

## Nicole Agee

### Pioneertown

I could have leaped two feet higher and a bit harder  
and flown up into the smoky color-filled sky  
a puff or fog or cloud from the great crowd  
a mystic of music and verse spun like silk in a twirl of rising colors

Powdered dirt caught our heels and smoke came out of your nose  
we laughed, we were dirty, in love, the sunset

A hall of sounds entered my stomach and ricocheted a pinball along my spine  
couples tread space without feet, without form  
4 legs to one body, a mythological pony, bestiary love horses  
galloping in spatial rhymes, spinning in imaginary circles /symbols

A man stood night watch under a shrunken wood roof  
a Brillo of scrubbed steel wool around his face, one eye sandpaper, one eye milky marble, skin like dried  
lemon cake  
The sound of an empty metal drum, the hollow of a ricochet, a howl in the canyon  
his voice was a rattlesnake tail  
Rigs and rules and niceties

We entered through dust, where elliptical tones became silhouettes  
Our bodies were lit from the inside

The night gathered the layers of our words and turned them into a wall of liquid light and cactus dew  
tongues and tales of desire,  
the smell was of lemon, electric and caramel  
fused hands and magnetic breath  
Exalted, clear and bright

## A Coat of Feather and Fern

A sticky and wide pool of a smile,  
a siren's tar mouth, Venus sprung of coal,  
veins clogged with glitter, quartz rose and agate

Earth rumbles at the coordinates of olden days  
where mothers walked and planted deeply with hungry hands  
held with soft arms and  
worried with tender arms  
they wove with worn bodies, this place  
to the future

A hand with a thousand restless and plying fingers, thirsty mouth, cuts the earth from its memory and casts  
it into the future again as pieces of smashed pottery

Fragile threads, a coat of feather and fern  
dandelions and loose pebbles, cool water, light piano  
soft feet - wind chimes and tiptoes  
floating away, awash, sugar whispers melting in a river

The heavy drum flap of a carrion wing

A steel girth opens its unhinged jaw  
wide like a viper's mouth,  
reeling back, rusty teeth and iron breath  
Its sharpened teeth claim no mercy when she eats the ground and shutters  
pulls back chugging and spitting dirt, furiously and victoriously into the air, a  
spray and celebratory plume of black smoke  
grinding, gulping,  
she liquifies layers of time

The edges of the tear are the shape and silhouette of an opened chest  
the sound, a slow motion snap of thick bone  
soft points of shadow undulate and break free  
a crack in the ice runs headless across miles of land

The earth opens and contracts, accepting and expelling -  
compression diamonds and fossil fuels, subway tunnels and the dead.  
oxygen, no oxygen, a churning fiery mound of sparkling embers

## If I am the Boat, You are the Sky

Hurling through black dust, space,  
a deep breath lingers for a moment above a bottomless pool

A shimmering body, glimmering jewel strands  
waving, snaking, quaking in the moon's light

My little night boat begins to peel away and turn in a circle  
I am not doing it, there's an eddy in the fabric that's pulling to the right  
I lean with the turn, dragging my knuckles along as a primitive of the universe

I grunt, I howl, I slither, the night is me and I am magic

Whirling, time is a flash.  
Did you know the speed and movement of time creates its own sound?  
The sound is a hiss of a poisonous black snake and the shush of a loving mother

The winds scrapes and whips, audible DNA  
Tall anorexic palms snap and bloated roots split:  
sap green, umber brown, black and blue

Hurling forward, my arms are stretching past my feet, my eyes fixed,  
there is a contortion to the night that makes me elastic and tasty,  
and you a prism of light and soft tongues and secrets  
(I can hear you now) )

A reflection in the water appears dotted white with streaks of color.  
An abstraction of lines and points, a morse code from another world underneath  
Maybe it will save me, but  
I don't have time to learn its language, cause  
I am moving faster now—too fast now,  
halting hurling stopping sobbing creating dreaming laughing

I am water over a cliff,  
a loose horse,  
quick as a blink,  
a slip on a sheet of ice

I look upward in my mortal spin

If I am the boat, you are the sky  
We look upon each other locked into this whirl  
As an elegant machine churns us into wider and wider circles  
Unstitching the threads and loosening the sails

Eventually, I'll lose my hold, lose breath, my vessel  
swallowed in a gulp

For now, we hold tight, arced limbs and locked eyes  
the pinned center of a widening blur  
enfolded in gold and pink, fat and slow, dripping honey and melted ice cream

hiss, shush, hiss, shush hiss,  
A breath spins through the black dust, space,  
lingering for a moment above a bottomless pool.

## Mark Me

That word just strung out  
across the room flickering and rattling  
by dagger hooks  
what's possible we know-  
but where are the unmoored and sinking ships,  
which doorway?  
bring the pills, a golden rod, the gilded mirror and all the rest

a place where dark empties its monsters like  
coins spilling from a swollen piggy bank

lips pursed,  
ribs crushed  
lips clenched, bubbling teeth  
yawning and spinning,  
my shape fills out an unknown space  
a purple uplight skims the edges and I am here with a root bound fern  
you had said just before that,  
I looked like that face  
from the movie we saw once high and young

a chase ensues and ends at the far end of the universe

yes, translate me by small immeasurable marks I said  
marks so small that I cannot be sensed but I will appear as an apparition or smell of something delicious  
mark me so I cannot leave forever  
mark me so you can find me  
mark me using coordinates  
mark me so I know you saw me in the wild  
name me with 100 emojis, magical numbers and neon words

my feet were so soft and buttery they made no sound  
just a creak of the mail slot and a shuffle of paper brushing the tile  
at night  
the gazing ball showed a reflection of you and me twisted as one in a giant  
cats eye marble  
It brought you close to the truth though  
It wasn't the contortionist, the Xanax or the weed  
it was the hummingbird flying erratically, the boiling sun, and

that great line in the film that shattered mass and time.

the lights are beginning to festoon around your head  
your hair is a zapped and tangled bouquet  
reach in, almost fall, maybe you should fall, let yourself fall, fall in and in and in and in  
there are 1000 faces looking in and just as many looking back  
this is the frame of the universe and million ascending lights

think of this

the photograph was black and white, a picture of a woman singing.  
a backdrop with a lake and utopian meadow  
I drifted in and looked straight at you through her eyes.