

10 POEMS BY ANNIE BLAKE

BIRDS OF SATAN

*/ so i made peace with the three pointed star / and on the crucifix / i realized
that the cross had penetrated roundly into the ground and its roots wrinkled and inked like soot /
so from the water / i unhooked my arms and legs and disembarked / opened
the bark of the tree and my feet out of the trapdoor / prints and blood and knee deep
in the mud /*

*/ my capitalist man had become a fat-bellied husband / dried up wives like twiggy sticks /
in old-fashioned clothes and sail-veiled hair like my old grandmother / so my husband
drove me in a taxi / our children in the back / i told him i saw him as he was young /
coming out of my mother's cupboard / where it was dark and all her old scraps / his own
mother fed him pureed food / my father found jars of them in my own belly / for i was
implicated / and so her placenta / to placate /
/ they told me / i can't accept that from you / so don't expect that from me / when i grew
angry / he said / why do you sabotage everything / and i said / please don't speak
if you don't understand what you're saying /
/ i told the girl to put her seat belt on but she wouldn't listen / tried to gloss her lips /
gave her love from the glove of my hand / but she spoke up / all you do is wear love over
your skin / suggestive satan and stop ignoring the record that he plays round and round /
/ then i saw him from afar / when night dispels i become black pixie dust / and i caught
his wings / webs made from flies and lies as thin as their legs /
/ because i was raised by moral climbers / halothane and hypnosis / thirsty chicken
in her womb and sitting behind them in the pew / the man who told me there was nothing
to be sad about because my parents loved me left the priesthood and married /
/ my husband was hanging off a hook behind my bedroom door / dressing gown for when
i hear my child cry in her sleep / his eyes were open and the door closed so he could
reveal himself to me /
/ so we took the girl out because we had permission / parents who teach their children
denialism should know that they will scapegoat out of the window / and we will never
look inside ourselves / but as i ran through the orchestra and the play / my orchestration
and my child / silent screaming through their mothers and fathers and one face / a narrow
prison or psychiatric hospital window / unite like ammunition / so i locked myself with a
key / watched as the spot fires flew / so i threw out the gun and closeted the glass /
my wooden jigsaw man and my flaws / flight and light like a kite /*

CHLOE

/ three women in a room / curtains flap like the hem of a dress and a red flag in the wind / and i recognize all of them / the one rocking on her chair / the one who arches her back like a boat and returns her leg from the dead like a phallus / her face / mascara river / theatre lights / coffee and cigarette smoke / the one who dyes her hair black and at the vanity unit weaves her strands / and how this cowboy hands me his boat /

/ my son will get me back one of these days / will learn to convert all my foreign scribbles / i let him cry on my shoulder and put my shoulder to the wheel /

/ and so i give up god / the son and the holy ghost / used my fingers to grope through the walls of my house and when the twi- and thrice-light failed / for the eyes can only observe and read / / my husband sent me a letter / it was all about the past of our house / he told me someone / long ago / used to live there and he wanted to see me again / so i turned the clock to the wall and put our childhood beds together / stopped wearing blazers / big black boots and silver buttons / / he smoked less than his usual cigarettes / and even though he took off his work shoes in our house he stayed human and didn't float away / in bold asian writing he wrote / after you riddle all of me / you have exorcised everyone else around you / so that night when i re-packed my bag / i chose one without compartments / for i gave up makeup and piles of the same regular clothes / and i lay in my bed / and when he whispered / i need to talk to you / i said / tomorrow / he said / why don't you love me / i said / tomorrow / we'll talk /

/ so i checked all our children / why let maids clean my house when all they do is steal my wedding ring / i kept wiping my body / blood / as soft and as thick / sliced piles of edible mushrooms / so i boiled water in an iron kettle and bathed chloe /

/ when i woke up in the boat / a window in the ceiling / scene after scene of blue skies and palm island beaches / pains started clicking over like the overripe rapping of a train /

/ when my daughter told me her fish were starting to die / so i stopped looking into the water / my father instructed the doctors not to tell his mother she was dying / my husband still gets angry when i drop something and make a crashing noise / his fat father / could magically turn money into whiskey and a hissy fist / i say / you're panicking / i don't like it / he says / we've wasted a whole bloody day / why don't you want to be with me /

/ and when the paramedic arrived / he took off our jacket and rinsed it in the sink / then we thought of my husband when he was a boy / suicides are murders / our unconscious motivations / of those who were once alive and swore black and blue by the olive / their rope arms cleating our necks / surrendering and the resurrection / dying in the lying bed / birthing and sex noises / / one and the same thing /

THE PILGRIMAGE

—for luzchlahn

/ to meet him / for whenever he is snide / and my expurgation / and to meet him half-way / god's
belly was an aboriginal cave / and as i emerged / my forearms and knees / kneading
the dirt for a nest must be conjoined / i'm christ's crazy crown /
/ when i repeat by blood / but i discovered how to reap / for even dry grass can furnish
more light than web / my winter coat licking the dirt / my snarled hair / and to let the sun stick
color to the cool branches splayed like fingers in the sky /
/ for she has a cold sore / her jaw that bites in my head / for her past doesn't want to make green
with me / and disheveled / for there are times i do not believe in who i am becoming / for my
thoughts and to make amends / are like root-roads /
/ and under the slough ground / a chary burning / so i blew ruah into the lead /
and so to warm and nestle my fire / for the law was to never let it sigh or smoke /
and to breathe through each eucalyptus leaf / water-laden and whenever i'm hot in a fever /
intuition and twigs / and so i kept walking / a thread and silver legs / needles for sewing /

SO WHEN I WAS YOUNG MY DAD MADE ME PROMISE NEVER TO DIVE IN DEEP WATER

—for luzchlahn

/ and when i went surfing / he told me it was better to never forage for the dead /
there was a long shadow / so i paddled into shallow water / where my dad was waiting for me /
for my father's solidarity gave me sovereignty / for he always thought the shallows
made us innocuous / but when he told me he got bitten / but i only found a patch
of blood in the sea /

/ so the shark became two vicious dogs / fur matted and vernix caseosa / for the sea's mouth
gasps / cardinal red and is full of rain / and my echo and two men came / his momma
offered him a cigarette and took all his dollar bills / thick as thieves' teeth and white as keys /
and he used his midwife fingers to play a harmonious tune / her fleshy hand and his money like a
book / so they said they must have drifted far away / for i remembered
them at the beach a long time ago / when they bit my dog and all i could do was hang
from my mother / some fathers are too embellished to step on the scaffold and let
themselves drown /

/ but the rabbit will scream if you skin it alive / and my daughter lifted it / her negligible
utterance from under the sea / because she has seen how bodies obtrude and i couldn't raise my
men from the dead / sulfur dioxide and methane and the haunt of too much sun /
so when i was a stillborn / for the dark whale's hunt will cull and suckle the young /
and his father laid out his son to generate the bridge / stretched arms and legs / sawn off trees /
the tracks from the bones of his back / and i remember how the snow sprays off when the rattle
of his death comes /

/ so in the morning / his first shaft of light / and i could see the body and i dove deep /
the shadow carried me and my child was saved /

THE BLACK GUN'S HAND

—for luzchlahn

/ her husband would never let her out of the house / but to have an affair with the priest /
and he wears a dress during the benediction / so i banned my child from writing trashy emails but
i let her go to parties / he came into my house / shifted all my books
and all my belongings / for my father's demon sometimes bought us cookies and my mother's
bought us clothes / so i provided a book box so my children could read /
and so they have learnt about death and evolution / so my father burnt them and so the eternal
pages were turned / when the child's father was killed / there was a hospital nurse / gave her a
transitional object and taught her how to use a phone / so she asked my father / was it possible to
grow up / without the devil's intervention / and to have a child /
/ so i took her to the orchestra / and harmony in the amphitheater / and the devil shook her down
into the pit / and when he takes your mother away / and so the lawyer intervened /
in her notes / a venn diagram of spirals / a tornado of writing in each one /
and when she watched as slaves fought for money / and as her pages rotated like the propeller of
/ a plane / crash will make death ineluctable / for i recapitulate that only the sick
and the weak can break the chain / and for her message i waited / so i learnt how to intrude and
ask a question / for only *αγαπη* can feed an empty stomach the winter vine
and all his wrath /

SO I ASKED FOR THE STONE GODS FROM THE SKY

—for luzchlahn

/ and i had to rub them until their ashes were on my fingers and my hands / a candle
and a cake of soap / for buddha's hollow belly / a furnace like a shrine / phylacteries are
apotropaic / and tefillin / on my forehead and i tied it around my arm / egyptian children and our
jewish children dead in wheelbarrows during the war /
/ domina rerum / regina coeli / her intercession and how she stood up to walk after her child was
born / for the man by himself / will tie a rope around his neck / so water kept pouring out of my
purse / corpses in ancient egypt / how the body dries and the holy grail / so i waterfalled out for
my children / and gave all my money to them / libation / there is a snake who makes milk / for
my conception / i stood as my old family left in their car in the dark / but i promised to love
whom i married / so in my front garden / a thousand lamps
for the moons were gentle and shaped out of glass / and i carried the jar of osiris / for anubis will
reassemble the stones and return to me my bones / so to open my arms / pentagon coin / and let
them prune each branch / to expound the river that runs a cross /

BLACK SPIDER ON MY KITCHEN WALL

—for luzchlahn

/ as fat as a ticking clock / intricate legs / braids and her bristle brides / tucked in like a soft newborn / she has engraved my body / the watch of my family crest / my mother used to give me tiered chocolate cake / for behind her bed she hid and ate it / but on my wedding / when i tried to eat / fingers as sticky as cobwebs / for my mother told me never to listen to music when my body wanted to move / i was her breathing apparatus / for she could not live without me / so i learnt how to play the pungi myself / but my mother lived in a hole and i her vent / hurt hut and triangular mother / with all my fist / placenta purged / pulled her out and the chandelier string started to swing / the light materialized in increments and this strange world / sometimes mothers make infants / half spider and half crab / my daughter laughed because i was afraid and so she ate it / and she complained of pain in her mouth / so i remembered when my mother used to pinch me because my body didn't build the church / so i took her pincers out of her mouth / o three holy snakes and one from the jungle / circular breathing and music out of the hallway wall / i told my children to run / the camouflage of soldiers in the garden and our acclimatization / / my mother gave of her sacred water / for my body ate the devil / and so i ran into the jungle / my skin yellow and musty and the twine of the tree / bed sores and emaciated / but i was young again / so we crawled out of our sepia eden / for they died there when i was born / / and flayed their skin like scripture / because she lived like she only ever had money for one knitted jumper per year / but lying on her deckchair / too delicate to learn how to swim / dark chic glasses and my lips as red as blood /

AND SO I RETURNED TO MY OWN HOUSE

—for luzchlahn

/ and we opened a door / who on this earth / there is no divine split / the dirt is not
to be divided / for his toes poked the blue of the water / and the pool was dug out of stone /
and when we found the pit of my grave / to make do with what is given / but my mother / i
scattered her body and re-arranged her walls / and used her to climb upon the rock / and blessed
was the ground / so when i went to church / i wore my sunday dress and my coat for dinner / so i
walked through the vestibule / the narrow aisle / and he remembered me and opened the iron gate
/ only with my bare feet did i swim out / and i told him to keep my money / for without interest i
would not take any of him /
/ so i taught her how to care for a woman / lay her long and broken in her bed / a candle
for her sunset melancholia / and the moon for the dark / and when he married me / love is / the
medieval shrine of / souls like innumerable and inexhaustible flames / and i adjusted
the ceiling lamp / for the eye to see too much / her whole body will burn and burn / now dim /
how many times have i menstruated and not been able to swim / but when i woke / the sun had
raised the water /
/ my old mother / but i once did look into a mirror / and thought if only i could trust myself
to leave / and my worth promised me / so i married an over spender / for on wedding days and
birthdays / he thought that fortune would turn their knife like a key / so i buried myself in the
ground / i found the story of jonah and the whale / because i was a secret and coming
to a head / but the dead woman's voice rings on / i was angry for my deflowering / because
marriages without commitment and my originary guilt /
/ so to risk the pricking of the distaff / and so i slept and i slept and saw my ceramic chinese
women / how we spend hours to rouge our smiles so pretty / smoke from my lips
and the battleships fire / for on the sea / when the war cries out for tall paper men /
and his sour milk and belly heavy fish / now and at the hour of my death / crucible fruits and krill
swimming in my feet / their silver till and tails / and the stomach of a whale / o hollow hill /

FOR MEN MUST LEARN THE SOFTNESS OF THE MOON'S WHITE FLESH

—for luzchlahn

/ how the winter churns / my forearm veins / ribbons like red rays / orange moist sun / bliss
of xanadu / for how winter pokes its keen tongue / i have learnt how to hem night's sad edges /
extramural or ruthless city eye / legs protrude / the wooden struts on the peak of the hill / cross
them for contingency and dig them deep / how she breathes in his rhymes and predictable
paradigms / i always want to be in myself / even though you have never felt
what it is to ride through my home roads / crow town / flying monkeys swoop and swoon / trash
can scavengers / debris grounded / sprays like sand on my delectable tongue / but my holy horse
/ toy tin train and their candy wrapper carriages / so i took the wet wood / mother hole / and he
entered the red bull mouth / how she chars and she blackens / factory ash / silent night for on that
day from purgatory / hail mary / mud mother / let your soul fly /

MY NATURAL MIND

'[of women] is a thing you never see on the surface ... it cannot be touched, ...it is a live wire.'—*'Dream Analysis: Notes of the Seminar given in 1928-1930'* by C. G. Jung

'The feminine mind is the earth waiting for the seed.'—*Letters Vol. 1. (March 22, 1935)* by C. G. Jung

/ a black and white sketch / victorian women / in their mourning clothes / their night white faces / moon hanged / fragments of trees / shavings off a pencil / the blunt end of a stick / witches and broomsticks and brutality / for nature must be both / snow white and the witch /

/ so i ticked off my children at night / she / who was asleep / and dead in her eyes / the mandala nritya / were undulating me / my shadow / homo homini lupus and / wolfsschanze and verwerfung / seven white wolves and the walnut tree / i'm not psychic / i saw her eyes / bladed pink / skiff-skin / cut stiff and supple / in whirls like / not of shell / hell spirals like tornado wind / waves pumping from the waist of the sea / and how they lump / my wood / board-body / curved out and now a boat / slapped me against the rock / the wall and not the shore / / because when a woman or a girl pushes out to no avail / the body turns into steam / wrapped in clean sheets / water-boiled / and i leave him wondering his sin in the kitchen / because the crying has ceased / and i stand like sand instead of the door / the floor / all-innocent cast and iconoclast / and the blood is already swept up / / but i still don't plump the dead / but in the injury room / i am a jury / all the files and drawers open and strewn for she gave me the key / combed out all her hair / and i washed all of mine / for i'm sorry his mother stuck a wire in his eye and i stuck in the fir / war-wife and mama mantra / his anima and strife-child / / all mornings and nights / a shroud and dark / when i fly down the stairs / for the first time i walked the line / the woman / again she waits for me / her face and a veil / because violation sucks the young late / when they stole her baby she walked the green mile / offered her my / night watch / my hand and with our fingers we crossed / our blood like metal and salt in our eyes / lifted her vile / unpulled the wool / / black ocean / infinite and forever dress / on a woman is a white cloth covering the table / wash and bright her tresses / to trespass the wolf / his yellow tin teeth / fur like fire / old and wrinkled / inkling of the bark of a tree / that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life / / i lack / therefore i am / the french revolution / fear is pope-palpable and the guillotine balancing / dancing on my head / the dead kneel and chavvah / the proportional portions of the dripping / my dipping-pan / the oread-nymph pitys out of self-pity / cried resin from her fir / so his seed / the earth keels damp and upside down / / but charlotte bronte / her child raison-dried / raisin still / / so i splashed red water to lull to peace / hull is the making space / also the fruit spake our fate / flour snow and the ceiling breaks / dehiscence and evisceration / for he picked up all the fishing boats / clicked them open like pods and / i'm so hell-bent and fell / the arrow and he sling shot me in / / lured water into his hands / wells and my watershed /