

Andrea Scott

### The Boundless Abyss of Time

*What a tiny part of the boundless abyss of time has been allotted to each of us – and this too shall vanish in eternity.* Marcus Aurelius  
*Meditations 12:32*

Winter's austere mapping, the cold trance of telephone wire and breath speechified in smoke.

'Tis the age of prolific terseness, the year of primetime eliminations and make-believe meritocracy.

The landscape grows frenetic. The mind of winter finally outdoes itself. And the thin screens of thought are replicated in florescent sparrows, meditation tracks of synchronized rivers and birds, avatars of pixelated selves suspended across the deep, invisible archives of speech projected nowhere—save the vast and starry hieroglyphics of half-listening members uploaded onto vacation spreads near links to parrots dancing to Ray Charles.

Click on this hand, which opens to this heart, which suspends canary red. Hit post and watch it spread across social networks.

But what then, the reticent student asks, of the rhetoric of longing?

Losing one's cadence—when the words kept in step, but the lines fell apart.

Maybe you should go

<inward >

where winter makes its mark

<inward>

where solitude, that clichéd casualty of our time,  
measures thoughts against the template's cool remove.

Ha!

\* \* \*

The campus is afield. These pre-postindustrial settings – removed from the city, yet hardwired for success. A fraternity of names lined up like seconds at the gates.

And the logic of persuasion in the name of making belong.

Power is the only point that's willfully obvious and surprisingly austere.

*You have to fight or go back home*, the pious converts say.

*You have to plow your way through your line of opponents*, the cranky sage affirms.

*These people are not your friends, but if you make them your friends, they'll do more for you.*

And on the life of the mind...

*You want a grant when you publish a book. Look at the catalogues. See where you can make yourself belong.*

\* \* \*

And there were birds in the sunny juvenile pop of Tarantino layered in Simon and Garfunkel amidst the digital refrains of voices doubling over time.

I clicked through the woods where a momentary measure in the shapeless sound of trees alliterates each cadence in snow. The owl becomes a face that splinters into text that sketches the arid etymology of tree.

The text's exhaustive possibility... The instant download of time's suspense...

And the unnerving tick tocks, the wading in a blue pool or night song or dawn song's cuckoo, the unstringing of that unsong—again.

## A Mourn Clipped Snow

*for J.J. and his father*

I.

Fissure tree sky-ed in the sullen blue –  
Bone-sculpted mud in a temporal remote –

The wind culls a sprig of ash from the hills and slips beneath the sea.

II.

When a spirit flew in the sandy wind,  
a pine transfixed a scream that needled into your limbs and wept.  
A woman comforted you in sleep, when different parts of your body talked.  
    And there were vengeful voices swirling like the paisley eye of the peacock.  
And there was a dream peopled with the echoes of speeding cars and trees.  
And there was you: a man suspended in an acre of clay  
until his discomfort yielded to the opening of song.

The sea tossed up a city of stars  
and a net of nerves in your thighs went numb.

III.

Father, once is bearer of seed, the almond tree.

    That mouth-urn gold unfurls  
    in wishbone flowers , stiffened hips.

    The pine-columned cliffs unease.

IV.

*I notice the trees have hushed their tongues.  
I notice their wrists are twisted and pale.  
A low cloud of dust hovers above the canyon – arid blues on folds of gold –  
and I am neither frightened nor at ease.*

We carried the voice of the crow, its cacophonous crackle dispersing, its circular flight drawing us in. We broke bread and drank of the holy one.

V.

*(and a man walked on hindered limbs for seven days and seven nights)*

*(and the mirrors were covered under supple cloth)*

*(and the village wept streams that turned rivers that turned blood.)*

*(and we were nothing in our being one)*

VI.

His mouth is that flower whose seeds the wind pulls until the field is a field of his small heart opening in your hands. Your hands shatter in your heart which shatters poppy red.

VII.

I feel him not feeling. Blunt flakes of light stiffening the dark. Errant curls of snow melting at the river's mouth.