

A House Whose Roof is Taken

A house whose roof is taken, without
so much as an outward wall to lean against.
In thin and seen-through frame, lonely---the winds
of prairie plains go in between its hallowed stance. And yet,
it does not fall.

A remnant; vertical but no foundation to speak of---
a threading of lumber in breaking cement---clinging
to what ground it has. And these able bits hold. (How,
when so un-held? In this kind of wind.) – Just yarn
from a funny looking thing, abandoned knit-work;
only makings for a scarf to begin with. Oh House. *Hold*

... when comes a tornado, a house remembers.

What *keeps* this house that shakes forever;
incomplete, never founded, nor,
uprooted in the wind? What keeps it here?
What would its prayers sound like?
“Join me with the ground---found me in the earth.
Let my insides blow away from me, but let me stay,
Let me have a home in the ground.

I have no windows to be shut. Take anything, but give me roots.
What use are windows without roots? Let the wind travel through me.
Take all I have. But finish me. Bury my feet. I'm hanging by nails;
I was not meant to waver so. Sink me low in the soil, as the trees are.
I'll grow leaves if asked. Finish me. Let me be a house.”

Un-counting Autumns

Wonder how many more autumns
I'll view from in here, see in your body.

The variance of your redness,
like sunset and dawn interspersed,

Perfectly encapsulated, framed
by our kitchen over the sink.

Half empty bottles of wine and brown
plastic medicine pill-jars wait on shelves.

Held up to the light in a transparent mug,
this Russian tea, red, and rich as coffee,
matches the autumn in your branches.

They're tearing down adjacent houses,
"tear-downs" they're called, cottage homes,
too quaint and too old for development
(get out the renters).

In the big room, on an old pine piano bench,
a lopsided pumpkin rests, next to two cacti
and a box-phonograph.

And,

as Eliot reads into a Caedmon microphone
in 1955---The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock;
as workers doze a clear view of the next street,
I fall into a chair patterned with stars, guided
in dreamless sleep.

A Losing Hand

Perhaps they saw their chances clearly,
felt futility in breaking their backs
to be esteemed "Negro"; saw no real
promise, with dignity come in one color.

I can see my great-grandfather, sitting
down his family for a supper he'd earned
building roads throughout the state. "Now,
there's plenty good workin' men--black,

white and red. And then, you've got a nigger."
Grandpa paved a little at a time, *his* road,
and didn't understand how a man could
withdraw(withhold)himself, fold in effort.

Content, in his own fought-for progress,
that in America, with a combination
of fierce desire and hard work, there's
no such thing as a losing hand.

And Here I Find an Earthly Mold

And here I find an earthly mold,
however ancient--timeless, doubtless.
I pull it up, my cupped hands full,
its substance nurturing, original,
a part of *always*, uniting now with then
and henceforth. All prophecy relenting,
bent low, placing its forehead in this
earthen end, this hiding place of God
and what we thought was lost.

I bury my face in the dirt of folk
who've readied themselves to some content;
depleted mortal wanderlust enough to die,
become dirt, and begin a timely, sober undertaking--
all consciousness immediate and reliable,
without delusions of separation, the soil
their body, and flesh indistinct.