sky, glow  
stars tremble.

\*

Each time  
you return  
grief cracks  
a deeper  
path into  
my skull.

5.29.2003



# The Toppled Garbage Can

If you were complicated: if you were  
but that, it could be justified. you were not, though,  
you were simple in your behaviors;  
in the kitchen, empty bottles of Sambuca,  
spoons, forks that were crusty, sticky in the sink;  
steak knife sticking blade upward  
out of a cup filled with soapy water.

you who could not tell your own story,  
you who fumbled with words, sometimes  
pausing to contemplate the concept of the very  
letters that composed them, laid out like brick  
after brick on a stone wall, punctuation marks  
like mortar cementing the sentences together.

but you, you loved a poet. I wrote to you,  
*fear does justify cowardice.*  
*cowardice does not justify viciousness.*  
you did not read the poem.

in the bedroom, Coke cans on the nightstand,  
cracked ashtray, ground out Marlboro Red  
cigarette butts beer bottles, three quarters  
the way empty warm, flat and the sheets  
tangled at the bottom of the bed.

undone, unsealed remapped, reorganized  
sliced, mended understood, forgiven  
in the name of a relationship with no boundaries

in the bathroom, shampoo empty at  
the bottom of the bathtub shaving cream by  
the sink, green towel with your initials,  
old toothbrush; on the floor, toppled garbage can,  
Q-tips, burned spoon.

6.3.2003

# Another Skin

*to R.C. Hildebrandt*

underneath my skin another skin  
was forming growing over  
my pounding heart, my contracting  
and expanding lungs,  
smothering me.  
phenomenology of prison,  
you'd say. it's not really  
happening. it's not really there.  
you'd look me in the eye  
as you said it, a knife between  
your teeth. it would flash  
in the moonlight shining  
through your uncovered  
windows.  
you are mine but  
you are not mine  
you would say,  
gutting me.

6.6.2003

# Scissors



1,

Our minds come apart  
in the adjusted lens of  
my eyes, focusing before me:

when I dream of the city it is  
always nighttime; we go through  
the tunnel on US1, close our windows  
to the sound of it

(in the dream you speak to me  
about why, words,  
intonation, body language. You  
tell me everything I need to hear  
in the softest whisper under the  
roar of the tunnel. I shout back  
at you)

How hard it is to leave you.  
The paralysis of the body,  
the blurring of the mind.

2.

You gave me a bloody letter.  
You might have stomped me  
to burnt pieces with  
wildness;  
I stopped singing—

I have no voice  
left to speak to you with

but this one,  
cracked, trying to reclaim  
this sawdust.

Often I grow  
confused;  
I cling to the wrong  
people,  
walk through smashed  
hallways, the last remainders  
of gold dust smudged  
off by your thumbs.

3.

(the otherness  
that comes suddenly  
leaves me blindsided)

4.

You (or someone  
like you) looked so  
human, drenching my  
body (at first)  
with bare unburdened  
love

until finally I looked  
up and saw  
a blunted  
pair of scissors.

6.12.2003

# Dead Summer, 1995

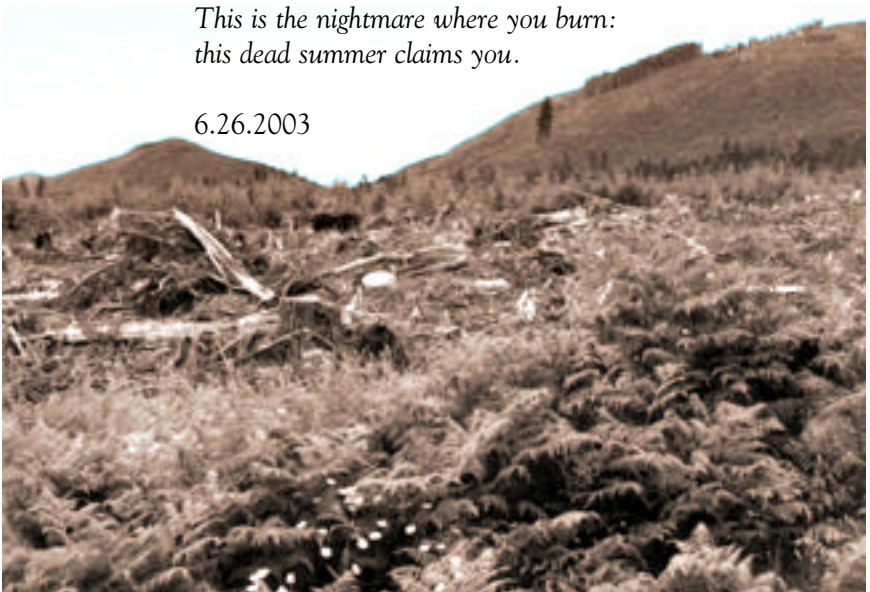
I walked through the hissing  
fields of Castro Valley, 12 years old  
wearing my favorite band t-shirt; wind wrapped  
itself around my skin and clung. I couldn't  
understand pale yellow grass, everything dying  
at the end of July—This land was naked,  
colors fried, flowers stripped:

Later I watched, horrified,  
as we drove past the charred  
trees of Yosemite, passing through a  
hellish forest stippled with reminders  
of death: flaming branches, smoking  
stumps, ashes of leaves blowing  
across the windshield;

those dead trees—I swear to you—spoke  
to me—portent in their heated grief:

*This is the nightmare where you burn: .  
in the blinding sunlight you remember everything.  
This is the nightmare where you burn:  
this dead summer claims you.*

6.26.2003



# Autobiography

I had a pair of scissors silver  
stolen from the kitchen

having seen death's talkative  
smile, that I used to cut

paper, over and over  
until it couldn't be cut

anymore, the pieces  
falling

like snow  
onto my bed, each white

flake a fragment  
of me. Gathering

in a soft quiet pile  
like a shredded, bleached

autobiography, they screamed  
& screamed & screamed, my

mind caught in its own terrible  
catacombs of 1993-1995. I was

filling the white void with  
white. The night that rolled

in oozing, lonely cold air rolling  
in through the cabin

windows, maple leaves stirring  
on the boughs that rested



heavily against the twinkling  
black horizon.

Made me what I was.  
How did he? I could not eat,

I did not sleep, I would not dance,  
never learned to.

My shirt sticky with sap in  
the forest he used to take me

to, the back of my head caked  
with earth, I would stumble

into the showers and  
shake

like an earthquake in those  
tiny stalls.

8.4.2003

# Exhaled by the First Breath of Day



In this abyssal room heaviness  
sets in,  
the air tangling like weeds  
in saltwater,  
silkystrip of nighttime blind  
folding me.  
Temporal, sensate—it reminds  
me of  
us, the last tenuous strands  
of hope



flapping in the wind like  
flags,  
the vertiginous light  
creeping in,  
exhaled by the first breath  
of day,  
peeling back the cloth of  
nighttime  
from my eyes.

\*



Morning reminds me of you, too.  
The wisps  
of sunlight, orange through  
the clouds, the  
overgrown vines I wake to see clawing  
at my  
windows, the carved sky illusive  
against  
the backdrop of the  
horizon.

8.12.2003

# The Snake

The moon hangs passively in the sky  
as the girl walks through the tall

lime green grass in the empty  
fields. She stains the ground human-color

as she moves through it,  
but she leaves no footprints.

The scattered flowers blossom  
into dust; compost heaps ascend

from the earth and rupture at its  
surface, settling on the soil in

moist piles.  
Moving alone, a brain full of

blood and belly caught precisely  
between her throat and her teeth,

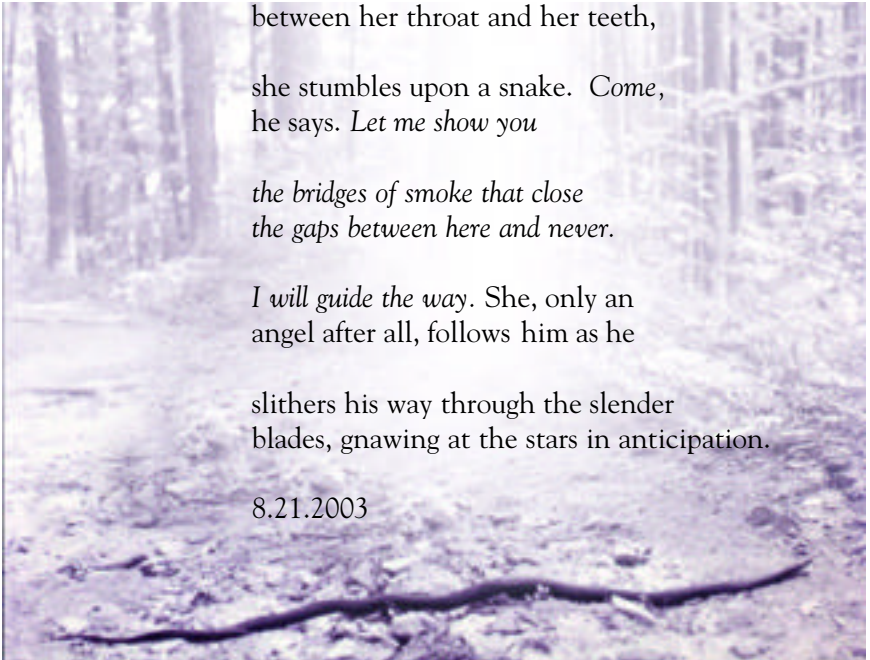
she stumbles upon a snake. *Come,*  
he says. *Let me show you*

*the bridges of smoke that close  
the gaps between here and never.*

*I will guide the way.* She, only an  
angel after all, follows him as he

slithers his way through the slender  
blades, gnawing at the stars in anticipation.

8.21.2003



# God Visits Me In A Dream I Have Of You

Flipping coins by the pond I am sitting at its edge staring  
at the cloudy waters, at the turtles poking their weary  
heads out the surface, at the minnows darting around

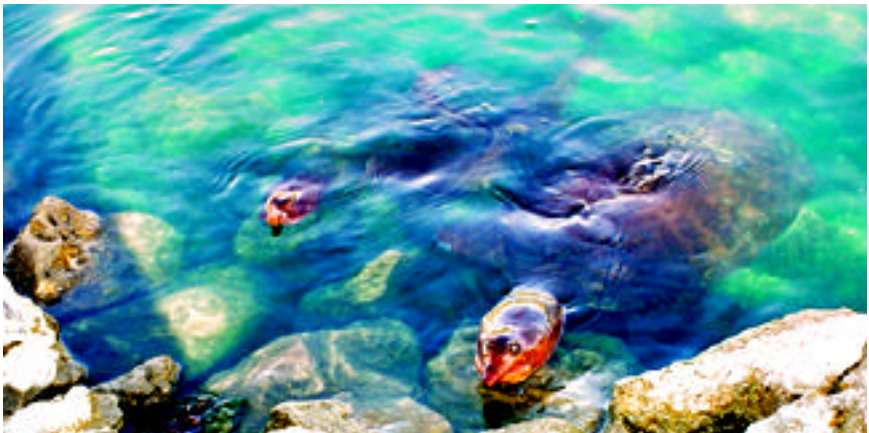
the water's edge, easy targets for birds. My tongue is frozen  
in my mouth; I can't speak. He is standing behind me, catching  
my coins as they fly up in the air. This is a simple metaphor

that I use: He is capturing the coins and thereby is controlling my  
my destiny. Ahead of me the sun is setting in a golden haze  
behind the clouds. He skips the

coins across the pond like rocks, but instead of sinking, they float  
on the surface; hundreds of them of gather. I dive in to get  
them and I am sucked under. Beneath the surface of the hot water,

I see your catacombs. I have suspected these tunnels  
for years and am holding their crumbling maps in my hands, using them  
to figure out which way is North before

I drown. I inhale the water. I taste salt. Bitter ocean in my mouth, pond of  
pennies, turtles, catacombs, who was the man catching my coins then  
tossing them away while I drown?



8.29.2003



Kisses that you would not otherwise give.

The things I had to steal from you.  
Words, promises, time, embraces...

*The Bitch*, you called me. Or, *She*. To your  
friends. You did not call me by my name.  
You stole my identity and my underwear  
and gave it to other girls, right in front of my face.

You took my innocence and splintered it like  
brittle wood, dropping the pieces  
on your  
floor, stained with Sambuca and cough syrup.

Your face, freckled with the ichor of my wounds,  
stared back at me, a hungry wolf, fierce eyes  
turning glazed and vacuous as you made  
the kill, saliva dripping from your  
gnashing jaws—

I abdicated, the worthless victim,  
heart silently lignifying  
as you tore my skin from  
my muscles, tossed me into  
your candied house,

crystallized honey windowpanes,  
black licorice holding the place

together by strings,  
oven sneezing out  
my bones, a fiery belch,  
an ashy breath, a smoky cough.


9.7.2003

Nominated for the Pushcart Prize 2005  
-version previously published in Volume III Issue XXXVI  
of *Futures Mysterious Anthology Magazine*.



# Me as a Metamorphic Rock

*-for Dr. Jay Muza*



My body is pinned down  
on the shield,  
or raised up in spectacular formation.  
Sometimes you are the  
sedimentary rock  
that covers me  
in which case  
my body is severely  
warped  
and your igneous masses intrude  
from the interior.

I change in both low and  
high-grade  
metamorphism.

Sometimes when the temperature  
gets the hottest  
I twist  
beyond recognition and you tell me  
I am not  
a good rock  
even though I can be  
slate, phyllite, gneiss, marble, & others  
for you.

When I am penetrated by your  
magma body  
you are unhappy with my  
thermal metamorphism.

Here we go back to your igneous  
intrusions  
which you have strung  
from my insides like Christmas

lights  
and the heat rises  
rises  
rises  
until I morph  
    into a byproduct  
of your ionic fluids.  
Then there are your  
    chemical alterations,  
your iron-rich water  
steeps in me as you run your  
fingers through my blood as a mother  
would run her fingers through  
her child's hair.

When our lithospheric plates  
collide,  
    this is where I most  
commonly form.

The gnashing of rocks leads  
to large deformations  
    and  
you look at my body,  
decorated bones,  
my iron-rich blood.  
I am twisted and warped,  
what you wanted:

but you tell me this is not enough,  
even though I can be  
mylonite, metaconglomerate, hornfels,  
anthracite, & others for you.





Turn me over, around  
and upside down—  
I am still  
    the same rock  
driven by your heat  
which provides the energy  
to cause the recrystallization and  
formation of new minerals.

Increase the temperature and my  
ions will vibrate, my innards will  
shake, things inside me will  
travel  
    from one place to another.

Subverted by your confining  
pressure,  
my quartzite's fused grains strain  
against each other,  
stretching like sandpaper  
although this does not  
fold me over,  
my fault breccia's broken fragments  
scatter in my lungs  
scratching at my chest cavity  
causing internal bleeding.

Now, you may have forgotten the  
importance of parent rock  
    but the key is that most  
metamorphic rocks have the same  
chemical composition as their  
parent.

Mineralogy may change, but  
unless there has been a substantial  
loss of atoms, the overall  
composition remains relatively  
    the same.

Me, I like to hang on to my atoms,  
even if my ions vibrate,  
even if I fold and deform, even  
if you string me like gourds  
or vines or Christmas  
lights  
or if you don't like my  
porphyroblastic texture.

And I would like to remind  
you that if you melt me down  
under high enough temperatures  
then let me cool  
I will become an igneous mass.

9.11.2003



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for Dr. Jay Muza • with thanks to Glenn Malone*

# A White Death Before a Blue Future

*-for K with thanks to Dr. John Childrey*

Nellie, Nellie, did we not fall  
asleep on the sofa curled  
in each other's arms did  
you not catch me when I fell  
like glass and shattered  
did you not pull  
me back up safely  
where I slept until morning  
the white morning  
did the lark not sing  
soft songs climbing in  
through the window  
is that why I didn't see  
the hole in your chest  
the leaking hole the glass hole the white  
hole Nellie why did we eat  
breakfast white  
breakfast tender, chafed  
nostrils why did we spend  
days long days white days  
wasting  
away pink flesh  
glistening on our white bones  
grey brains flattening  
against the sides  
of our skulls we later  
gathered quarters  
from our pockets  
to go to lunch  
in my car, my silver car  
encapsulated  
against the world  
glass windows rolled up  
glass teeth chewing glass  
hands moving glass

lips telling each other glass  
stories  
cold lurking  
in the corner when we drank  
cheap wine  
at night  
red wine  
white nights  
pushing deep into the sky the stars  
black sky white stars  
Nellie why didn't we fight  
for a blue future  
why did we put our backs against the wall  
hands over our mouths  
glass hands glass mouths  
were we lost in the white  
mazes weaving corners out  
of blackness to forget  
what we couldn't  
forget  
evaporation sublimation liquefaction  
scraping away  
at a full white moon  
Nellie don't betray me  
with your death  
a white death a red death  
ask your mother  
what I've done to you  
don't betray me with your death  
who will catch me when I fall  
in the white bedroom  
like glass  
off the couch  
onto the floor  
who will catch me  
when I fall  
out of the white mazes  
into the blue future?

10.24.003-10.25.003

*this poem also appears in "Down in the Dirt" literary magazine, v019, March 2005.*