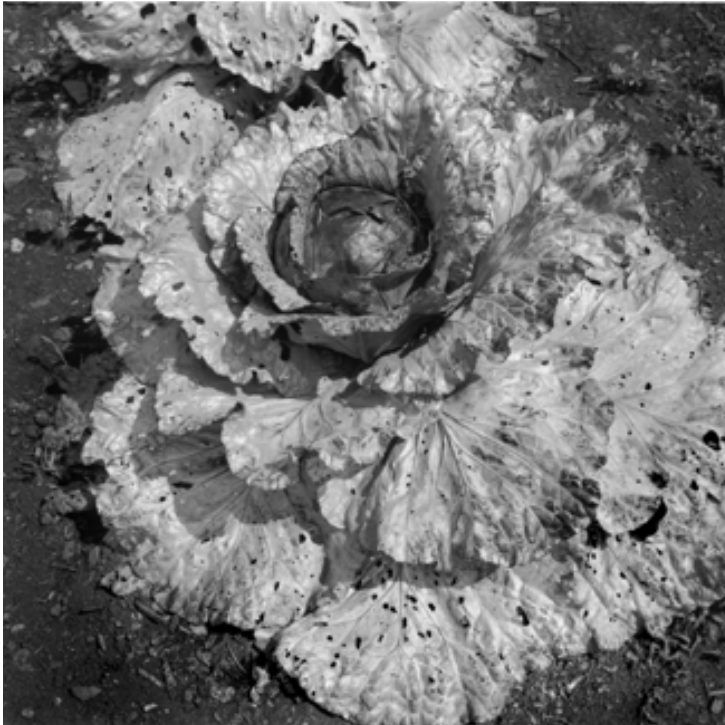


SONGLINES

A map, a harbor, and then a horizon,
I broke one window after another until
the light was cut by an edge. Now I'm alone
in silence, which profiteers call sadness,
but of course it's not. It's profound
and passionate, a hand coming down
on a wooden table and the table cracking
from anger at cocktail umbrellas, doom,
and thunderstorms. The roof beams
grow older, and weaken while the mind
pushes out against them. The mind
lashes out and throws peanuts at the painful
body, wild in its cage of time. Between
the soap boxer's parallax and the mime's
gentle syntax is a way to tell the tired people
who I hold dear, who follow the sun,
my thoughts on anguish, mirrored windows,
and the possibility of a new village
built entirely by unconscious acts.





DARK ECOLOGY

Two alabaster hands close one book
as a dying animal drags itself out of another.
The gesture of the hands is a simple benediction
that means grateful to learn language and sing.
The animal is the awareness of dust and decay.
Modern parables composed in half-light
are always terrifying. A popular one tells
of a retired scholar's first play's first performance
cut short by a powerful earthquake.
Another relates the tragedy of a choir
that escapes from a boarding school, only to be
slaughtered by a larger choir that has escaped
from a more prestigious boarding school.
How many innocent bodies have climbed out
on the limb of romance, over freedom's abyss,
only to have it break? The number must
approach a hunter's ideal. As the sun devotes
itself to uncertain lives, morning will paint
yonder hills the colors of a convalescing earth.

EXTERIOR

I smile at the bleached shirts in summer light.
I marvel at the fusion of forests and stones.
Passing by offices full of bottled water,
I imagine I'm looked at like a quiz show
while I gaze up at the thin row of sky
wherein a lone gull makes its way through
a hellish correlation. All streets lead to this one,
where everybody wants to be or at least
wants to have been, where the last decade
has faded from memory like it never happened
and the clocks move with great urgency
and reflect fireplaces and plowed fields
and helicopters full of nervous laughter.
Meanwhile, the temperature quickly rises.
The presence of a tiny bell, even idle
in a small watch, seems a threat as work's
intervals and conventions disclose nothing
of the galaxies of fearless lovers who shiver
in the broom closets of such drab buildings.





THE GARDEN

Whatever my shortcomings, above all
I lack an emotional habeas corpus
in the pawnshop of my desire, where my body
is full of air or is a cloud or is harnessed
to a balloon or hides behind an imperial screen.
The garden is a sanctuary for all the wrong
reasons. Before the big stone buildings
of cities were built to give context to production
and its mess, circumstances were kept
private until the world sent arrows
and monsters to receive and interpret
the scenery of progress. Discipline
and forbearance led to this enclosed pleasure.
Pandemonium and guilt hang their fruits
on my dream's prismatic trees. Embers endure.
Music lends new gladness to the sleeping sky.
When I wake up I'll create smoke of a very
specific color from the fuel of everything
I have, and trade reason for oblivion.

PHRENSY

The new market is being built here,
atop the old one. Salvage is a major player.
It never stops. I want to give the past away
but I need more time to diagram a story
of someone convicted after being caught
by the same fear that they first locked up.
It is an architectural fable that begins
with a thousand sleepers together waking
early to make the morning news, and ends
in poverty. There was no reprobation
to dictate that sort of beauty before now,
just a single object, lonely as an epigraph.
It fills the space something disappeared from,
to prove the nature of its disappearance.
The object has been stolen, wagered,
loaned, bought, traded, and given away
as a wedding present. Now the horizon
destroys itself as I replicate a fist again and
again and again in the palm of my hand.

