

SONGS OF SURRENDER

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Brittle While

Same sickle reaps same straw,
lays down same bed of same relief,
the masters of my depredation
leave behind their gasping thugs
to shepherd the submission of
my languor to defeat.

Carouse a brittle while now,
it's you who have the task of idly
rotting in the street,
whose tongue would rather taste
the tepid rancor of this gutter flow
than suckle at the surfeit of some
scornful liege, some welfare teat.
It's you, it's you and me, my friend,
who wallow in the ordure,
it's both of us together who will
hold open the breach.

Carouse a brittle while now,
our share of the remainder
is asylumed in this empty vow,
a pledge always adhered to
and complete—

Keepsake

Spit on the penance,
the purloined reprisal
awaits you.
The wolf with no teeth
will chew with his eyes
before feeding.
Carry the keepsake
of vengeance
within every sinew.
Yours is not
to grieve for the parted.
Yours is the parting—

Unsung

One livid gob will burst from bloom,
for time and times and half a time,
who can recall what yet decays
will not indulge the mouth its tongue.
Who can recall will salt away
the pit before it finds its plum,
the cart before its sullen dray
decamps to fight the war to come.
What needs this null a world to groom,
what needs the light, what needs the sun
a shadow risen from the shade
as though each mirror held the one
reflection not at once arrayed
with ornaments to smut or gaum,
to drain the night, to win the day
for this, the first begotten song
unsung—

So fairs all

What substitutes for clarity
survives all your inclusions,
a fugitive behind the torch
confessed to coming due.
What counts the stolen aegis
as the algebra of margins,
the siphon of the throat unplumbed
to slop a paper sward.
Not deity but circumstance,
not figure but encasement,
not border but horizon
stricken starless from the gloam.
Not barrier but finitude,
not scalpel but incision,
a void congealed with gnosis
into feature, so fairs all—

Songs of surrender

I

What begins at conviction
will end with a bullet.
This is our privilege, we keep it
by muscling out of the plumage
the scurvy of order,
our final adornment,
as fragile and fleeting
as roots in the lime.
I am loved by the flames
but the ash cannot stand me,
and this—can you hear it?—
the bullet is nigh—

II

Distance effervesces
from the alien in the mirror.
We imagined this in unison
but live it as an aggregate
of unrelated singulars.
Look: it's where they came for you,
stripped the rust from every hilltop,
pulled the string from every finger.
No oceans rise, no border stalls
the enemy at the table.
It's not the ends
that hollow out our words
but the beginnings—

III

The buildings are tilled
by the edges of windows,
spilling, consuming,
the basilisk rails.
We carry the boulevards
out of necessity
because they can't
carry themselves.
Put your hand on my throat,
this is the custom.
Break the skin if you must,
I won't make a sound.
The ranks will assemble,
the fields will adopt them,
and silt up with gutters
a place to call ours—

IV

What can, in the slough,
in the scale of the tracery,
the sluice and the slant
of projectiles mean
to the one forced to suffer
the singular puncture,
plucked from impassable air.
What does, in the face of this
shunting between, the face
and the scale of this
flailing surrender,
the slaughter of every last
partisan glean for
the conquering vagabond
gorged on the savor
of vengeance, then malice,
then sated despair—

V

That has fallen
once had flown.
The syrinx and the ulna
made a bubble burst
to residue, the whited stain
a dusty pock
upon the polished marl.
Just remind me; was it you
who balked at being
first to leap, who pushed
the next one through without
a harness clipped to backup wing
or prick of greasy quill?
It was, although you claimed to be
a second order power,
that you'd only followed suit
in helping scrape that vicious marker
on the toppled scrim,
the rising ground—

VI

Lips churned to ashes,
sown shut by the narrows,
sown dead is the apple,
churned dead is the air.
Condemned to a new life,
condemned to the narrows,
the transient ardor
released by the bier.
To reveal your degrees
in the crepe of the runnel,
to be clothed in the fist
as the evening lays bare
what you've taken to augur
the vista of gutters
the apple, the absence,
the hope of return—

VII

This mutiny against the plotting,
one time, once, against the plotting,
mustered to the nervous cry
of mutinously easy lucre,
eyes sewn into nervous clutches,
mouths sewn into muling gluts.
To give in, to concede to
the departure while it's still departing,
nervous shadow ripped from shadow,
blossomed axe, and ash unsharped,
to give in, that's the final ticket,
once and final chance to make a
forfeiture from muling lucre,
easy gush from slobbered gulch,
to plot the run of shattered prospects,
ash unstuffed from knuckled sockets,
prostrate in some flimsy sinkhole
voided of its flimsy sink,
to give in, that's the final sequence,
blossomed gulch and honed appeasement,
mutinously seeking lucre,
plotting its assured rebuke—

Tallow

So kindles the tallow,
the gate of all embers,
what cold lips could stutter
the absence of modes.
To this feeble herald
the last night is over,
the last wall is breached
though the scars were not few.
How differs this brink
from the past of all futures,
how differs this cloth
from its quarry of folds.
The dream-work begins
without shadow or glimmer,
the dream of the wing
is the burden of plumes—

Hatching marrow

You are no longer able
to ration your gratis
disease for a hatchet,
the glitter of frost
on the edge of a breath
for the brine of a pouch,
of a moistening socket
corrupted by harrow
and seed. How fitting
that we are not
driven to gainsay
the fear of return,
of an end to submission
as though at the pervious
cusp of a seal, of a
luminous pitch,
of an infinite advent,
that this hoard of indices
posed as a creed
seems a promise to witness
the voodoo reveal
of a native conceit,
of your native conceit,
hatching marrow, the gloss
shunt to glossa, the hatchet
to wit—

Figure of carcass of beef

With every bristled ordinance
shot off against the pendent cleft
of hacked and fraying ungulate,
another calf half-lowing from
the butcher's hook recedes into
its wormless hump of iterative
metaphor intact.

Is it not enough to haft
a vision, sow an orphic dream,
and be at once exempted
from all sentimental grazing?
Why renounce transcendence
for the beau ideal of meaning?

But men are judged by acts,
not dreams—

Nature morte

The nomad's thirst
for absence
takes the harrow
for a bier.

The tin worms
of the carcass roofs
spread like a spark
in the straw.

There is nothing that dies
in the abstract,
that has not at first
appeared.

There is nothing that dies
as a sport of nature,
nothing that dies—

More or less

The eye extends its jailhouse
across vistas more or less without
the power to seduce the over-
seer whose arousal is our
one chance for atonement,
commutation or escape.
The sealed tomb of the stratosphere
purports to hoard the plunder
of some universal conquest that,
while more or less accepted,
is assuredly a myth.
Such a patent aggregate
of regulative forms conscripts
this view to tear out every seam
in lieu of coalescence, neither
more nor less a trap door than a
mortal ruse, a cage beset
to keep the eye from throwing off
its blinders for its blindness, which is
more or less the promise
of this vacant bliss—

Glare

Minimalists have tangled hearts
but idiom conceals the snare
beneath a cant of blanks and darks
no matter what
no matter where
the haptic portals bleating bare
from incandescent lenses snatch
a viscous niello fair-
ly limned upon
the blinding glare.
When pilgrims on that torpid march
ascend a sightless, tuneless stair
to squelch an unconsuming torch
no matter who
no matter where
the calcined canvass spits and flairs
to intimate another course
across the gape, a sullen prayer
invoked against
the blinding glare—

Such as this

Panoptic trough
alloys with dusk
the blood mouth
of this teeming foss,
the sodden lips
choked open
to accommodate
the shine.
The sodden tongue
surrendered to
the carrion prayer
of leeches afflatus,
vultures of
parousia, such
as this, we sing—

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