

Bread::Circus

*“Eu quis cantar uma canção iluminada de sol
Soltei os panos sobre os mastros no ar
Soltei os tigres e os leões nos quintais
Mas as pessoas na sala de jantar
São ocupadas em nascer e morrer
Mandei fazer de puro aço luminoso um punhal
Para matar o meu amor e matei
Às cinco horas na avenida central
Mas as pessoas da sala de jantar
São ocupadas em nascer e morrer...”*

—Os Mutantes, “Panis Et Circenses”

(Circus.)

In the end it was simple. Moving down
the avenue with the knife in my hand, I felt
stronger, having nearly overcome
forever the dreams in which I have to
stop or hurt someone’s body with my body
and find that my body— that my body
no longer works.

Moving down the avenue
with the knife in my hand, I remember
it must have been a cool day. The trees were cool
and her face was cool and the rest of her.
I myself was cool. And the lilies and bells.

She said “Sweetness”
and I said “Sweetness”
and she said “What are you doing?”
and I said “What are you doing?”
and she said “Stop”
and I said “Stop” and finally I said
something else and that settled it

and we got in the car.

(Bread.)

The way it broke was almost scripted, taking up into itself the broth, sweet broth—
holding your fingers around it

like a sacrament
as though you had a choice

you brought it up to your mouth
and put your teeth down in it and dug a hole.

(Circus.)

Everyone or nearly
was there— everyone

the one-

armed lady,

the flying trapeze itself

spreading arms over head
in preparation.

The car hiccups out comes
white faces

a proliferation of
porcelain faces
chinadoll faces
swollen mouths

black harlequin eyes

a picture keeps returning with the heady barn-smell

a picture

turns corners
not so easily forgotten

as she kept—

as she kept turning corners

her face was cool
and the trees where we hung the bells

she brought it up

the first time
to her mouth
this is erasure
louder than words
this alarm:

said

said this is not a kind of silence

What have I done.

(Living Room.)

What I have done.

in the tent we stayed

we could not see the sky

it was just as well

(Bread.)

I said: just this: *I will be
here when you return.*

And you will be golden

as sunrise, strong

as a lion. (And the candy coins
that were her eyes blinked back at me).

All things good (I said)

that I have brought

*this tempest—if you can tell me the difference
between love and this black longing.*

*The difference when you rise
and leave this bed.*

(Living Room.)

Your eyes
are bread to me,
your tongue a frantic circus.

If I could, if I hadn't already chosen,
I would drown you—

that I might bring you up
again and breathe in life,

hot and elemental,

to put my breath into your bright silence,
into the sails, breathe

into you a lion, lions, all
of the animals. But your mouth—so
full.

I let them out again. The animals. I let
them out. I dusted my hands
in flour. I rubbed
my hands
with chalk.

I marked the shape
on the ground, wrote in the eyes.

I chose my mark and cut.