

2014

I Am Made Lush

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Recommended Citation

Rowland, Elizabeth, "I Am Made Lush" (2014). *Senior Capstone Projects*. 293.
http://digitalwindow.vassar.edu/senior_capstone/293

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i am made lush

elizabeth rowland

punch

i am in view of the blue house by the lake and
i let my blouse slip off a shoulder
and make love to no one in particular.

there's a pull, my heart beats
and my feet drenched in basement water,
wading to subvert the switch
on the panel
at the back of the room.
and stretching my fingers,
i fear the feeling of electrocution,
the hall, the glaze of the afternoon,
feeling limitless but only just.

i trim the hedge
and listen.

i watch him in reflections of reflections,
reversed so many times
he looks the same
and he makes the same faces,
feels the same shame.
and i'd give it all to feel strange again,
fake sick and make plans again.

"think of all those exiles" he says,
but we live in a shared discomfort,
participating, a shade.
he angles away from me like in women's magazines
and my heart fails,
murmuring.

i am not his lady.
i have made good elsewhere.

i sat till i was half-blind before i turned a light
because there was a quality about the room i didn't want to break.
clipped, instantaneous
and becoming ineffectual
rising, moon white, blue, grey,
propulsed, sleeping with men in the garden,
uprooting the bulbs and have at it,
braised blue and boorish
and he said he liked colors with depth.

the rainswept rattling, the bone
the soft, the bright moisture of an overheated temple,
the shapely leg,
the open coat,
the door.

there is something in that color that arises from transparency,
from the glow, from the dark,
reflections in watchbands.

and unbolting, throwing the hinges off,
there is messiness and you see it
call it unblemished,
unstudied,
fruit in the hand.

movement at a brisk clip,
the speed, the amble,
insufflation,
as for,
with a classical face, emotive like
how all light goes white with great distance applied.

my love is a hook in the mouth
and i grow with it in my cheek.

phase one

canned

idler,
beautiful, mild, desirous of leaving.
wraps herself around him like she is sea and he is the land,
and me, i wrap myself around him like i am the sea
and he is the land.

and i am praised for my clarity,
always praised for my clarity
and my attention to detail,
and my right hand
and the rings on my right hand,
and the way my right hand looks in his eyes.

he has white lids,
so thin you can almost see through,
to the blue,
to the red,
to the wave.

in response, i am leery,
caustic, resonant
feeling the curve of the earth against the spine
and dwelling, severely so
slurping up the brine
and cutting across whole swaths of land,
all variant topographies
all blue all brown
all salt all shale.

i would bathe with him in a dark hall,
exchange a communication with the weight of letters,
slop water onto the floor.
our arms would be lye-clean.

besotted

my eyes lock with yours, on the ballroom steps
and wait for something that might not come.
the night was a mistake
partially on my end
mostly on yours
and i know this
but i can't help feeling like an idiot.
but why should i?
i only take entirely appropriate risks.

you make me feel too much like a little girl to lean forward
to press my lips to your clean cheek
and smell soap and the cigarette musk left behind.
it's funny how soap and cigarettes smell romantic to me now
despite the lack of romance here in the wide space between us.

you know me too well for this
and the way you're looking at me
makes me feel edgy,
my toes buzz,
pushing me down the stairs to subway cars and the ping of train doors and the hope
that the tightness in my chest will go away like you will soon.

we listened once to the warble of her voice in Portuguese
and you asked "tropicalia? it reads like death to me."
but all the same, i lit a candle at my bedside for you
even though electric bulbs were plentiful that year and all other years, really.
(there hasn't been a shortage in my living (or dead) memory)
i think i did it to mean something
but i forgot what the something was.
does that mean the meaning is gone?

i can't cross my legs under the table like you can.
i can't make them move that way.
i tried,
i promise.
maybe you could teach me.
cause i do the secret things you aren't supposed to do
like shower for a second time
because he calls you late one night
and tells you he wants to see your pretty face.
but this isn't a love poem
i promised it wouldn't be

cause every time a love poem is written
i want another written about me.

but maybe all it is or ever will be is a love poem.
i think that makes me sad, but i can't be bothered
since i'm vapid and love is all i'll wish for.

at some point
i'm hoping i'll grow up.
i'm hoping i'll grow up, grow into my old bones
make something good and be able
to hand what i made to someone
and say "this is me,
and this is the product of me
and us two,
we're one and the same."
but i'm too much of a deadbeat to say things like that now
so i'll keep writing not-love-poem-love-poems
and keep hoping that you'll lean forward first.

but no.
i'll miss my train if i wait any longer.
so here i go.

stewed

i go over the skin of my arms twice with a sponge in the shower.
i keep a clean space,
there's pride in that.
but i struggle to turn the lights off when asked
to keep the sheets neat on my bed,
breeding rats in satanic attics.
crazed, misaligned,
fingertips round and rubbed fine,
while i watch the boats pass.

and we make a day of it,
there,
together.

i think you'd like to embed yourself in a wall somewhere,
just so your stoicism could be justifiable.
the decadent, slow sounds of breath,
of cheeky laughter,
of rain sliding groundwards off the tin roof.
and your sense of geography
your sense of geography,
i've got to wonder what you think of me.

i'll peel it away
and leave something fresher, newer, stinging and red to the sky.
standing in the unarticulated doorway,
giving me reasons why.
you say "business is business is business.
business, all work, all work."

miss veronica, everywhere at 12:41

we stop at convenience stores,
live between hot dog rotisseries and soda fountains,
dispensers of ill advised varieties of potato chips.
i think we lived our best minutes under heat lamps.
don't you?

"what's wrong," you ask.
"oh nothing, it's just the steam rising off the pipes has made a ghost in your image
and i don't want to look,
but here i am looking."

i have a boy back home who tells me he misses me.
he writes me letters,
uses all of the indecent punctuation,
puts chewing gum in the by line.
that's what i'd like.

i feel the way you do when you don't know what to say
and you start smoking cigarettes just to fill up your hands.
and i don't want to say anything unless i have something important.
and isn't it hard to be clever all the time?
and i think i'll be happy to leave when i go
'cause i'm sick of this place and all the things it makes me do and say.

i have nothing to lose,
nothing to lose and i look at you and open my mouth so i can make absolutely certain.
because clearly *you* can open *your* mouth and then be absolutely certain.

oh
if i had my way,
i'd make you wordless, clean, and blue.
you
you kiss my cheek.
"you're beautiful"
and then the room is flush with the light of your breathing.

i'd like to push the pieces of everyday living into one room,
and i might,
might i contain it?
i'd give my left thumb to you.
i'd give everything to you,
old boy.
i'm failing in the sense that visual art fails to impress you,
i'm failing in the sense that i don't care.

i think, sometimes, i'd like to spend all my time in one room
just to know it better than i already do
fill it up with all my old things,
my old brown shoes,
and the clothes i once wore and can still fit into.

and you could come to my window, and it would be
like i was staring straight through the flesh of flies' wings
straight at you.
i looked at you.
i think i could fall in love with you
but then i'm always in the middle of falling in love.

i want to well up in secret spaces,
wall ourselves inside,
brick up all the windows,
but leave a few loose so the light can get through,
of course.

it's not safe with the flame upended so close to the bedclothes.
i know, cause you taught me that
and i'll smile and pretend like i took the advice willingly,
but i didn't.
i'd really love to possess all the maturity you think you see in me,
or rather, not maturity, but the way i diffuse all manner of truths.

i hate to write about truths.
i hate to speak about something simply for sincerity's sake
or to make mixed metaphors with the contents of my memoirs,
i don't like them.
my memoir after all,
is critically rendered with toothpaste, open-mouthed breathing,
overeager fingers deep to the wrist.

you perch, picking out names for the girls you mothered,
better than your own mother,
and devour them.
"i'm missing the bite" you say, in my ear, "no one bites me back anymore. but
you do, or you used to, anyway."
"don't pretend like you're not flattered."
you whisper,
and i have nothing to say.

i want to be in a place where i can buy cigarettes without someone calling home and telling my mother.

i want to be with my mother
and smoke in her face.

i want to be with my mother
and make her
smile.

phase 2

blotto

“you are a slow-eater with turned-out penmanship,
an actress,” he said.
at least not a failed actress.
he exaggerated and he could make me exaggerate too
could make me dive up six flights
drunk and overtired, spoiled with the long cab ride.
and on the roof,
the boards that elevate the feet from storm runoff
made soft underfoot, made soft.

he’s not quite handsome
but he takes me better than i thought he would,
pausing to leave rings on the side table
the room all white, mostly unfurnished
and no bath sheet in the morning
so i would have to improvise,
dry my face with my own shirt.

he explored the limits of my eye sockets
and when he was done
he drew his fingers away and went for a smoke,
indoor furniture out of doors.

there’s a ship somewhere.
somewhere there’s a line in the sand.
somewhere there is a place where he doesn't move so much
or at least he’s taking me with him.

a pile of silt, the peg held with tensile strength,
the grip vices,
the day old lemonade,
the bend of the knee.
it seems broken.
it is broken.

pie-eyed

i go home at night for the sole pleasure of watching you watch films in the dark.
you talk a lot,
not speech really,
but like the strokes of an axe.

you make bottles empty themselves,
quick as a flash
and smile.

i am only lying in part,
but you are also lying.
there are tensions between fictions
and nonfictions
and your hands are open wide
and your palms point up at the ceiling
and they're round
and clean
and you're looking at me,
setting up the way you'll move across the space.

i sit still,
a tension in my jaw, silvery.
the fat black gem at your throat,
aristocratic, tremulous with the whole way you breathe.
'cause we are born, not made,
aren't we?

crapulous

you tell the stories the way you knew them to be,
pruning down detail to your satisfaction,
weeding the beds,
burying bulbs deep in the ground to be found much later.
don't pretend like you're neutral.
the dirt smells rich and you steep your hands in it,
so you can carry the smell around with you,
so you can put your hands in your pockets and leave some of it behind there.
you always wanted to possess the things you had no way of possessing.

when you write poems about capitalism,
I can hardly be expected to enjoy what you write.
your voice goes all deep when it speaks in directives.

I liked almost everything about you,
except for that.
you talked a lot about capitalism when we were in bed.
I spent a lot of time asleep.

pissed

i began to miss modern conveniences,
began to wring my hands,
began to feel crowded in my self-criticism.
but you have to be able to be critical of something.
nothing quite like the present
nothing quite like yourself.

you were living
in a room with sloped ceilings,
unsparing,
picking your teeth in the good silver,
reflection rounded off at the edge.
and your feet pounded to flatness,
the collapsed arch.

you take into yourself miraculous things like sucking every bit of pith from a peach pit,
humming Vivaldi under your breath,
like the look of me chain smoking in the living room.
and you don't remember what it was like anymore,
living that way.
i'd give innumerable days just to be able to say that i understand.

you told me to get gifted,
you told me to get strange and pretend like my mother was a drunk and my father left
cause it was more glamorous than death,
but you're wrong because nothing's more glamorous than making an early exit.
i don't wanna hate my daddy,
because i'm not my daddy.

loaded

you made an effort at transcription,
blood flashing brief and opened up
the flayed fist
the broken thumb

well done.
she is not appropriately strange and overly docile
big-eyed.
she is rising into cool awareness,
quite.

the glass,
the mirror that holds you
and your hands
gripped on the steel-wool spool
the crook of a cane, or an arm that supports just as well.

she bathed herself twice daily
and ate the ass-ends of french bread
cracking teeth, making eyes speed through old books and magazines
pressed flowers in the pages

and
barring the ways in which you hold your hands above your head
barring the breath, the beauty spot, thin chest with bones neat, pin-folded
barring the teeth and the light in the room
barring the flick of the eye, the finger touch, severely so,
i'd arrange myself in a salute.

unsparing
sunlight coming up off parked cars,
sugarless ice pops.
you carry paper bags with
grease pressed into the load-bearing walls
and you, with legs but no capacity for progress anyhow,
sad fried smell long on your hands
no dish soap to wash with.
the byproducts could cling faster than the meat can
the meat of it,
the meat of the issue.

miss edie at 11:41

he drove a motorbike off a cliff once, you know,
all for the pleasure of proving a point,
but he jumped off at the last second, of course.
consistency wasn't his thing.

and the noise as it fell in the lake!
all that noise!
you wouldn't believe it.

it seemed fitting then,
to spend six hours in darkness
and six hours in light.
i saw how easy it could be,
to fall into the sky.
we could live there, an enormous
separate reality that exists,
some other world cast out in the black.
but if we leave it this way,
there will be the devil to pay.

the lights go down,
the lights buzz and shape the music in and around my ears,
i'm teetering, letting somebody else support the weight of my arms and spine,
i feel right, more gin, more noise
or harder things, i suppose. if i'm ready for them.

we walked to their house,
we walked in the dark,
and you said to me "i know, i know.
it will be strange but it will be good."
and you smiled and perhaps you understood me.
so i said: "sure i'll be in your movies, Jim
give me a call sometime."

the blank, white, crush, pills,
slow.
and tanks and fire hose waterpistols
"it was all part of the show, dear,
my only regret is, well,
it was just too soon."

i stood, at the back of the flash,
at the back of the stage.

he made faces at me and i laughed and then
i saw the look in his eye:
the glaze and the clarity.

the mic cracks,
the radiator bangs about,
you threw a whole ream of paper from a far-off corner,
the individual sheets falling in a swirling arrhythmia.

it's the sound of the upswing,
the glitter of your teeth as you look at me
and talk to me
and picture me naked.
i am naked. willowy.
your teeth verily clang in the flashbulbs.

the fall of snow, the drugged sound,
wind, the breath of it,
sliding down my arms
sliding over skin, bruises, bones,
cat gut.
i'm gonna build this from the ground up.
i'm ready.

there's a rush of passing cars,
louder now, pull of breath and smoke into lungs,
while you clank bottles together.
something sweet and husky and French is playing on the radio.
you always liked the old standards.

i'm standing at the brooding edge
and i'm holding your hand
and the tenuousness of it all,
the flash and dazzle of it all...

"they shot him. did you hear?" you said.
"yeah. i did. but then i thought... maybe he had to die. you know?"
you looked concerned. "no. i can't say I do."

i think i confused you.

i said it all
i said it all on film
to him.
the lit end crackled as he inhaled.
behind the hole of the lens, he breathed,

waiting for me to end, but i just faded off and looked at him.
i think he may finally care.

shh shh

let me think!

there's silence, the phone doesn't ring,

but the silence is filled with things:

the street lamps sizzle outside in the dark and somewhere

there's a low, chemical whine.

i just wanna reach up and grab hold of something,

you know?

phase 3

in your cups

vision in blankness,
a quiet vision in triplicate,
the curl of the three curling as your mouth does in a careful,
a decided,
an appropriately excessive response,
jealousy limp in the afternoon,
your fingers curled just so around the ice cubes,
the ice cubes held in glass,
the slow pour of someone so sure of himself.

your preening alcoholism,
conceived so as to seem real,
to give credit where it is due and to lapse back,
not having to say anything really startling while awake.
i said i'd give it all and i meant it,
leaving the receiver off the hook only for protection,
letting you get the old dial tone,
trusty in its own unborn monolith;
not everything can be so well-crafted,
not well-heeled or spoon-fed,
silver in the ear and gold in the tooth,
gold in the blue mouth out of which you climb
because everything you say has meaning and matters,
surely it does,
and the way you made me feel,
surely it matters,
surely it does.

blitzed

transfixed at the mention of skeletal parts,
(anatomically correct language always got you off)
and the service to be done,
undercut
jeweled, ancient, cloth.

you sprung me out
my brooding black jail,
with a cocktail of sorts,
five parts sleep
and four in forgetting.

you twisted me,
sick sick sick
and fast, and purpled the room,
flipped the switch
shut the light,

poked out my eyes
for all i can see.
and your thinning black mop
the muscles weak in your back.
you smell like death when you're up this close.

ripped

not now

now he smells like iced tea
which is what i imagine the seventies to smell like,
and it is shadowed work,
the click of a heel perhaps,
the click of heels.

his skin snaps.
he used to say i had a certain sharpness about me;
i only smiled, said nothing.
the wide brim throws a circle of darkness to dwell in,
and i am brave under the eaves,
under the hat.

i work,
an effort to disguise a laugh,
but maybe i want to appear like
i always have a little something clever breaking open in my head.
and assuredly i can make smooth marks on the page,
and assuredly i can be divested.

he doesn't fight me,
like he wants to see how far i'll go,
thinks i'm too clever for behavior like this,
too fragile.
he's quite wrong, in fact;
i stopped the good girl act long ago.

half-cut

occasionally you stopped and took an orange for yourself,
slicing it open rather than
digging your nails under the peel.
you made similar slim incisions in my flesh.
always avoiding the pith of it,
always avoiding the pith.

sometimes i would delight in something i had done that no one else knew about.
this would be one of those moments.
it was just the thing
'cause your story consisted of one too many fictions.
it remained unbelievable even when presented with proof.
what i couldn't understand was the motivation.
i was always hungry
and you, never.

the kitchen scene, appropriately sparse, appropriately dingy,
but none perhaps more infamous.
it was an edging out,
a scalding,
a hot iron bell billowing steam,
a valve of sound,
a ring in the nose.

your face was funny
but you sure could slay.
I guess I'd take that any day to a man who is
sometimes shrill, sometimes well-balanced.
you make me out to be crazy. i wonder.
i do dislike the way i write my own name
like the bright hairs of onion flowers,
white, shaved.

miss turner, 5:41

here is number five coming in the door,
bumping into number four,
steady relief pitching.
they always said i was nuts.
a kick in the mouth, now
a kiss on the mouth,
the click and the dive,
real romantic like,
and sagely, he said,
“i won’t stop you.”

i have given everything, stranger,
and i have gotten everything,
all in the most wonderful way.
my girl,
always with pretty fingers,
always, pretty little thing,
and always good with the knife,
too good i think.

i have always been forward, roughly,
hedging bets on seven children,
secret deaths, all in seven houses,
romantic for the police chase,
romantic in the scream of them.
“what a scream,” he said with his open lips.

i had to fight to be seen, even
i had to fight to be seen past the satin,
past the black opera glove,
feeling the crush of the rib against the kitchen knife.
i would that it were my hands,
to see him so fleshy in the three-piece.
i made him violent,
and all those other men,
seven of them all together.
i am exhausted, blurred, a lush.
the fan stirred the palm fronds out the open window,
where the raised double glass layer
magnified the sunlit gloom of the place,
and where you magnified my sanity
and your own relative insanity,
believing the opposite of course.
you were an education in unhappiness, and the smell,

the whole of my education,
was saturated with the names of boys,
and nobody looks at me,
and i'm unsure of it,
the picture of obsession.

hobbled at the knees, oh please
nobody knows how to feel,
the pause, the weight, making it all very full.
But then, i've been distracted,
very distracted, i've gotten ahead of myself,
spreading thin over nothing,
nothing i want, only splinters,
all climaxes, all in terrible isolation from each other,
or not at all, just estimations in shape,
in love,
in lovemaking.

i hated my half-names
they were all too easy.
I will not be your sweater girl.

you were my college education!

I wish you were my college education.

phase 4

pixilated

plumbed up from the depths
with an ivory thumb bone
and the silent b radiates in the ears.

it's a collection of parts i don't recognize,
careful arrangements of parts i don't recognize.

i was told i should keep the luggage tags affixed,
and with the smell of the cooking still in his clothes,
i let him take me,
legless, toothless,
girls with parade eyes,
girls who used to smile at me,
nervously i think.

she sat with a bowl of olives
and she would lick her fingers
and she would watch me move around the room
and

do it. be thorough.
and look off in the middle distance.
the middle distance is best,
detached but not so much that you can't hear.

i am starved for the middle distance,
the rush of solar wind,
the smoke off the smoke rise,
the aeroplane,
and your full grown gullet,
your blue forearms,
and the defeated border between your eyes
pilloried.

wrecked

i want to wander in white dresses,
and recollect.
there's a silverfish crawling out the damp
and all the white corners, blooming green.

there is steam, and
my face florid with the heat;
and you consume me, miserly
bellies in dirt, snakes, many legged things.

go and hang it out, one on each bough,
leave it all for the cat to devour,
air the linens out in the cold like
rice paper.

and i do believe they're ready
to accept your death.
i like making you scared
more than anything, i think.

you'll put down
one strange root, bleed on the sheets, embed yourself
in all the walls, nude arms exposed
with dirt under fingernails, grey hairs, loose teeth.

it's 10 o'clock and i'm breathing, i'm breathing,
i'm breathing and i just can't seem to get it expressed.
it had been a mealy, open-mouthed winter full of mealy, open-
mouthed men and contradictions, English nobility riding in cars.

stinko

self-rouged,
pouting, petulant,
wet lips full of injustice,
frowning,
blooming in blood rush.

the slant of sun on the turf,
the shade,
the pine,
your hand pulling the lenses from my eyes,
temporary blindness.

sweat dangling off slick necks,
ears,
wet lips,
and you with your notion of the epic
and your prescience.

you are possessed of a body,
you are startling and still,
you make my belly boil,
take shapes i thought were reserved for girls.

the blush,
the heat,
the newspaper circulation,
cold ink in the morning,
the space below the windowsill,
above the radiator.

your nose, the color of flesh, of course.
i won't invoke the rose,
but i will perk you up,
dip you in water.

and you exhibit slow digestions,
and i feed you all you ask for, and more.
but you haunt me,
there's still a haunting going.

gassed

i would say i scorched you,
but who could possibly know you?
your knees spun the wrong way, and
your teeth cracked and
the sheets of your bed in fine strips,
torn up with the scent of softener imbued.
and now the bruise,
the cut over your heart.

i need to know what i've learned
so my philandering will seem worth it.
i think i've learned about the way the sun rises
or the loneliness of an open window,
quite.
i won't pretend i have knowledge of anything but what i've seen.

you are softened with the exhaustion of the weather,
and you lean out between the curtains.
you look, leaning forearms on the sill
seeing everything in opposites,
timing yourself in the desperation of trains
and quiet backyards,
with gaping rooms behind the glass of the windows.

we run out of milk every day or two
and share a bed.
i open and close the faucets
waiting for the coldest water
and let it seep through the collected murk of our dishes
and you sleep
and you sleep.
i'm afraid i can't speak to you now.
i turn to the wall
so whatever is left will still surprise me.
and you're drawing a bath
or looking relaxed in your death,
with ten extra days to think.
it's life through the red eye,
mysterious and lovely with conjunctivitis,
breakfast at midnight
half a grapefruit.

after weeks, i beg for the romance of cigarettes,
i read dirty novels with bent pages,
i eat too much
and leave foul takeaway cups on my dresser.

and you're so good at forgetting,
you even make me forget.

fill my mind.

erased like
completed like
upstaged like
i'm alive.

soaked

i am out on the lawn,
breathing,
gaps in between the teeth
the eye,
purpled in your preference for clean fights,
bar glass sparkling, bottles left out,
a rhythm for the middling sort,
rising nearly out of their seats for the possibilities.

emulsified,
with all the opposing liquids
sparkling in their distribution.
and the room was dark enough to feel comfortable in,
any light coming low up off the floor,
at a pleasing angle.

i had an active mind
preserved by a certain kind of filial piety,
privacy on the lawn,
brown spots in the dead grass,
and low moss beneath the trees.
i made room for your private apparitions,
incriminating in the salt taste,
i went salty for the taste of it.

and so like the sharp cleanliness of my split tongue,
one feeling over the other, in hunger,
collided in cheapness together,
To be so stubbed out,
to be drowned in a subtling, a diffusing light,
trees dipping silvered leaves down into the hand,
under the boards of the wooden floor,
the mortar, denture cream,
and breathing outward,
out of the surface of the water.

pickled

my first memory.
you ask me like it's important i remember.
i imagine it's either entirely mundane or entirely perverse
like feeling fascination out the car windows
or like the sound of cats fucking in the street.

and your fingertips wrap over
a whole series of disappointments,
framed artwork in a paneled study,
and the red brick of the university
clinging.

i know you
more than you think i do, and i've felt free to keep looking
even while your back was turned
and your face was turned away.

i am no longer possessed of my own appendages,
they have escaped me,
sitting, fat red gems in a jar behind my desk chair.
it creaks when it spins
and the whole world goes purple with astringent.
and like a chemical,
i spurt over the floor and eat up all the wooden legs of examination tables,
and then seep out to the metal legs of park benches,
and then consume the feet and hearts and arms.

if it is too long
you can flip the page over,
cut it to thirds, and thirds of thirds
sideways, resplendent,
and continue maniacally with such force
so as to break through.
and like a full-blooming bishop
clothed in red,
you can consecrate the ground,
make lush, grow garlic in it.
and you can scare off the stilted deer
with clumps of your own hair dropped in the grassless patch
through a diffuse,
a purplish light.

tight

you are far too young, and
we are inside, looking out at a flashless street,
the allure of dated storefronts,
the appropriate sort of European decay.
reality, a heavy word,
the careful, detached things we say.

the safety of loneliness is stunning.
we make every effort to curb the slow drip,
the mouldering way about ourselves.
you offer to wait with me, in the fine, sharp rain.
your offer is mouldering,
a strange ad-lib,
i know you'll never be in my car.

i am driving on pitted roads in the dark of four in the morning
the smell of you still on my neck.
i don't bristle anymore.
you're too easy.
it's not work if i don't really like you.

the fundamentals haven't changed,
the beaten breath,
your breath.
like a gift,
barbed
ready to catch,
save for the given name, the ironed flat,
a preference for playing cards.

i lived in the shine of your black boot,
in the rain splashed up from the ground
in several hundred sheets of paper.

i had burned through all my candles
and the money you lent me
and i felt crowded in the piles of unbound
paper in the study,
the way you felt eviscerating,
always,
always towering,
or strange or too quiet.

i would have to learn to breathe more slowly.
i would have to split my time right down the middle.

You make me want to wrong you,
bright in the silken chrome
the nausea climbing up my throat,
and the beautiful spread of your hand
on the small of my back.

drunk

moved in one long, slow cowardice,
perjury in the lines in his lips,
the ex-girlfriends with a bit of a hitch,
a bit of breath between all the sounds,
the loose way about him.

he got in contact with me after years,
what made him do it, i won't know,
and now its unfolding,
i go for hours
and then stop
and then remember
and go again.

he wrote in black pen,
ridges in paper from how awfully hard he pressed
just like his checks,
monogrammed, big as a souvenir dollar bill.

handsome and with the wood at the door
and the mismatched knobs to hold,
to drape over with a handhold,
the hand, the sheer of grocery bags,
tied together improperly
so i would just have to cut the damn things,
just cut them open.

i'd begin to explode,
i'd rather my teeth fall out,
i'd burn in all that heat,
burn right up.

limbered with the heat of it,
the exercise
of aiming with your eyes,
the chin dropped just so,
to cast a shade darker than usual
over the eye, the left eye,
so red and lovely.

**i would like to thank michael joyce,
eternally,
for everything.**

**and thank you,
and you,
pretty boys and girls.**