Terms of Flight

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A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

University of Washington
2014

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Program Authorized to Offer Degree:
English, M.F.A.
a room vibrates with pieces
of a life

each eggcrate part
of a bricolage bed

a place to lay your head

.

a simple depression,
the right to a home

.

at the end of the day
nothing
fits a hole
like a hole

I thought safe
in thermals
forever
Grip

Mother was a toreador of war. She made & held a red blanket
to wrap me in. Worn as a boot, mad as a hat of birds, and wild, she held me against her.
The plait in her hair was always coming loose.

As a child, I was a climber. I wanted to be where I could see the whole story, all stone & glory,

but there was a wall. She said I’d never be a nester.
pressed collar,
prepped package

most people’s first memories
are of boxes

mine was a splinter

.

I was driven
to the academy, pushed
into the trees—among
majestic elders

.

bruised speaker,
blown tweeter

a cigarette, so
the morning paper

.

I was drawn down
by a pack of Camels
on a park bench, a plastic bag,
a picnic table people
had graffitied
indigo takes after
cloth is removed
from the dyeing vat

blanket blued
upon exposure
to air

.

storytellers, we unfold
ourselves and wait
to become folklore

.

when the wood dries,
fire
carve your name
and burn
the knife
to each tongue
its own little
unforgivable betrayals

.

I am an only child, so
is my brother
Slip

The scar on your wrist
from when you were four
and climbed the metal mesh fence
that separated your backyard
from your neighbors’
is nearly untraceable.
While your parents were inside
you climbed.

You reached the top
then slipped, but didn’t drop—
the jagged metal edge
at the top of the fence
where the meshing ends
pierced your smooth forearm

just missing an artery.
Who knows how long
you hung.

Your father stepped out
for a smoke and saw you dangling
mute as a cocoon.
He rushed to you.

One arm around your waist,
he held your trembling form
and gripped your wrist
now slick with blood—
he lifted you up
& off—the fence

out of you—and brought you in
to butterfly the wound
just days before he left.
suspended by silk
a spider abandons
its baby carapace

hardens into adulthood

swan to man

father lifting weights
until he couldn’t

son & swoon

d

then new forms make demands
Outcome

When the caterpillar cracks its chrysalis, takes its prize—itself to task or flight—out comes flaming logos birdsilk razorspeak.
die-cast clapper
no time to chime
.

I pulled the rope
until the bell broke
wrapped it around
my sinewed body
until mummified
.

warm as when I haven’t
been home for a while
bed made no matter
how empty the room
.

when I go, I go
silent
a slippery sleeve,
the permanence of parents

a simple
complex structure
on the skin

. to contain, have
command, 
say

I’m not certain
but I believe
what I said
was no
Ask

The mailbox in the middle of the woods
says ASK, so I do—if I close my eyes
and count to a hundred, will I be able
to find you? I make my way
through teacups, past
moss-laden fainting couches,
under branch-hung candelabras
and there you are—eyes closed
reclining on a divan, nude
except for one outstretched arm
draped along a headboard
covered in vines.
we spark-test metal
to check if it’s ferrous

we span the galaxy
but only that

. .

a discrete fluid
until it is arrested

. .

I am because of you
biting my lip
Glance

Sarah’s dropped her baby’s bottle—
I kneel to cobblestones
to find the shards.
She thanks me from the corners
of her eyes.

With eyes of his own
for that lost bottle, the baby goes
from whine to wail. He flails
his tiny arms, born for
holding on. Which pitcher,
glancer, glass, will he grow up
desiring most?

Gravity has one answer,
laughter another.
Rise

No student ever gave me an apple,
but if she had, it would still
glisten shellac red
in fluorescent classroom light.
It would still taste underripe.

Of course, it would be plastic,
in its own plastic orbit.
Whether we rise in rapture
or objection, gravity corrects us

like tired satellites. You laid your head
in the crook of my neck—
the space between my baby heart
and lizard brain—and slept

the entire flight. I liked my body being
a drumbeat to your dreams.
the evidence is in
you already
drank the contrast

backsliding to the package store
for a bottle despite
the promise

.

on bad days
I would rearrange myself
if I could

take my DNA
and make it spell
&
i.

The point is to extend the code. Age the line, follow the keynote, keep the campaign alive. See pop. See king.

See your college buddy’s family photo on the fridge, Dad asking *Think you’re too old to donate?*

See yourself in carbon copied everywhere.

ii.

I’ve got a bee in my bonnet. It’s buzzing about soccer, cookies, fatherhood announcing *Now is the time!* It’s got a point

I don’t see. If I don’t respond you know where to find the safe deposit box key.

iii.

As soon as we’re owned I’m afraid of dispossession. I’m afraid to look at the ring’s inscription. Out

our rented window:
the house across the street
is a pink foam work in progress.

iv.

Find me in the closet, hiding in a shoebox, trembling in the shadow of my shadow.
the mist between
the mountains & the sea

the gulf
between audience
and stage

.

being afraid
you’ll envy the baby
his innocence

.

the space
between you
and me

a caesura before
cesarean

.

close your eyes
and say something
two egg-white butterflies
coupling
plummet to earth

she breaks free
inches before impact
and ascends

the empty tumblers,
the unmade bed

the suitcase
ready
Elizabeth, we’re out of orbit. We’ve started drifting. Knowing the moon controls the tides, you wonder if eclipses make the oceans motionless. You bike to the beach at night to seize the syzygy. I stay home with the windows open, angle myself off the spectacle. I wait for it to transit through the house—to come—to pass. We’ve spent our time. We’ve tried to realign, but when the moon swims out of the umbra, we won’t see each other. Take care, or you’ll make too much of the world.
I cut a hole
in the open door

you laughed, plastered

when the whiskey wears off

you snuck out of the house
wolf bag in your mouth

I removed the tape
from inside
the ring you gave me
a mouthful of want,
a catholic gathering of forces

breath stretched
between a moment & a mile

barbed wire
where a spine should be

hands keep wringing,
keep needing
Grasp

In the dead of morning
at the height of fall
an ochre-fingered leaf
wrenched from its branch
is windswept back. My face sifts
through my hands,
light breaking
the wrists.

The answer to praying
is what was in them
to begin with.
thin light filters
through bedroom slats,
my slow closers

cleaved moon hung
against a charcoal sky
a cloud swims by

.

I see it all go
back to sleep

.

a gypsy moth jackhammers
into the pane
I’d trade forms with it
for the wings
alone in my skin  
in the frozen city  

ecstatic among skyscrapers  
gutters, pigeons,  
the downpour  

I walked the length of it  
forgetting  

hands feel  
clean in the rain  

the devil in  
what isn’t
Survive

Today is a 5. The flood survivors can be reached only by air, declared the anchorman. The more I squint my eyes, the more I see the mountains will never come into focus. Between protest headlines and news about tsunamis, I make my bed in a constant state of thermal underwear—an employee at the Museum of Nausea. Sometimes the best you can get is an honest ending. My father’s voice will never change. It will be silver zeppelins whether he’s addressing schizophrenics or confessing adulteries. He will be Mister Clinical until home feels like a hotel. Until the heartbeat comes from outside the chest.

From here the unclear mountains seem to be waiting, to be wanting. Like a light so far away I’ll be long gone before it reaches where I live. No helicopter can save us now.
pocked & pitted
the aged face
of a weathered cliff
rattles into fissures

the unreasonable sea

the moon swallows
its pigeons
.

I was green and you
were stubborn
when we drove
behind the bluff

the earth’s subtle interlude,
the pecking bismuth sky
.

I wish we hadn’t
closed the road
a boy on broken crutches
crossing the street
rickety, irregular

a packet of raw sugar
opened into the wind

at the end of the bar
the bearded man
with his head

the scar
on my right wrist

my small arms
Forward

You can always count on a day to end.
You can always count on a man made of stone
to move on. Sober in foreign beds,
I remember dreams better than when home.

The English say a wolf must die alone
in his own skin. Whimpering & quivering,
my dog pants himself dry in sleep,
his hunger fed with memories

of hunting. How red his dreams must be.
We can’t escape. The blade that made us
made us family. A melting glacier drops things
and moves on.