

Kate Wise

**austere**

I was compelled to know the length of your bones,  
Freeing them of their flawless flesh encasement.  
Your arrow head jaw, agape in reverie,  
a dull chant to dumbstruck rafters,  
flowers efflorescing in the hollow of your throat.  
inducing the sensation of the gilded humming bird you wear as pectoral;  
wings reverberating against your sternum: a deafening, silent flutter.  
my pupils expand at the very sight of you,  
ventricles expanding & absorbing the light  
that emanates from the divine, diamond sharpness of your aquiline bone  
The elegance of your clavicles,  
And delicate incline of your nose,  
Suggested equine endeavors, and manicured lawns and hands  
Recitals and rehearsals of pleasantries,  
Nobility,  
Exuding poise,  
The orchestra of your bones,  
The cacophony of orgasm."

## Connemara

My father's land had always been a love letter written in penmanship I could not decipher.  
I searched for imagery my whole childhood, but what I discovered in reality  
was two dimensional to the land I had fashioned in my mind,  
to the land I scaffolded from the aching magnificence of photography.  
I had wandered through the outdated grey scale.  
I memorized the mountains and moors in the hushed geography section of dimly lit libraries.  
I traced the peat bogs with my hands, wanting to know the scent of such rich soil.  
It had felt like pornography those quiet afternoons,  
something I sought for the thrill of desire as well as for the crescendo of knowing.

but I arrived to his land like a failed first fuck.  
I found his land beautiful but droll,  
bleak in the reality of its limits.  
Where was the beauty, my birthright?  
I soon forgot the importance of lighting.

Then I traveled into the interior of Connemara,  
and there was all the honesty I had pined for in the last several weeks,  
an unmasked, unapologetic understanding of my own insignificance within the collective,  
an undeniable dichotomy between male and female energy.  
A dalliance between the two, an unsanctioned cohabitation in the landscape,  
the phallic monadnocks and the demure but lush midland.  
Distinctly feral, rife with paradoxical glamour.  
I knew it well, such expensiveness.

Ballynahinch Castle was austere and despite unrelenting elements; unaffected.  
This was how we made space for tragedy in what we could not anticipate:  
roughhewn, bold elegance.  
Even when there were mice in the kitchen,  
earnest sensibility bore a legacy.  
There lived in that space a physical representation of the lavish inner life of my people.  
The wiley land rendered a sacred solitude we would serenely succumb to in the company of our own.

The tweed drapes were slumbering, suspended heavy like eyelids.  
Somewhere in the middle distance  
I saw a woman who may have also been a race horse,  
such were the contours of her face & mind.  
You could cut stones and build a home by such cheekbones,  
as easily as you could be stampeded by her wit.  
Ultimately you would be left bereft for the feeling that had come first:  
the false possibility of winning.  
This was the land of my mother's people,  
who I had begun to forget were my own true birthright.

## Gold

the arc of the road  
parallels the course of the sun,  
& I am incinerated,  
in the holy glow  
of the day's demise

the ocean spreads below me  
of that I am sure  
I am careening towards the arc

tar & blinding light

I do not trust that there is  
a gradual decline  
on the other side  
Or indeed a path at all

& from my apathy  
materializes a placidity

that does not provide evidence of god  
but rather generates god  
in the hollow of my throat

A peacefulness ebbing into  
benevolence  
that I can retrieve from the confines  
of my coat pocket  
like a book of psalms  
emblazoned by the sun  
on to my soul