

Three Poems

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The following poems, transcribed here, were written spontaneously on the poet's grandmother's Royal Arrow typewriter at various farmer's markets in New Haven. Prompted from strangers' requests and written within the constraints of 10 minutes or so, the poems take on an immediate, sketch-like quality that releases the poet from her usual practice and challenges her to reshape the raw material of life's most private matters—dying mothers, long-distance lovers, people hungering for peace within their communities.

Brooding

There is the sky, laden
and the trees and all the things
we need, this morning and each.

There is yeast in the air above us
somewhere the seeds are bolting
and between two panes of glass,

honeybees are stewing up honey
in it, lavender and tansy
and organized industry.

Everything around us is making -
making from matter an action
a sensation, a tingling tongue.

The poet of the spirit said
make of the sword the plowshare-
the spirit of the human is still

learning. What have you made today?
and by what origin have you come
inspired? today Think of the courage

of the newly turned tool, of the
cloud to stave off its nature.

Think of the instinct, when born

to reach out for love.

For Henry

8.31.14

What the scraped knee teaches us . . .

A mother will tell her daughter
she doesn't remember the pain
of childbirth, and so the two
can laugh together at any scraped knee.

There is one idea that pain is a gift,
that it reminds us that the body
has boundaries, and that objects have
strength. . In another idea, it is a

curse. The poet believes a scar
is a story. A scar is a rite of passage
and emblem of experience. And so
in our family, we show our stories

by tending. By salving the wounds.
That the rock wall loomed below
the daughter as she swung, off balance,
over its crags will not be what anyone

remembers. But the care with which
she was giving a bandage is what will
define this memory. Ask the knee what
happened and its reflex is ,‘love’.

For Lily and Susan

8.23.14

A Keeper's Heart (For Jason)

When first she told me

Once the grid of green held bodies

It was mine who-m leaned in.

The lightness of her hair

a web, a circumscription in any light

or crypt.

What type of heart can hold secrets

or stories of other loves

and enter their darkness

enter their dampest preservations

and tend and wipe clean?

A keeping heart, a heart of dark chamber

and rime and of the whispering

angels and ancestors and forgotten

foundations.

When we shared wine together

in the crypt, first she passed

me a glass with her lips

lingering on it

the veils of ardour

the enchantment

and the peripheral walls

opened. And in that place

in those lives, we tasted

a dry sweetness of something

aged and time old, something

making our bodies feel light.

