Spring 2018

for the intruder in my home

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for the intruder in my home

a Senior Project submitted to
The Division of Languages and Literature at Bard College

by Bennett Chinsena

Annandale-on-Hudson, NY
May 2018
Acknowledgements

To Phil, who supported me, guided me, and made sure I was drinking enough water at every meeting.
To Michael and Susan, who made sure I put myself before anything else.
To Michelle, who made me feel comfortable in my own skin.
To my family, for letting me be a poet. Thank you for making this country my home.
To Bard, for teaching me more about myself and the world around me.

To Thailand, for nee yuemman. 
My life
in the leaves and on water
My mother and I
born
in swale and swamp and sworn
to water

- Lorine Niedecker
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for the intruder in my home
for the intruder in my home

hand rubs and chamomile tea

if you stay up past dawn
tuck in your self-impressions

sawdust and
periwinkle under fingernails

your perfect image
churned, fermented
have you ever tried writing with a ballpoint pen?

sandpaper on sandpaper
all you do is
scrape and categorize
you don't know your neighbor's name

sandals on concrete
socks on hardwood
risk of falling makes me
walk barefoot

calloused soles
on linoleum
paint my timid
footprints

buy pre-sliced meat
with no effort
instant coffee
with no effort

i watch you
wash your hands in my
earl grey
fluent

azure lines the ceiling
piercing through a concrete canvas
lost on marked trails
dust spins off their cleats like tie-dye

keep the salt close to the heart
wet napkins under soft drinks
kaleidoscope dreams of square plates
and cups of small talk

bathing by the riverbank
oxfords stained by runoff
only copper on copperheads

water lilies watered strictly
grown without regard
sold without petals
stare

breath reads like braille
tetanus shots
and whispers of verbatim

memory met with residual feeling
unturned lackadaisical stone

pebble of knowledge
in resolute rivers
can’t pinpoint fault
agave

in the whistle of the nose of the totem
i can hear the scarred sparrow
whose wings ache from the weight of our problems
tattered and bruised by trees too tall

in the crescent of the nose of the dawn
i can taste the peaceful victory of
a sunset tinted spectacles cannot hide from
and they cannot paint for me

in the bruise of the crevice of the arm
i can smell patience, reservoirs waiting
to overflow, effort wasted on weed picking,
the gardening of the American dreamer

in the arch of the dimples in your back
i see the futures of our children

in the space of the smile of your love
time is viscous
revision

should i speak of the cauliflower
fed to me on this day by my ancestors
if your loving walks by short rivers

if time is of the essence
why argue in person

i remember to bathe
in scarce water and cut hair

if drywall breaks like promises
and home for dinner
means it’s in the fridge

or dinner is dry
and time overweight,
should we risk for reward if it is fed to us?
synthesis

crackling is not anguish
it is natural
lack of solar rays that is natural

ture pigments show
dry leaves heave a
sigh heard once or twice

it gets worn out
stems get bloated
strides of simple actions
are lost in the rain

are caught in the puddle
mistaken intimacy
twilight comes swift

when eyed for long

when riverbed is twin-sized
and the rain can't fit
and the snow falls dry

petals of flower
overtake the precipitation

peacocks lose color
when mud marks boots
when autumn strikes colors on wall

on the fifth day
feels like the hundredth

when affection is trite
and warm hugs minced

this change awaits the

fumes that release
from augmented certainties,

from the trust-encrusted delicacy of
the definite

redefine hesitance,
all is remedial
all is memorial
mitosis at midnight

vision and compassion can
spot unshallow shrapnel

knee-deep
in recovery,
bone-deep wounds
washed in shallow rivers
running from oceans of contempt,

decreed in sorrow
you are the despot now
crescent of your moonlight
you cut your leg from this rift
and now to present the community award to:

rhythm of hiccups
on my awning

a room filled with
suspenseless conversation
labeled friendship

daily routine becomes riddle
would rather be eating poutine in Ontario
or camel-backing in Vegas

stuck in the chair
waiting for electricity
to singe my last nerves

one in the axon
firing my last dendrite
leave the Oolong undrunk
I know it's not your fault but

left me deserted with cacti to kiss
you speak creole to foreigners

paid $30 in tolls
drove lightyears from parents

eat tums no meals
strip sense from self

mongrel passion
carve feel in flesh
stippling

another taste of mercury won’t quench my thirst
what does the luster of a precious stone matter if it breaks skin
if you hold too tight
what if the mic drop leaves the worst unsaid
and what of compromise?

forgiveness is the release of funds into your bank account

braised in shallow oils
bathed in bad luck brews
the marketing professional goes door to door just to deal with it
intermission
hitting licks on the 14th floor
abandoned buildings never felt so at home

we could spot the lynx tying his shoe in the garden adjacent
weathering the tiles with his knuckles
dipping his claws in concrete to scrape

chiasmus in the mountains
early morning coffee for more fuel birds
burning out like fireworks in summer tradition
honey brine pucker pie

sour dessert torture
dipped in river Styx fondue
eating your bag of bones

package me in Hostess wrap
preserve our ties
dunk me in brine

fermented ice cream on a hot Wednesday
at dusk we're forced to talk

w glasses of cerulean
doubt watered down
by hollow time

wrapped by feeble hands
read my magnum opus
e-mails on a whim

outside the mausoleum
i post my suggestions
sweet unrest in baton rouge
to start at square one

coated in the bleakest lining — dug out of our gelato — craters in a mess of anguish and turmoil there she was — unmasked and uncovered by space debris uninterested in the craft but more so in the product — more so in what he could get and thought less of what she had left, what he had taken, time spent in a vacuum, dilated in a melting rush of delusion — swarmed by sound of hope and lack of initiative — the oars wore down / the mast termite-ridden / the compass fidgety — essence of a man dismantled — ideal becomes illogical becomes over — banality of deception — lack of concern makes for a temple left in rubble
out-of-town

moth in the rear view mirror
flutter
waning
in light coat of toxins
diet of daisies and cobblestone
growing in cracked principle
pressed in drying asphalt

kneel on ground zero
for businessmen who died for our sins
and the fees and taxes saved us
sincere

What hasn’t been said is lost in cursive, scissored into nylon
cloth of ribbon-tied trinkets and things to bring back to close
friends from far away. The snow-capped mountains, too familiar,
too blinding. The envelope too perfectly sealed, left unread, its
edges too sharp to hold.
tiffany's

scarlet-covered syringe make it known
— crept up onto you like breakfast in
bed — crepes crept up, skillet wrapped
in velvet gnawed into with veneers —
my mannerisms appraised
blessed

and tucked away are lynx-buried / instinct-driven truths, unrefrainable -isms, blaming the victim wrapped in gauze, wrapped in sleek satin antidepressant, draped in blanket of education, cloaked in care, the activist picks up altruism
tall tales stand short

overlooked by engrained encouragement, influence of therapeutic promises of self-help written by selves themselves — souls sold for less-than stellar salaries, packed in suitcases checked-in for connecting flights to familiar terrain, adjacent valleys just out of reach of foreigners and financial institutions string-up houses like sausages in a slow-cook suburbia furnace — breeding ground for high populations and low expectations and big dreams in small towns with big backyards and low ceilings made of glass, made to break through with cloth wrapped around fist
I don't hear an accent

doggy-paddled through River Styx
backpacked through Adirondacks,
feet unscathed, forehead untanned,
hoodie tied around organs —
time wasted, peace of mind at the peak.

hands washed in running river,
fingernails trimmed by granite,
granite made countertop —

peace made worry. faith in sediment.
compromise over displaced metamorphic
foot stuck in faults. calves cramped in crevices.

I look up to natural phenomena and
jersey numbers I refuse to retire or respect.
tide

surface tension breeds
  troubled waters

lost in marsh
  in wicked soot
    in darkness comes too soon

over amethyst crack rocks
  psyches shaped

in minefields over
  rushed metropolis

ether cultivation in
  troubled waters

untrimmed elm tree in
  troubled waters

rubble turned skin
  rust turned pale
on the tip of an aster

I found perennial vision
a will to move on grew oars on my forearms
my hunger made urgent

vision obsolete
I wrestle
I hear its whistle through the temple

unkempt for decades
my village forgets tradition
my respect wrinkles

peers speak to me in centigrade
I mourn for lost literature
drenched in sweat my dahlia grows
in pent-up rage her petals ache

I am the weeds beside her
the ache in the gardener's arms

the roots are my patience
dug deep in your soil
this handkerchief on mulholland dr

seering yet soft
laced, lacquered, locked in place,
pavement met with steps

resonate from oblique square
strained with grace

persian patterns built for
legacy cut short by bustle
and feeble feet
diaspora

stretched taut in Siam
our bodies, letters in Sanskrit

valet my stress
I saw your exhibit last Sunday

or was it the glimmer on soju-glazed
countertop? Sure you remember the tongue-tied
fishing trips but how about the Uber ride you
forgot to Venmo me for? Or the fact that we
never finished Orange is the New Black before
the olives went bad. I told you to refrigerate
salsa after opening it but you just looked at me
like you do when I’m dragging things out and I
get that we were raised different — it was only a
matter of time before apartments smaller than
dorm rooms
nnn

to earn my allowance for the week
drowsy pillars of principle

gutter filled with squid and trout
grooming under leaky awning
you hate me not

I pressed against
cinder-block spongy and porous
until my tomb spilled out

my severances, burrowing under soil and seed,
scuffling with soot under ash-filled air
heaving and retching for reimbursement

ego lies around
rummaging through sand
beachside,
scones for a few

under my breath
in quiet but confident

an utterance of sincerity
and certain knowledge

whisked breath at potluck

should I tip this time?
sleek azalea on a bough
flail me
trapeze my attention
this mildew night
in a mitsubishi

shower in kerosene
porcelain palms break
promises

left your plasma
left your pendant
in orbit round your loneliness
creviced

typhoon hug me tight
whisk me

Margiela-laced toes
elated by tension

beckon in closet
irate in shower

distorted comfort
dormant infant inched
marketplace in Yonkers

ccontent in no man's land
my hometown coos
cops shake my hand

mutilate
**emphasis**

wind blows without atmosphere
    around here
mouth shut and hand slit
“who’s going home
For Easter”

relics of sound logic
usual monotone
reference to typical in atypical tone

criticism
of monarch butterflies
cognizant

strafe from tired ends
cut ladders in my forearms

borders in Burma
made stateless
name on the coliseum

runny ink on statements signed in rain,
silk road led me to you

desert island patience
for a glimmer of god

tentacle-built foundation
pagans will mock us

fans of fate
I watch wiping blood from nose
ode to Morgana

your arms are really heavy on my stomach
you can sit on my thighs

head in the wasteland
eating bleach-dipped chicken

persian rugs wrapped deformities
paint our nails in pyrite

needle, my ladybird
into my flesh paint a priceless form

not too generic
like photos with backdrops

take one sideways
mid-blink
with my feet cropped out
with my friends cropped out
sorry I startled you turning the corner

stabbed you with chopsticks
and spewed tar in your eyes

curried baking soda and chicken
so the smell would not offend you

wipe your oxfords dry
before entering my temple

you drip of wines i can’t pronounce
and reruns on TV land

of mice wine and men
don’t say i love you

cartilage pierced for salvation
floating market through swamp

admit to watching westworld once
and burrowing to keith ape

borrow from me and never reimburse
I swear I dream in English

use your language on my tombstone