

NO.1

How I feel

We pass around human remains.

I hold a person's skull in my hand.

Feel its roundness,

toughness, It's weight

and texture, small pits and dents.

Like a thing hand-made.

Modeled in clay.

Sculpted ivory.

The scientific stuff of facts and supposition float in the air.

While I, cupping my hand atop the crown, marvel at its size, its density.

Compact.

Handled.

And so, so small.

I compare its scale to those of the living-breathing people around me.

There is much mass in flesh and fluids, skin and hair.

Weight and substance.

There is volume in breath...

In life.

And then,

one small piece of rib,

Fragments.

Dust.

A sprinkling

that escapes its plastic entombment remains

caught

in the fold of my open book.

The centerfold.

Bones returned to boxes.

Boxed up.

Were they labeled "fragile"?

Or "handle with care"?

Handle with care.

And we

We did

We all

handled with care

Were they purchased?

Bought? These bones?

Again?

Valued more now

Or less

than when

Covered with flesh

and fluids,

Wrapped in skin, and hair,

and so much more mass,

volume, weight and substance?

Like you, me

With breath and life that register hurt

and feels pain

yet roughly

Handled.

Brutally Rough.

Now though, valued

in different measure.

Handled with care.

Handled with care.

And Fragments and Dust Remains in a crevice.

Rubbing my finger slowly down the inner spine  
I feel the gritty uneven texture of ground bone.

“In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.”

Sister,  
Brother.  
Ancestor

I hesitate to turn the page.

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## NO.2

I am here only  
Because you were  
And are  
Strong.

You cannot know to how many you have gifted.  
Or what your short time represents.

You have issued forth.  
Peopled a Tribe.  
All come from you.

Generations  
that thrive 'longside the void.  
The void of the absented.  
The lost.  
Lost in their thousands.  
Those missing that we yearn for.  
Dismembered branches.  
Limbs, histories  
that aches us still –  
once lovingly held,  
calmed, soothed with kisses.

But You,  
The Eve of our beginning.  
Our source .

The source.  
For your grace, there is  
no apple of contention  
nor serpent poised.  
No Temptation.  
None but you,  
and whether taken in violence  
or given freely,  
Yours is not the shame.  
Yours is not our shame  
Nor sin.

It was your right  
That you claimed.  
You claimed life.  
Stayed. And in so doing,  
In that short time, that life cut down;  
Unbroken.  
You  
Gave  
Life.  
You are our source.  
My source.  
The source.  
Great, great, great grandmothers and mothers,  
Your sons and your daughters.  
Creator.  
Life giver.

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### **NO.3**

What kind o' whip that?  
Is not catgut.  
What that thing eee?

When she holding it up,  
and wrapping it round she hand,  
the thing look stiff like... I don't know what.  
I never see no natural thing look like that.  
Is what?

When she swing the thing  
it drop down heavy like lead  
and drag  
And bust up the skin  
Cut deep into flesh.  
Back open up on the first lick

Laaard  
Flesh just split up  
cut up.

But  
Is not the mash up mash flesh make she stop.

She never like the blood touch her.  
When she take that last swing and likkle blood splash up on her  
She leap back and fling down the whip and run back to the house wiping she face like  
blood have heat  
And burning her

We now  
rushing  
we cut you down  
carry you back.  
And is old Sylfred pick it up.  
New thing they call whip.  
And when him showing it to us – still blood up blood up with skin and flesh  
and none of us we *Never* see a thing like that  
Thing tough and heavy. Covered all over with short stiff bristle  
Look like stubble I don't know what it is  
But it heavy

None of us believe you could survive that.

None of us.

Is the speed.  
The speed weh the thing draw blood weh mek all o' we cry out.  
All o' we cry out.  
We all feeling it.

We all feeling it.

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#### **NO.4**

What can you do  
when agony torments and  
soothing is unthinkable?  
When I cannot bare a touch.  
I cannot stand another hand  
laid on me  
To inject  
Another procedure,  
No.  
Not another extraction of my blood.  
No further small incision.  
And when it's all over,  
Please, let my flesh not feed this land

for I was never part of it.

Burn me.  
Just burn me to dust,  
And throw my ashes to the wind.

But you,  
Here still  
at my bedside,  
take my feet in your two hands  
gently.  
First one  
then the other.  
And you don't release me when I resist,  
kicking at hands that begin to feed my skin with oil.

In silence  
You hold tenderly my soles  
No words, no speech.  
You soothe.

Anointed.

You cup my heels  
In gentle pressure  
And I am stilled.

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## **NO.5**

I must cradle  
These heels that kick up dust  
That stamps the ground that draws us all  
But too soon ...

Too soon.  
And you fight.  
Resist.  
For this is not ground to which you belong.  
Not the earth that bore you.  
And in your resistance,  
still, here is your submission.  
Yes, I will not  
let you be un-held.  
Cannot.

for there is nothing else.  
There is nothing to be done;  
No matter we  
Plead the Almighty  
That you remain,

Healed,  
Buttressed,  
strong of breath,  
and live.

You only are my God,  
And I must be yours.

Yes.  
You are my God,  
And  
I am yours.

### NO.6

Sister  
When you and I were young  
We, a pair,  
shared a bed at night.  
We played,  
moved together.  
Conjoined twins we whispered,  
did mischief,  
we danced.

And I wished to please you,  
big sister.

I see you strong.  
Yet fragile.  
But not weak.  
Never soft.  
No pushover.

Fighter.  
Doing battle daily.  
And win or lose,  
not defined.

Never believing that circumstances made you,  
made me,  
made us poorer  
or Lesser than.  
No.

From you I learned  
how to ready myself for each day,  
for whatever onslaught.  
Because your capacity to love,  
that, and the way in which you gave your love,  
that travels distance with those beloved.

How can I feel deserted?  
For your gift.  
For you abide with me still.

Sister,  
in health  
your power,  
your vigour  
overwhelms.

Sister,  
through time descended.  
Still,  
Even still,

I am in awe.