

# FISHER

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Black  
Lawrence  
Press

*for J*

(1953–1991)

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*Your omnivorous soul...*  
*Your soul that's bird, fish, beast, man, woman,*  
*Your soul the two where there are two,*  
*Your soul the one that's two where two are one.*  
~Álvaro de Campos

*"Once, / I almost died for grief, because of you," Orpheus complains.*  
*"I ate nothing and drank no water. / I lost thirty pounds."*  
*"You look fine," Eurydice replies;*  
*"I gained them back," quips Orpheus.*  
~V. R. Lang, *Fire Exit*

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## Fisher

I understood that in the time it took to tie one mayfly I could open the fridge and remove the rainbow he caught the week before, fire up the grill, cook the fish, and eat it alone on our deck, with thyme and butter.

That when the fly was finished, uncannily real, freakishly swattable, another needed tying because the concentration it took was so lovely (and the mayflies themselves so elegant) the task demanded repeating.

I understood that his silhouette bent over light was precious, and the resolve he needed to wade the current, flick the wrist, flick it again until I dreamt of him up to his thighs in river, was formidable and ripe with faith.

And I understood that the man I loved thrived deep inside the fisher man in the swirling cold, the tidal stream, and for one moment away from the world and its demons, I could almost touch him.

Still, I left the quiet of his dying, where he glowed bright with purpose, and drove madly alone down the Hudson before he had a chance to bait his hook with mayflies, tree frogs, bloodsuckers.

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# Radical

What do I know of a band named *Bomb*  
or an armed hitchhiker on Rt. 9?

Form often follows substance or else  
it holds it up to a light that flickers

when you tap it. Stop tapping, okay?  
You look nothing like my father, who died

last April, although he's formless now  
as jello or paint or war, a holy

mass of arteries and calcified chakras.  
I've got a few tricks (smokes or

mirrors) up the sleeve of this shifty coat  
of arms we live beneath: our *film de guerre*.

Of all the masked faces I've seen, yours  
takes the trophy for night maneuvers

now that you're lobbing potatoes (I say)  
or tomatoes (you say), trading salvation

for love. Pick a savior. Can't? I could never  
sleep with a terrorist. I'd rather hike

the entire length of the Hudson or skip  
baths like they did in the old days. Still

there's something gorgeous in your minefield.  
I adore the way your face explodes in fractals.

## Chelsea/Suicide

In every myth there is a secret. Like the time I went looking for my childhood around the next bend in the Palisades and missed it, or the time teeth were discovered in my favorite uncle's yard and he disclaimed ownership and sang falsettos.

I went to a meeting on 28th Street. The guy next to me had eyes exactly like yours, corpuscles hardening inside blue irises. He stood too close when he told me I would die if I didn't ease up on myself. I thought he was right but I wanted him to step back so I didn't have to see inside his liver, which was sodden, like mine, with tinges of red, white, and rosé.

He talked to himself in the middle of the room, the way he would talk to anyone who used hyperbole. He said: *I tried suicide but it didn't work*. When he stuck out his hand I shook it.

I walked with him down 8th and we parted at 21st. I thought of all the times I'd dozed in my car near the river, how cops would come to my window and tap, telling me it wasn't safe for a woman in the middle of the day in a car by the river in a world like this one.

Now there's snow in Chelsea and my soul leaps in something I've heard described as bliss. You're never far in winter, I realize, and here is the secret: If you'd lived you'd be asleep beside me now, bent around me like an aura, keeping me safer than I ever thought I had the right to be.

## Beginning with Third Degree Burns, Ending with a Broken Neck

I dreamt the length of a fevered river:  
Cuyahoga, Opalescent, Mazon Creek.

Sometimes I felt the way a heart feels.  
I confused Yeats with Keats. (No

violence intended.) I'm often a liar  
when falling through thin air.

## 13 Auras for a Migraine

One travels clockwise, harboring knives.

One holds a sickle.

In a glass atop a bomb, one shatters mind.

Holy David Byrne, you say.

(The head is never silent.)

The left side of the brain tolls, whirling longitude.

The right side is a cliff of mud.

Along the horizon: zigging steam shovels.

Up close: zagging zebras.

One makes a nest in the eye.

One shits along the cortex.

At noon, hemispheres cast shadows in opposite directions.

Creatures on the equator fall, murdered by sun.

## Croton-on-Hudson

You're alive not unhappily although that smirk tells me you're cracking near the reservoir. You're sexy in mist so deep snakes journey and we can't see them. I'm peeled to skin and sultry in humidity—it's so hot, love, you can't endure it, and I'm baffled but stronger than you, ready to grip the string of insanity and blow the lid off everything that begins with the word sex. I'm not worried about my bare feet (*snakes!*) or my bare breasts (*cops!*). Everything I fear is at the end of your line—catfish, bass, creatures that suck the bottoms of lakes and can't see us on shore in the cool dim in the decade of your suicide.

# Infidel

Don't pretend you've got a corner on grave idols  
or craven images. It's not your skin that succors,

it's the sneaky way your eyes crawl around  
my Überfrau, like the orange silk or surreal feel

of transcendental sums giving in to gravity  
or infection or the ingenious revolutionary—

our ten toes lying in a grave together, skin to skin.  
Tell the Queen you wish to play with me and I bet

she'll vet you. I can't figure out the meaning  
of what some call playing in the dark (what,

yin?) or whistling low because of pseudonyms  
you've named yourself after. Now I nudge

junipers as they gnarl and ignore me, aka  
you. The way we pretend to know the meaning

of stuff. The painstaking pain of it: One Missoula  
two Missoula. Throw yourself beneath a train.

This is the undisclosed story of an infidel  
in the throes of her soul's infidelity. How she

wants all these stanzas to herself, doe-eyed  
and bra be gone, how she threw her pink

spats and saddle shoes onto the toes of any old  
beautiful believer she could find. Or, what

are the chances our ten toes will lie together  
under a bed of petunias someday, playing footsies?