

*wabi-sabi*: aesthetics of imperfection

last time i laid on carpet you scraped your knees  
coming my clitoris a friction burn  
now my skirt is bunched over my waist  
a lonely climax glasses a-kilter  
writing hand cramped from effort

lately her turbulence intruded me  
while i imagine myself a self-regulating  
unit much like a fridge  
set to a thermostat  
someone left the door open  
my compressor can't keep up and water  
leaks onto the floor

*slippery* ! her warning echoed  
several rocks ahead rainy beaches of her gulf island  
so temperate yet lush with fern and lichen  
she races to him blood thick  
in her eardrums deaf to her own alarm  
i wouldn't lose sight of her  
bruised knees and sprained ankles

*masochist after all* you declare  
undressing my battered legs  
traced the vertical scar on my left  
arm your favourite amongst all my wounds  
from your nightstand  
your girlfriend beams beatific in her gilded frame  
saint atop altar her radiance  
transfixes me your belt  
breaks my skin

all his edges soften in a rare  
west coast sun the three of us  
laze like lizards water striders mate  
in a golden lagoon  
her head on his opened thigh  
their entwined fingers roam  
weathered bark and withered roots  
*this is wabi-sabi* he says  
kissing her crow's feet

the myth about them goes: a lifetime of joy  
but in sadness the eyes shutter  
along the same lines  
bliss or suffering in a face  
impossible to tell  
the glacier melted long ago

on our way home

inevitably when you call  
both of us are out in the world  
your bicycle whirls through neon taipei  
tongue & legs loose after a couple high balls  
for you i watch traffic anxiously  
your head bare since leaving toronto  
starry street signs vertiginous skyline  
i could reach & ring your bell

it's daytime on my small hill  
of wild apple & mauve sumac  
sunscreen in my eyes monarch butterflies  
drink their milkweed  
lungs teem with sweat  
through the small screen i wonder  
if you see tenderness  
like a toothache

you crave pastries at night  
take me to your 7-eleven  
pineapple tart waffle ice cream  
papaya milk hawthorne candy  
neat onigiri by the tea eggs  
i tease you for your carton of OJ  
how resolutely north american  
in this tropical paradise

you wind up a quiet alley  
my ankles swim in soybean field  
leaves deep aquamarine  
caress my shins  
we admire a black cat's eyes  
liquid topaz  
an altar of smoking incense  
peaches & rice wine  
almost home

the house is asleep you drop  
to a whisper the key catches  
just a bit  
the long mirror beside your bed  
yes i could kneel to you here

in my kitchen full of light  
i press my mouth to the faucet & drink

the colleague up close

his enthusiastic ablutions  
a snuffle, two short snorts  
trill of gargles and spits  
take me back to amman during ramadan  
where i learned that piety  
could be sexy

the bathtub is small  
he tells me *you're surprisingly tall*  
*up close*  
soap suds in his body hair  
like spume on seaweed  
i taste grit and salt  
he immerses me i hold my breath

underwater i hear  
his nostalgia for the coast  
adriatic ? tofino ?  
the confusion of childhood split  
by migration the home country cut  
in seven his laughter ripples  
*i wanted to be a soldier*  
*then a philosopher*  
*now i mend bodies but not souls*

he pulls my head out of water  
fleeting holiness  
fills my chest's hollow  
this virus will not kill  
either of us  
we still have much future to waste

## Elegy for the Queen of Hearts

Alas, the certainty of violence  
& sad endings    seeded from Edenic promise:  
                    summer swims & water flights  
A shallow lake's bound to be murky  
Seasonable heat    fish float  
on their bellies  
Spend long enough in the sun & breeze  
all trace of moisture    vanishes

*When what shouldn't ever happen  
is happening*    Velvet voices play  
from a tape recorder    Antiquated rustle  
nude silk of her nightgown  
Bare knees groan  
                    on carpet soft as moss  
Is it still an act            of killing ?  
You haven't seen the inside of her arm

Silver birches long and thin  
In autumn canopy and forest floor  
become synonymous  
Ecology a daylong russet    sunset  
It becomes pointless to discuss  
up and down  
right or wrong  
You can never tell by looking