

# *ABANDONING*

*Nicole Foss*

# 1. Looking

## South of the Mason-Dixon Line

The walls of the glass grow deformed with condensation  
studded beads of perspiration a church congregation.

The surface draws water molecules together to practice the gravity of their religion.  
As the pews grow crowded the congregants are moved to coalesce and begin  
a paradoxical race downward  
as each molecule  
tumbling over the next  
tries to be first to  
make it to the bottom.

There is an honesty  
in this lack  
of heaven-bound aspiration.  
We all came from the ground,  
and we will all return to it.

They give each other words that no one wants to hold

Then,  
They sit on the settee  
Lawn of emerald velvet  
Lush like a field in some  
Everblooming book.

Her hand bends the blades  
This way and that.  
Swiping nervously over  
Wild fibers.

She passes  
Trembling touch  
Over warm fabric  
Eyes refusing to lift from  
The patterns created  
Where the other  
Sat.

## Day Two of a Fever Which is Notoriously Inconsistent

Of the many miracles in the world, none is quite so particular as the fact that dust accumulating on a polished slanted stone surface does not avalanche without warning onto the shelf which waits below.

## Warning Signs

like an emotional desiccant.

Throw me away

Throw me away

Throw me away

Throw me away.

Throw me away.

## Blinded

by cloudy skies  
and rainy days.  
Light filters in through the  
Window,  
Half his face lit by  
Dimness, half by  
Ambience.  
A strange contradiction, light  
Reflecting, bouncing off the clouds,  
Brighter than  
300 days of sunshine.  
What a particular phenomenon.

Snow (a character study)

It clammers over rooftops  
an aurora borealis on sidewalks and street surfaces  
creating mountain ranges and crystal cliffs against doorways and on  
the other side of pine islands.

It is a wintry whirlpool  
now and again  
taking a breath in a  
Break from long windy exhales    those blustery blizzards.

(Un)remarkable

There are shoeprints on the blackboard  
Geometric shapes where the rubber picked up  
Chalk dust  
Erasing an erasing.

His name might be Sullivan.

It is 1:38 pm  
No heelprints, only toes above my hip when standing.

## Diving

As cream turns to clear  
The wicks, finally caught,  
Pop while the energy enters their bones  
Stiff from coolness and rest  
Tiny black specks appear.

Revealed layer by layer  
Edges smooth against that heavy pool  
Melted wax becoming air becoming  
Solvent

There is a cloud of soot hovering in time  
Shifting only as imperceptible breezes bend the three suns at the surface

Dalmatian spots in a glass jar;  
White candles do not stay white candles  
Once they are melting

Then, they are melting revealing their history,  
The joints that are  
Buried in themselves  
Always sunk  
Or suspended

White candles are only white from the outside.  
He has Dalmatian spots beneath his freckles and I stay to watch him melt.

## 2. Echoes

Impulses and Echoing<sup>i</sup>

I felt a funeral, in my Brain  
An imperial affliction  
And hit a world, at every plunge,  
Like Stone  
Might I but moor Tonight  
Before the door of God!  
And crawl between  
The stillness in the Room  
In Corners till a Day  
Attended, or alone  
First chill then stupor then the letting go

even emptiness is something

I feel I am a captive  
On the cathedral wall  
in the destroyed (and guilty) Theatre

Whose god? I asked  
flexing for the ascent  
I am a blur to them

Anybody can die, evidently. Few  
Cold, delicately as the dark snow.  
I give you all the years from then,  
suddenly younger.

Lordly Composure<sup>ii</sup>

Carrying a valise  
Summer tea,  
Daintily dressed.  
Across the fields  
    A light goes on.

Death  
Saturday nights and  
Screaming fire.

A torch of sunlight and  
What ought to be truth  
Over a big oil drum or water tank  
Pierced by an  
Artificial smile.  
*Dismal birthday*

    ough the portieres.

He was just a boy with  
An older man.  
The room had two people in it  
Coming suddenly into the light.

She holds an afternoon,  
Faded to dusk,  
In her hands.

She holds complete surrender,  
Inhuman abandon,  
In her hands.

Brilliant Silk

[Interior]

Sit stiffly  
Carefully.  
Baby,

With a merciless glare  
She nearly slips from my grasp.  
Nearly.

Her glance is  
And I wonder.

Like old Madonna pictures

Scarlet satin robe  
Paper lanterns

She finds you  
Making pigs of yourselves  
*Men are callous things.*

She is drinking to escape.  
*Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often.*  
The music is in her mind.

Some things are not forgivable.  
False amiability  
Brilliant silk  
Deliberate cruelty.

Elysian Fields

[Setting]

Lordly composure and

*Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often.*

[Enter]

A young collector; appearance incongruous.

The Elysian Fields,  
Weathered grey  
Tender blue  
Invest in lyricism.

like.

Desperate.

Long rainy afternoons.

Lurid shadows  
Weathered grey in  
Elysian Fields.  
Not truth, but what ought to be.

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*After Jamaica Kincaid*

Now I am a girl but one day I will marry a woman a peach-skin woman with red thicketed hair and green eyes, who wears jackets that are so beautiful I can easily entangle my mind in them. I would like to marry this woman and live with her in a bright apartment near the cliffs. In the bright apartment there will be seven windows and seven windowsills, a wall that hosts shelves, a bag of dirt, a kettle, one couch, two watering cans, two sets of gloves, one looking glass, two teacups, two saucers, two pairs of running shoes, two cans of pepper spray, two pride flags, one kitchen table, two wooden chairs, two handmade cushions to chase the lurking discomfort off our bones, two bookshelves for things we have very sporadic use for, one basket, one book of wallpaper swatches, one box filled with postcards from people who no longer speak to us, one raspberry tart wrapped in a letter from her mother, one small rug, one picture of two women standing in a forest, one picture of the same two women embracing, one picture of the same two women climbing a tree, one box of matches. Every day this peach-skin woman and I will eat raspberry tarts and drink tea for breakfast, hide on balconies and throw lopsided compliments at n centers, pick plants, breathe the air from the plants we have picked, replace pinecones in the forest, put on short dresses with fancy coats and offend grumpy old men on their way home from the office, go shopping and buy only the ugliest potatoes to roast and have for dinner, steal fresh herbs to eat for dinner with the roast potatoes.

know yet, but the shape is in my head. This woman I would like to marry knows many things, but to me she will only tell about things that would never dream of making me bored; and every woman like this, and every night, every night I will be completely happy.

## 1. A Necessarily Flawed Dedication

*After Anne Carson*

A house gives off its own light  
carpenters say.

If all the stars in the sky went out  
you could still walk these halls  
by what shines from them.

Fair seer I offer merely a metaphor

A hesitation.

Use hesitation instead of statement or speech  
a hesitation in wood  
as you would say a poem in prose or a bride in white.  
So van Eyck  
of *The Ghent Altarpiece*

which was stolen in twelve pieces in transaction from Belgium  
to Germany (1934).

What is hesitating?  
Reason I guess.  
That imagining place as my mother called it.  
Hear how the word  
Stands.

## What I Have Been Doing Lately

*After Jamaica Kincaid*

What I have been doing lately: I was standing in the doorway and a bird sang. I stepped outside. Reluctantly. I examined the tree. Everything was there. I turned around. Either it was cloudy or the sun was taking some time off and the sun was tired. I opened my eyes and the clouds or the absent sun looked like recycled newspaper. I turned east. I turned west. I was compelled to

why I was wandering so far. While wandering east I looked down and saw the planet earth and

upon a very large hill. The very large hill was green and glittering and looked as if it had been a

inside it but it would take me a life to get a shovel. I wanted to live inside it but it would take me eons to walk down the staircase. Hours passed and then one year, wanting to, I lifted the ground and dove in.

### 3. After

## Stopwatch

I returned until nothing was old  
And everything was routine.  
Sandpapered new,  
I tread the same path until  
The view was unrecognizable.

I am thought spirals.

I walked that same hike  
Until sunsets needed studying  
And trees were yet to be word-ified.

I looked at this world until I saw it for the first time;  
And I pictured your face until I forgot it  
Then, we met each other.

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<sup>i</sup> These two centos are entirely composed of lines taken from poems found in the Norton Anthology of Modern and Contemporary Poetry.

<sup>ii</sup> This is a series of three poems using found language from the play Streetcar Named Desire.