

exercises in telepathy

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This whole thing became a problem
When I was hanging up my coat at 4 years of age
Mom and Grandma sitting in tendrils of smoke in the
kitchen
It struck the downside of my head
"Why am I not George Washington?"
Which translates to "why am I in here all alone?"
I drop my coat, pick it back up, drop it again
Mom asks "you okay, bud?"
I say "Yeahhhh"

What then?
Sheer vertigo on the George Washington Problem
Puberty comes and I begin to think if I laid my head on the
chest
Of another boy, maybe then I could tune myself to listen to
his mind
Which deranges me by night and day into nothing, syrupy
half-dark
And radiohead, and I never did find a way to tune into the
thoughts
Of a boy in my history class, no matter how much I looked
at the clock
And back at him, hoping I'd catch him looking too

I have allowed myself to believe I got close more than
once, as a treat
But no more than twice

In a motel room past Kennedy, I was with a man twice my
age
Who had an exuberant arrested development and child's
love
For a god whose face I have seen and found to be only
empty space
The kind you see between the stars on an empty county
road
But in the motel room, I thought I could hear him thinking
But I don't know if I can tell you what except that he loved
me
Or at least he believed he did
And I can tell you that much to my frustration and
disappointment
Even when these blonde hairs sprout on my upper lip
And I've given my head a shear like this
I will always be his girl

Another time, nearer in time and space
But still reflected in the back of my ear like in a mirror
dimly
There was someone I held and I felt her sorrow
A grand oceanic lacrimosa, great phthalo green
And how I longed to take it from her, to tuck it behind my
ear
Or under the soles of my boots
In some hidden place she would never have to see it again
But no, the architects of our making couldn't allow that
To rip away the mortal veil of fear in the vainglorious hope
To deprive someone I loved of her bending woe

A skunk walks across the street, something is spooking him
I fear for his life in solidarity, I pray to the blank space of
god
That he'll be okay. No resolution in the spring night

There is another, a young man across the river

Who reads his dirty paperbacks in a red apartment
Whose life's work is to reanimate
The director of dirty pictures whose fist
Was clenched in the moment of birth.
He has no idea who Mao is but
I would give him my heart in a paper bag
To avoid staining his carpet
I have become acquainted with his musculature
How it gives up the ghosts when I kiss him on the cheek
And while I wonder about what he thinks about
Those old paperbacks or what pissed him off so bad
Or the content of the dreams he smokes weed to keep
away
The only thought I can divine is that
He won't be happy if I tell him I love him

So I am stuck in a lonely head pushed out of my mother's
waters
And I will
Walk east till there is no more east to walk
And not reveal my name until
On a dark county road, somebody tells me what it is.