

Michael J Pagan

hunger \

At first, we were just fragments chewing away
at each other hoping to leave behind the shapes
of our bodies. *We must transform what we are
into our hungers*, you said. *Into shapes*,

like how we used to point out atmosphere, days,
imagination; *a sturdy object*, *Love*, we said
to each other, even though all we did was create
conundrums, hoping to sympathize shapes

of ourselves into selves bare of moments,
bare of mercies, of the problem horizons
caused by endings like impassable boulders;
we collided: atmosphered into shapes

of steaming rubble, burning & glorious – that’s
what gave us our power, our tendencies
to burglarize each other’s bodies, our questions
like, “Why does the world hold onto these shapes

& colors so tightly? When colors always run away
for tomorrow, weary of looking any further than
the *further* they speak so much about?
“Our souls?” I ask. “Why do they only leave shapes

behind?” Why won’t they just leave? Or at least
let me be in *you* now? Then I can come back
as the one I was before? The one who loved to write
on walls what I didn’t dare say aloud? In shapes

that didn’t dare say aloud? Because you know

people: you tell them something, & *then* they
like to talk. But they had to mean something if
they were up on the walls? Those shapes

spelling out sentences, why else would they be
there? We still have to believe in the musical
instruments of our voices, just like the water
inside our heads, sweet & sentimental shapes,

like when I first saw you amongst the old oranges
of the sky, dislocated like a weed, & you said, "Michael,
it's beautiful here, even though here's where everyone
goes to die & memory into molded shapes.

what songbirds have you see today? \

We sit inside an abandoned tow truck
& just talk. Lean on each other. Lay heads
on each other's laps, listening to the scattered
gun shots outside, making up stories about who
shot who. Play with each other's hair.
Whisper things. Things like: *Wait for me.*

Things like: *Just wait for me.* Things like:
Is that a boy or a girl inside that belly of yours?
& how histories are only made at night,
amongst other things. Other things not meant
to be heard except by us.

Only then could I see the near future: eyeing
her neck bent, neck bone fault-lining her skin;
the earth-winds of her body's scent, a tribute
to all our mistakes, like a collapsing roof, asking:
What songbirds have you seen today?

& only then could I see the near future: see
your large belly. See you lying on your back across
the carpet, feet raised onto the bed, watching your nose
breathe. Watching your belly rise & fall.

There was a time when baby fat
used to turn my stomach with its lazy
breath, before you taught me "Humanity
is in the places." That place to reanimate words,
freeing the dead souls inside them.

That was our summer in water,
that orange beam bridge, the sun.
That was our summer.

The sun like orange cheese, cars parked
illegally like lost cats & dogs & we brightly
seated like foil, like shiny bags, like
floating particles of voice: our curses, our spells

floating across telephone poles, the closest
we would ever come to approaching God.

Then a second became quiet. "Strange," you said.
"That minute before people actually existed."

"Strange," you said again. "That minute just
before people arrived."

"Had there really ever existed a mankind?" I asked.

"How it must've been strange for a god," you said.

inches per sound \

Sometimes her skin feels sharp
like the edges of a large sewer
drainage pipe.

& sometimes it becomes this incredible
space, this beautiful room where you're glad
to take off your shoes – an absolutely wonderful

custom – & then you sit on a couch & look
up at the ceiling where clouds were painted;
where they can see their own breath,

& sometimes my head is leaning
against the window while I pretend
to sleep-listen to you the way strangers
do on city trains, surrounded

by others who they'd like to hear, but
not see, & I think it's fine, just fine,
only this format has no name the way
skin can't be measured in *Inches Per
Sound*: you, your skin calling out

to me on my way out the door; my body
moving too quickly for your sounds when
all you ever wanted from me was wait

to open this door tomorrow.