

DRYWALL
by
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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we
Find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards
Of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.

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Drywall
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My intention in writing this collection was to explore where Lyric and narrative come together to tell a story that is neither linear nor abstract, but woven in such a way as to be an immersion. The Lyric gave me room for experimentation in language and eased the difficulties inherent in showing the obsession of the narrator. The narrative arcs in prose allowed for scenes and story to develop, even when on a minute scale.

During the writing process, it became very apparent that at the heart of these stories was a fascination somewhere between fixation and voyeurism. Seeing the unseen, or even imagining the unseen to such a point that it becomes, somehow, seen.

To portray a quiet, an intimacy, I utilized parentheses, not as moments of deemphasis, but as an expression of the aside, the effortless feeling of an aside. Saying something over your shoulder, off the page, out of the way. The real notion is of quietness.

My research focused on poetry such as Ondaatje's *The Collected Works of Billy the Kid* and Anne Carson's *The Beauty of the Husband*, works that deal with 'outsiders' or characters that live on the edge of an edginess; collections that deal with relationships and the influences we have on each other, especially when it is secret, unnoticed or even accidental.

Poetry is the perfect way to encapsulate the small moments of experience, and it becomes even more complex and interesting when driven by story. In this young collection, I attempted to marry prose and poetry in such a way as to blur the boundaries between reality and imagination for three characters, who come together in a folding and unfolding of influence and impact.

Never knowing what tiny intimacy reveals to an observer, we inflict entire experiences on other people without ever realizing it. Overwhelming a neighbor with the smells of your cooking, or scowling at a stranger while puzzling over a memory: these are the things that became the driving force behind my writing, and will continue to do so as I further this collection.

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I want to write a letter to the man that shares my wall,
he is circumflex, he is narrow winded
he was in the hospital for over two weeks.

His visiting sister looms about afterwards,
loaded with steaming takeout, her face arranged.
We pass and she enters his apartment
shrouded in the silence of indispense.

I would see him in the hallway later
with his groceries and pup, leash running out front
We pass and in a pass we move through the vowels of this hallway in quiet.
I am renewed each morning with anticipation
my plantheart beats a dial of xylem of phloem,
of his ranting through the night all along the wall.

The vascularization of his thoughts in my night space we share a ribbon of thought we share a practicum
of nutrient tissue threading our minds together
I crumple the paper letter, a balled fist between his loud silence from mine
rising again in my throat, it is an invented reading.

I imagine I already know his accumulation of items and fixation.

She corners 26th and watches him shuffle onto Blaine St.
across the avenue he checks a trashcan and a newsstand
glancing in front, pulling forward to see behind.
She watches him investigate.

Looking back he sees into a window,
a woman sipping coffee catching his
reflection makes him sharply aware of her proximity.
His calloused hand is veined and russet colored.
He seems to be gripping something invisible, down by his waist.

I couldn't make it out of my apartment last night, or under the waves that one time

shovel into this line of reasoning.

August I turned seventeen, I filled my truck with bagels and drove it off this old bridge in Springwater

Hitched my way home. The newspaper never covered it.

My favorite shade of lipstick blends between two things that I wear always

The night shudders into lightposts or islands in meat and poultry like a district

the possible sounds of nothing between him and me.

My thoughts of him tattoo a name into the skin of my lids.

This to wake me up

I imagine he ran away from Spruce Woods at sixteen. Packed a sandwich, some books and landed in the nearest town. Had his first taste of whiskey from a man in flannel with a gristly mouth. I think he was troubled to sleep, watching the rising light or falling darkness arc across his walls. Kept moving until the line of land and sea where he enveloped a casual looseness to being unknown. The order between rigid and fluid becoming the clock to link by each day. A furling into steady curvature of working during the day with quiet promise to be unwound again all night.

I imagine he only moved again once, deeper into the city so the lines between fluid coast and rigid land no longer pull him into their threaded collusion.

One night at the restaurant Elena drunkenly tells the bar director he's fired. Traipsing through the dining room her hair is untidy her skirt wrinkled. The customers bring their needs to her, asking for perfect service, an immaculate thing they deserve. The customers have deepset eyes that glint like mackerel. They ask for a nice vintage, a perfect amuse-bouche. She plays the manager, hears and takes and does for this for them.

Today she wept in the bathroom after filling a woman's wine glass for the fourth time at 11 in the morning. A woman with tight skin, expensive shoes.

Her casual expensive shoes.

Elena drank three shots of top-shelf whiskey and went to sit in the passenger seat of her car.

Dividing parallels, this moment she has to herself no longer present in the ridiculous.

(The implication is that we are together
in separateness. But who implies?)

(His life and mine squared off by drywall privacy)

I hear his music beneath the television, up and down all night. I imagine burnished tracks in the wood
from where he paces

A restless pitch, his body taut
I lay on the hardwood by the wall

Me hearing him and him consumed
a palpable unity between us

He is a man sick with a restless quiver
hear his twisting lapses through the night

I awake in the morning, a damp void on the floor by my feet.

A man in my building
plainly collapsed into the palm
of my wheelbarrow capacity

he is a breathing space overwhich
the processions of my fancy unravel.

An ability to count breaths
one before the one before
of a person off at the unseen part of vision
(the sounds through a wall enact the wall)

I am the collared version of an impulse maniac.

It was not a night of learning
but unreason (the first burn of rum)
a night in the city visiting friends
she throws up all over the confusing balcony.

An obvious target for her, the girl with fragile bangs

(she never hit a woman in the face).

Unlike in school, pursued by cops, she would flee into the woods
with some guy named Niles who was distinctly the person she wanted to undress.
Here, she parsed her hands into the crooks of her elbows
as though furniture,
furnished pillars,
a tell.

(That same night she was sick in the bluegreen bathroom,
and he watched her, laughing).

With unreason she lost her shirt and sandals
stirs awake in a backyard, wrapped in a rug under a tree
and yet, radiant, somehow.

Later, heading home
a found companion at the airport,
he smells of iodine or vinyl
his hands are rough and sort of violent

in the quiet where she endeavors to breathe.

At a sandwich shop I saw him eating at a table by the window. Lingered, he was there with bags tied to his hands and feet.

(Refrain from shouting to him
he saw you before the narrowing)

I followed him afterwards.
Down Lane
past 6th

onto Everett.
He whistles expertly
the crosswalk cracked and veined

I lost my Amethyst ring on this street
He pauses at the bus stop and bums a smoke.

I found out his name is Carl.
A name of very small sound.

With every Carl linking hands along the block, the bodies could pull into lines a figure history
the many headed python of history.

My neighbors come out of their buildings, snow-blowers whirl
what weather
the doorman calls to Carl with muted rifletones
he is unfolding through the syllable.

(Later at night with a ladder under his arm the landlord knocked on my door asked about my
kitchen lights).

I told him Carl maybe needs something
—optimistic voicing.
The landlord is nonplussed. He looks right through me like that guy
when I was ordering pizza.
No my kitchen lights are fine.

We all live in city block hallways quiet blooming rooms of private madness the whirling scapes of what
you keep in the bathroom.

(Passing for a concrete integrity
pursue the line of furtive reasoning)

On Tuesdays she leaves the apartment to volunteer at the City Aquarium. Leading threads of children down the cool of glassed hallways. Explains the nature of recovery, growth predation and luminosity. (Volunteers wear a pin with their credentials of a knowing, a doing). Around the Stingray exhibit, glowing ribbons cast viscous shadows teal and grey. The spines of Skates and Rays are made of keratin, the substance of fingernails. If you try to identify the different Rays, she explains, it is important to keep in mind their bodily configurations. The gill slits, the dorsal fins if there are any. She knows if he were to appear, amidst the glass of her aquarium, he would be her favorite type of observer: absorbed, careful. (He would read the plaques, pause for every flick of a fin).

What or how the animals cast their array in the shapes of their lobes
 their lobes of thought their zones of origin

She points to the Bat Ray, see the broad angular shape of the disc that is its head? That is how the animal glides along like beating wings. Vertical undulations slicing through the water. (It's short tail has up to five stinging spines to ward off dangers in the open Ocean). They move beyond the exhibits into the stadium seating of the Education Cinema. The screen lights up.

The lobing threads of margin come together

He turns on piano music thrumming through our wall
it peals away the limination of his body before mine

A threat: my blurred encapsulation of his feeling
my forced shaping of his luminary surrounding

I lay against a wall convinced of its proximity to the wanted gesture adjacent to my side

On the floor of the bathroom, she comes out of fainting feeling guilty for being in dream
(as though to faint were willful subject matter)

She applies for the apartment because it is part of the Association.
The man next door has a navy coat that he wears in all weather
She is new to boxed in living lives
new to unmentioned passing in the halls.

A story: on the train uptown a man vomits on his own shoes

his head is heavy, that she sees
his mind is reeling, she thinks she knows

talking to strangers she lies profusely.

The story of the time she met him once in a taxi, like the one where both were grocery shopping for
soup and tea.

At the restaurant where he works three times a week washing dishes and hauling trash, they call him Clever Carl. The shortness in such a name. His method is very quick. Elena the Manager offered him more shifts, prime nights Fridays and Saturdays but quietly he refused.

For Elena, Carl is a doll. Says she never knew such a doll.

His method begins with categorizing levels of scrubbing, hastily scraping the effortless food remnants first. On a fifteen minute break he drinks one glass of rootbeer at the bar, before going back too early to make sure his station is clean. (The previous dishwasher got canned for shotgunning a beer in the bathroom on the clock). Employees wield their coveted shifties at the end of day, but Carl refuses drink in public. Unwanting the sluice of negative lapses in control. Elena flirts about it, she calls him to the cellar with some neat vintage but he's home by the 6 o'clock news.

Intervals spaced between intervals.

He buys a fifth of whiskey at the Corner Market

home by way of 25th

off Copper Street

He opens the ball of his fingers
and there is ease.

In the street he puts on his sunglasses
a glaring motion through bodies
buildings as bodies with corrugated veins,
a woman in pink jolts by on jagged breaths.
Down the street he tosses them under a passing bus.

She showers when she hears his water running
against the grain on the bar of soap, not grain really
(times it right so both bodies stream together
in the sounds of his shower sounds).

With flexing limbs she sees him towel off
a callous energy remains
her will to loosen the fabric between his body
onto her own

(the energy she saved it was only saving, not becoming)

his body slams into her, slams is unlike it at all.

(Collide the angle of his tempo
it is your day to day)

I melted
candle wax into the carpet
a silent revenge
of clumping forms
on fibers.

That man
has to drink all
the time, my landlord
of interrogations
and he can barely
hold his hands
together.

For the naught
of will

I burn the wax.

I am alone in the evening before he arrives next door. With a strung up resiliency I wait patiently to hear a lock turn, a stove light, a window shade. The little things magnify the weight of lingering to hear. When his sister was visiting, muffled tones of anger came through muted and vibrato. She left what seemed abruptly, a mystery in my own skin. At the Aquarium my tasks include stringing lights on the exhibit frames during the holidays. A circulating twinkle in glass and light upon glass and light. I come home to string my own lights against the empty wall of my southfacing room. The layback of a body on the folds of a linen sheet, I press against knowing he is there and knowing he does not need to hear me.

Facing a picture on the wall, he considers it carefully.

A moderate picture of nothing alarming, though its pretense is alarming enough

—lawn chairs on a porch

stifled brickwork detail

the picture undoes the moment

He is the italicized notion of this lawn.

Before he puts socks on his feet

or makes a pot of coffee, there are two lawn chairs

and this moment of undoing.

He is the invisible person to you or I.

The impossible faction of you or I.

I once slept through his alarm one morning
and when I finally awoke feeling ravenous
a thrum from the loom of morning alone
a thrum from the looming
empty apartment next door—

My eye catches on the corner
where I cannot get up to face this quiet.

On a Wednesday Carl is hauling trash outside to the dumpster. The slick black bag tears as he lifts to heave it over. Crumpled rinds, tissue and used coffee filters. He stoops to scoop it up. Rock Pigeons scuffle about, a whirring sensation. Elena has a leather binder in her arms and drags deeply on a cigarette. She wears a knit dress and tall black boots. To be undone this moment. She sees Carl stooped over spilled garbage, his body immutable. She calls out to him, her voice revealing. He is still. She retrieves a dustpan and a broom, click clacking through the kitchen, but he meets her at the backdoor. His features composed, he passes without a sound.

I imagine I will learn his accumulation of items and fixation.

Silence through a mouth
in the party of a living room

(at the Apartment Association Holiday party)
filled with other saying other
saying this is this
and that is my fancy.

I hold a glass
tightly to my chest,
I wield a canopy
over my eyes.
 I am an object
 of viewing

A collapsed historical
text written on my eyelids he
sees me turn,
it is my fancy

in the leeway
he blinds
my face.

Alone, you play a drinking game.

That time you were tied up, for hours. Have a drink.

The sunlight before immensely growing waves, on a boat with a friend where the creeping sensation of sickness logs you off to sleep. Have a drink.

A taxi driver screaming out the window about his wife's death. Take a drink.

(With the lights out you could almost pretend he was a she and this was more fun). Take a drink.

For three weeks your skin broke into hives –a reaction to your aunt's cat. Another drink.

This time you can't hold onto the glass, just lift it with your face and mouth.
Take a drink.

The first and last moment you swam in the Pacific, off the bow of the same boat, thinking about your period and sharks, how even *this* could be spoiled. Take a drink.

(The time you were tied up for hours. Have that drink.)

The taxi driver who told you he knew a porn star once, and you looked just like her, in the back seat, all sweaty like that. Have a drink.

The day at camp when the boy you knew to be whip smart but quiet was found with another boy under the picnic table.

Kids were skipping stones on the lake. Take a drink

(Without a glass in hand
a fall to break is easy)

He loses self preservation
while spreading jam on toast.
It slips away through the melting compote
and continues to expel itself,
(filling perforations with semiclear jewels)
the violence of red blooms in his hands.

With the flick of his wrist a fault
unfurls onto the table streaking
strawberry jewelslick color on a fork
and then a knife.
A color that begins to coat and drench
wood, metal, skin and hair.

A table no longer more than a meter by which to gauge
the striking of day into night
—hemorrhaging day into coagulate night.

The moment in still objects stillness
furling back into itself,
venison hues in the shades
dispelling with the clatter of a taxi
by the window.

After the lunch business, Elena brings Carl a rootbeer in the kitchen and tells him he's the kind of man she could love. Carl sets the soda on the sink, the glass a poised beacon between them. Says she's tired he can tell. Says maybe she should leave this place. A callous note. He pours the soda in the drain and rinses clean the glass. Elena watches the glint of a ring on his right hand. A strange ring the shape of a coiled serpent. Her body relaxes, watching him move one arm out in an arc, rinsing with the hose from the other. A serpent coiled in gold.

I feel honest, not honest yet
a cohesion of syllables.

I am angry at him this time.
a bodily endeavor
enlisting the lacking of a list.

On this, a knowing
we cannot go much further
my bedside table boasts
a candle melted in clumps

(A knowing the table of his room
any table in his room).

These elliptical movements
of thinking sweep
between the now, the now, the now

it becomes a rhythm
with which to undo myself by

that and a cigarette
on a streetcorner.
An appurtenance
for passing the time.

A deep-sea diving simulation happens at the end of every Tuesday in the Education Cinema. She heads the Educate and Inspire Tour where it empties into the shell shaped arena. The children rush to centrally arrange themselves.

When she interviewed for the volunteer position, the naturalist coordinator asked her to lead an impromptu mini tour. He mentioned ease and smiling. She was unshaken. (Her already knowing so much about the elusive Chondrichthyes).

The scuba divers on screen look science fiction in their goggled onyx gypsum.
A voiceover tells us Rays have demonstrated a reasonable learning capacity,
even fetching floats on their snouts for handlers using a reward system.

It is a film for all ages.

Though she explained that Rays are heavyjawed with fused teeth, it is the large carnivores who garner the attention. She is considered the specialist, but she favors the Rays openly, even ignoring eager questions about Sharks.

The divers kick silently through the striata of inky greensihblue
and the credits advance upwards out of nothing.

Silent predators lose their intrigue after time she knows. The maniacal swimming in glasssed-off waters.
Without active predation, their instincts turn inwards, they become blearyeyed.

She has become indulgent with the Elasmobranchii and their cartilaginous skeletons.

Breaking into song he was radiant in the elevator and I knew
his elation in a sense of shrapnel vibrations
through the carpet our feet shared in the space

I always take the stairs (only
jumping in this time at the passing glimpse
of his tattered navy coat).

We advance through mechanized proximity
to our desired level
My hand reaching barely from the hip—
I tremor into a thinness of standing,
his body threads through the instance of our brief merging.

(The simple glances on an elevator
become moments to flower again)

In the park I saw my wall neighbor, with his pup.
Together they threaded through
the hurtling joggers like fishes through the kelp.
He wears the navy coat and fumbles with a cigarette
I once loved a guy who was killed in his best friend's house

This is like that unknowing.

I collide with the heat of a pavement glowing
from exposure. At this distance I waver like an opportunist.
(Eagle Rays make remarkable sounds when caught and removed from the water)

He is liminal in the greens, like the thinning arch in a bridge
My view reaches out as though to burn him.

He is loud all last night along his track
next to mine.

My track a writhing convex

I put on Brahms in E minor and the quiet moves
over like a sheet encompassing a log.

His hands grow over the pacing and he rests, I think.

This man
a bowl of melon
or rotting papaya
He is closed.
a distilled beaker of columnated
raisins, he collapsed again
on the stairs
This time began the rows.

In a parking lot interview the man told Elena she would have to really shake it to improve on what he saw earlier, his mouth a receding beacon. Towards her, really improve ya know, away from her, but it is good so good, towards her. She finds a knot in her hair the morning after. Pulling threads like fibers she counts the money and decides today is the one day she was really lucky all year long. She applies to be store manager and is hired as a backwait. Moving through the motions of the simple details, she allows herself to hate the growing embryo of desire.

(Undocumented loyalty is wrapped
just so much tissue)

A thoughtful neighbor pulled in the trash
with winds hitting record speeds. In an ordeal
over sense again, this time again, this time insisted.

he is unlike the one (the neighbor) outside the crevasse
a shoeprint just above my stuffed chair
remnant of a moment in fury

(I am of a reasonable learning capacity)

A thoughtful neighbor vascular through the fibers
with his giving mouth to mouth on a subway car
it is a fantasy to see myself beneath the shoulders
of this time, which he insisted.

The broken bone-edge of a calmness

or the curve of a stifle

he is
completely usable body

he is
the shape of a room

Down the hall he crouches to tie his shoes. Through the wall of apartment 221 he can hear soft scratching of the cat

Such loudness in quiet moments.

A woman named Keebler crumbles cookies to her little dog Schmitzy, on their way to the street for a walk. Keebler has a lockbox, a safe, and antique highbacked chairs.

He normally collects his mail at the end of the week

The mailbox says BEATRIX

Everyone assumes it must be his dead wife.

Out of the room
she folds the clothes and heaps
the linens. He adjusts himself.
The sum of happening
not at center here

Inside these,

remarks shift
about and in their ways.

(Effortless motions are not as easy
as the steps taken towards a revealing)

I imagine him entering my apartment in the navy coat. He is excited beyond my furnishings. That yellow lamp feels so silly. He sits on my faded pink couch and I have crackers on a plate or something to offer. He seems to know that I know him so well. He is comfortable. Looks around for a cat. I am not a pet person. Though it would be easy to sit too close and brush against him, I refrain keeping an air of casual. A looseness makes this all so typical. He scratches his thigh, or maybe his chin. Asks for a glass with his beer. I pour slowly, or actually there are no crackers on a plate. I have only water to give.

the possible sounds of nothing between him and me.

My body
blankets the street

I know pavement now
from cement
and paving stones.

Lines stripe my fingertips glinting
to the cars

driving over it or us or me
with entrails like a grocery bouquet
drive over the leeway that you sing in the car on the way.

This hand reaches out and becomes
the trees,
my torso a sidewalk
and in the park a man sits patiently
on a bench.

His knees of wood
his birds of ears.

Released into a city of choice
out of reason or inreason or unreason.

Coming home by six
can't hear the news on next door
(a vermillion chasing)
he must be out
a difference of profound silence.

I will water the plants,
tissues muted pulse.

I will loiter casually,
an expression to have
see him come home from work.

Potentially he is in the hospital again
a rumination of vacuous sounds
I shower and feel emptied out,
a threaded silence running
like water from the room nextdoor.

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