

## Nadine Shelly / FOUR POEMS

### HORUS

hillcrest gypsomoth, dripping moss  
a spot of green. Wet mouth,  
wet eye. Rolling  
over the old hill, hovering.  
The speckled hawk is roving here.  
Hunting: your eye is an egg  
is a grape in the grass, cool surprise  
in round, red mouth. Circling  
the bright flight of your vision  
shape of the eye is the head  
of the hawk

broken rock  
bleeds clear green tears.  
Two drops on the back  
of the tongue, tip back.  
The head drops, smash. Water spills  
upon the hills: this muscle  
in your neck talking, tick tocking,  
tipping the wide face the white  
forehead into the sky

wide open wings of winter grey sky

take you in my arms, keep you  
warm, safe from harm. My love  
who is thrush, who is bullrush,  
who is blond arms of arbutus  
reaching. Wither

have you wandered love, wither  
do you wander? Through dark  
woods, golden frog  
in a fog, a rotting bog

underbrush of birdsong, brambles  
like mazes, like madness  
tearing your tatters,  
tangling your hair.  
Caught in a brittle thicket,  
bracket of sticks (unspoken  
violence) indicates  
a breath, a pause, a bearing  
compass rose  
veins of milk and veins of quartz

gathering twigs to my dry heart  
kind as kindling, love of fire.  
This land is a hand  
on the sole of your foot. Black  
boot, bare foot, steel toes.  
Stones and steps fall on the face  
of the green man, fool of false  
spring. Not hurting the land.  
Not knowing but going, being led.  
A branch in the hand, a spine  
cracking

love, your heart like a sharp horizon  
a light on the crest  
of the still heart, the hill

## VERNAL VERNACULAR

With this land I am growing  
older everyday, decay  
like days of rain  
water on the brain.  
The body bears its barren  
breasts, hips, belly  
like a heavyweight  
across the bridge, over  
the hill. Will you be there  
waiting? Wondering  
where the spring fed fawn  
has gone to, what laughter  
what slaughter has befallen her.

With this land I am growing  
older, greener, meaner  
everyday. Spring sings  
in my veins, shouts out  
showering flowers of perennial  
pain. No shame, no gain,  
a shake of the head  
sun's flare/lion's mane.

## ODE TO A NODE (DEJA VU)

### 1. astronaut

underpass, undertow  
throwing small rubber balls  
tight bright words against the walls  
of winter. Underground flesh  
pressing against a cold stone  
heart, harvest moon tombstone.  
Seeking your darkness and quiet  
caress

your hands are leaves falling  
from frostbitten crimson trees  
tender as fingertips your tongue  
holding, folding my body  
like a paper bird or origami box  
birch bark biting snowflake stars  
upon pale skin, tooth marks red  
running like a loveletter's ink  
in the rain

in the country of silence  
there is no place for pain

luxury of memory, to say:  
do you remember  
sky spinning a spiderweb  
in silver darkness, tongues tangled

eyes crossed with clear delight  
of starlight, love, do you remember

taste of rosehips  
(shape of your lips)  
walking through the haunted hills  
like songs of sleepless deep  
surrender. Dancing barefoot  
through fading fields and forests  
my body is bread  
I throw to the birds  
in hopes that they will always  
bring me back to you  
pirouette silhouette  
to the sound of the sea  
smell of wet skin, mushrooms  
in the shadow of hush  
damp towering trees

put it away: call it pipe dream  
smoke screen, scanning the green  
wilderness of our common memory

## 2. juggernaut

look around, hear the sounds  
of here and now  
ear to the heaven  
ear to the ground

sound of surfaces  
dry sand, silk sky scraping  
a city of skin  
your name a windowledge I walk  
across like a cat in early morning  
mottled light, milk bottle  
everfull of flowers;  
me-o-my, honeypie  
call you my milk man  
call you every day, every way  
that I can

your soft lap a boat  
I can float in, away  
no burden to say:  
love, lift me up

when hope hangs her head  
like a coat by the door  
where will she go? home  
along a slick black road  
shining all night, street light  
through a single window pane

### 3. slipnaught

brain like a breadbox, a mailbox,  
a bioluminescent origami box  
to hold the butterknife

the day to day life  
the constant image of the crane  
slipping into passive moonlit  
inlet of calm abiding,  
the mind content with confluence  
influence of silence  
impossibility  
simplicity of the sea

brings me back  
like a bouncing ball  
to the blank walls of winter  
where everywhere your face  
is a hoarfrost mask, melting  
where you see me  
emerging/submerging  
in some well loved landscape  
a frozen breath on the window  
a mystery of memory

expressions of ecstatic change  
impress me, please hand me the reins  
of the silver horses who are harnessed  
delicately to every minute muscle  
trembling in your placid  
perfect, inexplicably pleasing face  
gently softened now (like my heart)  
with a fevered fall, a day of dreams

## internal damnation: the furnace of angels

sailing away, blank blot  
of abandonment  
I meant to leave you there  
but how could I bear  
the look on your face

and now all the waters  
are turning red and brown  
the desperate search for signs  
continues, down the river

drowning in sentiment  
sediment sinking ships into soft  
skin, running cold hands  
through the water your body

is passing. What a waste.  
Saying sorry, sorry to your sad  
sister and the dead seas  
she drowned in

skull is a shell  
is a bell in the blue  
hours by the window, watching  
you in some far part

of the house. Skies fall  
in a metal dish of rain water



the metal scraping some pink  
wet part of you, parted lips

glisten: ovarian breathing  
listen: ask again, my friend  
am I speaking this language of yours, yet,  
am I telling you things you already knew?

language of love, lost children,  
tin rain, red roof, dull pain  
of a forehead hitting the floor.  
Mountains fall down

to the brown river  
in the Valley of Gods, monsoon  
of insanity. Desperation devours  
your integrity, I send you these signs:

stop/yield/surrender.  
Lay me down in the river of peace  
just down, just through  
just under the belly

you already knew that, didn't you  
I couldn't fool you  
if I wanted to