

FLOCK BOOK

poems

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For my flock: My parents. Ryan & V.

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Poems from this manuscript have appeared in the following publications, sometimes in slightly different versions, or under alternate titles:

<i>Barrow Street</i>	"Love Poem (Marrow)"
<i>Bellingham Review</i>	"Recipe"
<i>Columbia: A Journal of Literature and Art</i>	"Field's Chromatography"
<i>Court Green</i>	"Dream In a Time of War"
<i>Forklift, Ohio</i>	"Prodigal"
<i>Fourteen Hills</i>	"New Year's Eve, with Fever"
<i>Indiana Review</i>	"The Bathing Machine"
	"The Ostriches Take a Human Child"
<i>The Tampa Review</i>	"Lullaby for the Buffalypso"
<i>Metamorphoses</i> (an art book by Grant Hanna)	"Io, Tethered"
<i>Michigan Quarterly Review</i>	"Sestina to Undo the Little Albert Experiment"
<i>Mid-American Review</i>	"The Body Near Paintings"
"New Hampshire Poet Showcase"	"Forecast"
<i>Prairie Schooner</i>	"Ekphrastics"
	"Love Poem (in a False Tense)"
<i>Salt Hill</i>	"Ducdame, Ducdame"
	"Instructions to the Painter of Our Family Portrait"
<i>Tuesday; An Art Project</i>	from "Phobia Ladder"
	"Aquaphobia"
	"Cenophobia"
<i>32 Poems</i>	"The Gardens of Ninfa"

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FLOCK BOOK: a record of sheep or cattle, which includes information about parentage, pedigree, ownership, births, transfers, and deaths.

THE FIRST BIOME

Here the soil is human:
jutting with beets, potatoes, turnips—

like elbows and knees of a rowdy crowd.

The people are clean
despite their peasant clothes. They hold their pale hands
to the sun and say *toil* *time* *hardship*.

Then slide shows of beet stains pass across their palms.

THE BATHING MACHINE

It made a country of women.

On the other side of the modest
contraptions, makeshift wooden changing rooms
wheeled out into shallows, they emerged

fleshy as sea lions on banks of rock, a frank display
under just the sun, hot as the eyelid
of one asleep and wading in a bawdy dream.

If a flap of bathing costume cleaved
to the wrong fork of a figure
it would be known only by the fish with bodies

taut as men's calves accidental under tables.
The plan was quarantine, of course, and yet
it assembled the most alluring archipelago—

sirens who'd hardly need to sing
the ships to them, a string of warm points
just off shore. Still what woman

here would summon wrecks
to splinter a seascape for now all hers—
or savor a graveyard of drowned men

in the waves, pulled uselessly under by desire.

**(ELLIS BELL IS EMILY BRONTE.)
(ACTON BELL IS ANNE BRONTE.)
(CURRER BELL IS CHARLOTTE BRONTE.)**

The suitors come hoping
our hands are white, and suppose
our knuckles are inked black, the house teased

by the skeletal breeze of quills—
so the goose-bumps raise on their arms.
The suitors come hoping

and for them we unfurl hushed anagrams—
(Bronte: *be torn*
riot us: Suitor: trio us)

but cannot stay still long enough. Restless, we
circle the perimeters of rooms
to find their acrostic meaning—leave

at the center the vases and tea sets,
the suitors' chalk bones
in their wing-back chairs. We hear

the Bells, industrious brothers, bellowing
our six-lunged solitude until we catch
its breath again. After all, all lives are trade.

A goose yields ten to twelve good quills—
plucked and sorted, put in hot sand to dry,
to harden in acids or alum. With two of us

to fall ill early and calculating
all three mortal, we will, between us,
yield some finite quantity of words.

THE SYNCHRONIZED DIVERS

To the side
of each
body: a body
like a novocained lip.

Arms raised
as if bound
to a headboard.
The breath

of both:
Flemish snow,
the outfield,
a watchery thick as briar.