

## Theory of Flight

1

First like thunder then like wings it starts to come  
First like thunder then like wings and I will cry out  
Belief to the stone that said it would come but did not say  
It would pass, belief to the stone silence  
That as long as I follow out my hand the wound  
Draws up its own stricture, scarlet dog in the sun,  
Medicine inviolable; belief to the stone that life is  
More than death destroys, several million hand tools  
Ordered off to kill each other under a flag of peace  
First like thunder then like wings then like our love

2

This war is an opinion I do not hold, a commercial  
I'm having a beer during. There's this webby thing  
hung up in the living room tree I'm trying to burn  
before it multiplies. The undergrowth on my feet  
itches and I must see a doctor or walk a long way  
in the sun or somehow remember what miracle it was  
began the climb of my narrow lymph into this woods  
where I think i once saw a moth paralyze a unicorn  
by merely looking at him but not before the unicorn  
for once fucked the virgin who was waiting for him  
to fall asleep. Drink a beer and scratch my toes.

3

I'm leaving you because I no longer control myself.  
I try to be good for you but when you come sparrows  
die under me a suffocating infant death the law ignores.

I give your lips to everyone I love: through me you whore  
with Historical Inevitability; with Malachai; with Qualce  
the Deformed, mischievous dwarf to his Majesty my Lord  
who lives in this half-space between us I am leaving you.

4

Invented war when I ws ten and ten years later  
death, your nipples blackened into hairs, that mole.  
How did I never think down in your dry salt marsh  
magnificent smell the angel in your crotch a blown-  
eyed fish unused to man, the bladder in its throat,  
the rain? When I am black or white or just me  
I may not find it hard to weave or bad to slaughter

the calf each winter, may know the shaking of this house  
for what it is, not merely wind. Might even trust  
the night. But in the evil thirteenth month, month  
the horseman re-enacts the husbandman, month the sun  
swims closest to this frozen world, I was born  
and I expect to die too soon to outlive  
this needle, knife, fish-clasp horrible want of love.

5

We lie here in the rotting sun as though washed up on this beach.  
Through the heat haze and drowsy film of my eyes I watch you  
undulate with tides of small, crisp wings, your gooseflesh  
puckering into mouth after mouth after mouth. Sandlice kiss  
your nose and ears, starfish suck your staring eyes, crabs  
scuttle up your inner thighs to search your pubic weed.  
None of you is private, least of all your exits and entrances,  
comings and goings. You always were given to broad gesture,  
an actress adlibbing, performing on call, emoting right on cue.  
Now spiny urchins play on your public tongue the song of creation.  
Now your tissue heaves to the infinite applause of heat,  
your organs swell and squeeze out their tune on the widest stage,  
your very bone marrow writhes in a teeming dance of your own  
decomposition. Cliff sand and wave whirl in the flood  
seal eel and seagull dip and dive in the molecular maze  
salt blood and seawater tumble under the churning surf  
enfold entangle entwine exchange their atoms unfurl unwind  
all to the same inexorable drum that turns the stars in the sky  
turns your audience into yourself turns yourself inside  
out. You are already gone. Whatever you were. Whatever we are.

6

With things you used to touch  
I hang the tree across the river.  
Most often I think of you now:  
I dream, I don't remember, we talk.  
I hang there your hair your face  
larynx lips and bowels, silverware,  
skillet, the air clanking awake.  
There thread eye of needle,  
dawn, burn down the house  
in sheets of fire rising, birds  
flying out of the mirror-bright  
light all day, and that night  
too turn the tree too  
to carbon and sagging metal.

7

Watching your face worn away  
with tides and seasons, wind rain ice  
the burrowing under of claw fur scale slime  
soft as the inner bark of yellow pine

Watching your face worn away  
from spectral light licking and kissing  
breathing up the leaf's damp ear  
already rotting as they tumble  
: the manifold will in a drop of water

Watching your face worn away  
by the scrape of the population implement,  
bulldozer, whatever you call it, explosion  
progress profit poem expando universe  
turning you inside out fouling your flesh  
sucking you into a baggie tossed away  
with dirty needles bloody towels and specimens

How neat they make the place afterwards  
and smile and wish you well (so too do I)  
and never look twice in my eyes

8

Dream of alchemists, love of living stone, knights  
needle through leather wings breathing fire.  
The dragon of the west, the mere dragon, *axolotl*,  
stores wax in his tail, burns himself back into life.

One and many dance in the outside scale.  
I weigh the measure of mincing steps  
Fiddle under the roof boiling the soup  
A small room of my own making, lizard  
Inside his skin, windows wet with steam  
Raising the roof an inch, making it light.

Thinking of trolls crickets skullcaps and candlesticks  
golden scales of light peeling out of the sky an old man  
under the hill feeding his pot pinches of flesh breath  
of sacred music lightening the dark heavy lump on his  
shoulders learning to live with bald head and slack lips.

8

Let's watch the last cancer commercial  
Let's watch the future eat the past  
Let's watch the final Ishi installed in the museum  
Let's watch the last emperor of China fade  
Let's watch the waters darken and burn the slick  
rich hues of sun set into an oily sea  
Let's watch the live oak into plywood grown  
Let's watch the air fill up for the last time space  
with insane dwelling sick breath and pus like that  
Let's watch the internal combustion end  
Let's watch now let go its toe hold  
Let's watch the clumsy lovers throttle each other  
Let's watch wind shiver the white fir  
Let's watch the moonlight drip into nothingness  
Let's watch the cricket's meter run into the red  
Let's watch the current fail, lights go out all over  
Let's watch the moth owl mother the darkness  
Let's watch the seven year cicada pop his skin  
Let's watch the nighwatch watch the watchmaker  
watch and never again watch that old stuff over again

from Hunger Weather 1959-1975