OF RESIDUE

Barbara Tomash
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In memory of Marthe Reed
Of Nature

I am neither the strangeness of the voice nor the creature too small and finite how quickly the need to expand oneself one draws the circle one dons the rescue suit living matter how quickly the earth’s strangeness how quickly the voice is not god’s but night’s curious dimension I am neither an absolute form nor a part of the rest how quickly night blackens
Of Water

to uproot the light you risk contamination build a small structure or fence lock the enclosure to minimize the threat what are the constituents you want to remove? words replicate themselves on websites these discussions concern the body’s distance from other bodies to reveal openings both high and low as day begins to teeter these discussions concern feces and urine where to tie your dog or goat you cup your hands in clay and silt sound out what you’ve learned by now water is blue water is reddish brown always keep in mind you walk on water arms held tightly at your sides in absence of light in darkness in night you roll down the grassy slope singing somewhere over the rainbow
Of Dissolution

the instructions are biochemical
the instructions are finite and
compressed the instructions take
days you have wanted
immersion front to back back to
front inside out your fingers fall
upon rock-dust strenuous as
rock the force of your re-
absorption ground-down leaves
you have been asked to gather
terms to ponder particulate
matter eddying starting with
smog the odor of insecticide
lavish green fern fronds
incinerated when brown gravel-
dust rising on no-trespass roads
ash-beaded clouds what doesn’t
diminish is nothing to begin
with torrential means to gather
if you’re breathing in sand
Of Dormancy

revived after stasis to regrow roots and ribcage of willowy human shape the child emerges lifespan long or short when starved phobias of insects and mean dogs invisible in the trees walk backwards a dozen careful steps connected by ring-count blue beam of flashlight thorn in the mouth after being thawed prehistoric worms moving and eating will not age a seed from a Judean date palm sprouts fruit found in an ancient squirrel’s cache a sacred lotus yeast trapped in amber a fossil weevil slowly metabolizing in the lead cellars of the city where first things lie down with last almost by accident
Of Longevity

spores from salt deposits coaxed duplicated and analyzed no natural limit no singular specimen thrown back against her own fragility you make various claims of me to mature reproduce cycle back to polyp after being multicellular I hear the notes of small birds in their sequence dispersing like shadows mirabilis gymnosperm lingers in permafrost in larvae of skin-beetles in competition of disenfranchised immortality I speak only and repeatedly of glass sponges found in the East China Sea
Of Footprint

who else wanders here? crows coyotes stray dogs and cats house-humans and un-housed I hold tree roots tethered display troubled organs on my outside teeth remain as my residue whether I write these words or not what did I purchase? what did I instigate? what refuse constructs what “we” call “home?” in “our” earth-work glossary what won’t be spoken now? quake speculate escape rose vines grow into the camellia hedge the lawn is weeded with dandelions I press the tall grass down where I stand but this is not as passive as it sounds
Of Surroundings

what if you need clumsy excess as a giant would twisted and tamed windows doors porches and terraces what if as a beaver does you need disintegration what if you need orb empty light hollow breezes uncluttered for a day or two or two million years of human evolution what if you experience signs of shattering and blind bone seeing inward abandons you and the shadow of a ridge in the continually flickering present
Of Forgetting

a deer stepping delicately into the road covered in ticks or covered in a series of predictions or the mistake I visualized in the house over the back fence a girl weeding forty days forty nights thistles and crabgrass rain water and run off
O daughter stars cleaved into the roof of my mouth the bigger the lightless object the better rase it rase it one guy draws his gun even to the foundation flower stems greening the water neither a small life of hooves rough hide nor a concept in error a pit spit out let my right hand be forgot in the language my grandmother spoke that won’t be spoken now the hand of another man I preferred not made a fist the smell of lichen on stone to my quivering nostrils the nests of birds the webs of spiders mete out their masks didn’t I think I was invisible?
Of Motion

you invite everyone’s attention here to “the human fit” a contraption made of minute hinges and bundles of concentrated light that you call “political life” that you call “the language of ambience and description” the body stripped to the waist in a doorway no one constructs you call this “rising sea levels” the point is that you call this your lens but that does not mean it has memory last night you read a novel that does not exist words without any kind of legs spiraling like the shells of sea snails without motion the writer has run away collapsing a bursting mouth you call this “nature writing” you call words “concentrated rays of light” but words are eyes that should never be closed life comes from life you invite everyone’s attention here
Of Order

in rose bushes the piano tuner
has calibrated each drastic
specificity of bough please can
you measure the finitude of
embodiment? out of sequence
blurred in relation to or in a
continuum with air currents
echoes raptors radiation fall out
history riding over the earth
how many times do I swallow
per minute? how many holes
must be emptied in order to
decenter sound? I go to the
supermarket the auto mechanic
the doctor how do I keep
contiguous count? one wetland
rat? one gasp? I write what is
owed two different ways the
tips of my fingers destabilized
by thorns work does get done
weeds come
Of Leaves

near your bed the sea shell box of small bones and press your hand to chest you lack bones leave weight leave home leave gap and gone and get long fingered flick the length of flute calm full wind spine fan take hold tear not rake not weep into leaf heaps per hope your lungful
Of Syncopation

so as to think *outside* so as to say *countryside* so as to possess the lost technique to sculpt our shinning domes so as to think when you think you generate sound and so you stumble a step behind scraping words from garden bricks so as to perceive *private quandary* and *deprivation* and you are panting to catch up I am alone criss-crossing arches of rose vines where the horizon line should be within the grid of the window screen and within my sights the people I love come in and out of focus I put my hands around my throat is it better to continue or begin again? if the parent tree is killed new buds sprout from its base
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