

SHARING SPACES AND OTHER POEMS

Gabriela Lee

SHARING SPACES

Isn't it interesting when a poet says that he is preoccupied with something? "I am preoccupied with time."

"I am studying space, the birth of distant stars."

"I think about connections all the time."

Well -- I am preoccupied with the roast beef in the oven, slowly cooking to a perfect shine.

I pretend that I am listening to a man speak about the war in Iraq, in Palestine, in Afghanistan -- places that have given birth to ruins, civilizations.

I am occupied with the blood and bones of another life, of a spoken work, of a word yet unspoken. I stroke my belly and listen to two hearts beating.

I am preoccupied with this occupation of living.

In this distance: an airplane takes off, words on a screen, the death of another star. Whole galaxies live and die.

The roast beef is almost running out of time. Soon, he will come home. We will sit down. Eat. This is my occupation: this devouring of a world.

RETRANCHER

Always this need to prune what has become unruly, untidy
vines in the garden threatening to overrun the petunias.

Not that they aren't lovely, all green and winding like some serpentine
earth goddess wild child whose name we have buried under earth under sky.

But really, how can one sit through breakfast without thinking of sex
while watching vines intertwine like lady fingers across the wall?

Horizontal now and they become sheets mossy messy let's tangle
entangled where endings and beginning become a Gordian knot

a riddle, a tale told in a stroke of a blade, a rake cutting through the green green
grass. Better to chop it up, parcel it up into neat little boxes ready for burning:

becoming cordwood, driftwood, a stack of firewood trapped without a grasp, waiting
for the flame that cleanses the dead, that consumes, that finally mingles with air.

NUDES

I am jealous of people who can take their clothes
off. How liberating it must be, to become unfettered

from the jailhouse of buttons, zippers masquerading
as locks without keys. I mean, let your hair down

there, peering out, child-like, a dark little secret
between flesh, the shadowed parts of your play.

Each strand contains what we could never find,
could never name. “Who are you?” we would ask

bending down to speak to a stray patch on someone’s arm
or thigh, crouching down to confront that junction

between two legs. Let me discover your secrets.
Give me the key. Allow me to enter.