Beyond the Limits of Sight

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BEYOND THE LIMITS OF SIGHT

by

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ABSTRACT

_Beyond the Limits of Sight_ is a collection of poems exploring black diasporic identity through and beyond the silences that come to surround violence. In this experimental collection, black bars representing selective silence appear throughout the work, in protest of the compulsory release of licensing rights to the university and its corporate partners as a degree requirement, and in insistence that the poet be able to decide on what terms and via which platforms their voice enters the public sphere.
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there are so many ways to keep [ ] quiet (and as many ways to [ ] )
i’m unfolding my childhood again, convinced it’s a map i haven’t read right, convinced there’s [ ]
lessons i like to think [ ] with the gift of a pet rock, the lion king band-aid on top [ ]
the moon is curved and [ ] , and i am skilled in its shape 
boko haram abducted more schoolgirls. [ ]
in which love is a practice of [ ] under the gaze of a racist state
in which [ ] the small god of perseverance
[ ] is gentle before he knows it
the world according to [ ]
improvisations on versions of what we’ve been, [ ]
in which [ ] humbles the sky
in which i refract the inherited world to [ ]
sometimes i try to [ ] before i could spell violence
People are trapped in history
and history is trapped in them.

—James Baldwin, *Stranger in the Village*
facing the failure of a cast spell

In the only photograph, the eyes of a goat, make flat black cliffs of his pupils with my pen. has a flattened field of vision, a near complete view of the savanna on the horizon, and behind himself, where my face and fingers are when I'm holding him. When I speak to him, then, my voice is godlike, descending from an unknown source. I tell him. Later, when he calls me, asks after this message is still lodged for the tongue’s hammer to send it resounding again into open space. I blink. The mouth’s muscle fenced by my teeth.
James Byrd Jr. is murdered a few hours away and... Texas, 1998

News says they drug him behind a truck until... and to them that made him... seethes, kicking at dirt

and weighing a helpless curse on his tongue. Their way of seeing... a threat that lingers fresh and... as...

Nine years old and molted... wobble, wrap my palms around the... that straddle my shoulders, find...

...twist the chains above me until the swing’s pull... Head thrown back, legs flailing, I am a blur of... and... and...

the world turned to wind, flashes of light, something like...
what i know at birth / what i know

Mother births a [redacted] as the [redacted] ascend to fame in [redacted] / Mother births a [redacted] minutes from where she might one day be beaten for visiting—her audacity to picnic in—[redacted] / Mother births a [redacted] the year five white men beat brown-skinned strangers for being near their park / Mother births a [redacted] the year five men with [redacted] beat brown-skinned strangers for being / Mother births a [redacted] into being / Mother births a [redacted] while [redacted] past a park named after a Confederate general / Mother births [redacted] from [redacted] / Mother births [redacted] who doesn’t scream / Mother births [redacted] and worries [redacted] / Mother births [redacted] whose heart beats / Mother births [redacted] while [redacted] / Mother births [redacted] who police think a suspicious being has a [redacted] waiting / Mother births a [redacted] / Mother births a [redacted] without changing [redacted] / Mother births a [redacted] in a country that never [redacted]
force. field.

held a double-edged straight blade between his index finger and thumb while he

making myself sick. the same tool, in the same hands, and i couldn’t stop it—

of my skin. seven years old, flushed with adrenaline, how could i

: the wildflowers and weeds in the vacant lot had pollen enough to, and still, most of all the blooms that were red-edged and yellowed at the center. near a patch of these lied a discarded pallet, shading this trash was a stout tree with a thick branch i perched on to read, one leg dangling against the trunk, one knee tucked to my chest, my toes wiggling on the tree bark. a healthy tree the dead wood in the instep of my foot as i walked back i was trying to ignore it, waiting for be softer, wouldn’t scold
or peroxide and

on the wound. i’d kept it secret, he said the would help

the wood, it wouldn’t,

and how else believe, didn’t trust to be, though i them, though i hadn’t seen them

i knew. what else could i do. i

held my
in the house of

We’re twins at the edge of a forest, brush grown thick and long. Branches scratch and pick at our calves as we enter. Above us, a foreign bird is frantic in its call. Ahead, a light suggests we might not be alone. of the forest until we are weak with hunger, need-driven toward the glow at its center: a mud house with its inner walls kiln-bright, no electricity, no fire. In the center of its one room, a man’s head, a small trail of smoke from the statue’s top lip, at the fresh welts on the tips of his fingers. After that morning, my mother tells him he snores like our father. I watch his larynx, only recently grown larger, move in his neck as he swallows.
wars against 

“The answer, of course, has been a calculated weapon in the civil war between and .” —TIME Magazine, January

stores bananas, granola bars, loose cash, and napkins in , sucks air between his teeth and moans whenever he sees on the street. I am when he invites a man to sit with him and his youngest children at a ; when he brings to tears for shunning him, walking six times past his table without . I learn while young to finish more merits, condone. I am and when I meet of his youth: and bellies, bodies withering for lack of protein, for want of a . They stare at me from the archives of TIME, an away. daily winning and doomed.
famine comes in waves and i think of south sudan, 1993; yemen, 2018

A vulture loomed over a famished child
the year, and the image flooded the news
for days, her jutting
ripples in her skin.

For a moment, the moneyed world was
at that age I
appearing quiet and sudden in his line of sight—

my fingers poking under,
a crown of curls swaying field,
the arcs of my the top edge
of a . He’d palm his.

I didn’t know, that each rib
has its own
onto a lower plane. Today, on my computer screen,

sit unnamed and unspeaking, bronze
skin taut. They too
will reach the limits of sight,
into the.

abstraction, unabated
into the and profit.
Children appear

on the earth’s surface, obscures reflection,
that grip.
imagining ***things fall apart***

Fresh ***the ground flat.*** No ***of his ***house. Nightly, he kneels to ***of time. It’s never a soft descent, no ***to catch him, the ***curling across the sky:

in this American city. ***cause a constant ***behind his eyes, the past ***to save, the decades of ash and ***piling up to coat his ***blur his ***overwhelm his ***

He ***in the language ***attends mass ***coast ***. He reads notes from home like a ***convicted ***is inside, something ***How is it that ***how he remembers it, the ***on his clasped hands ***his veins and ***his bones.
in the house of

We’re twins again at the edge of a dark forest, our hands sore and wrapped in bandages, the moon and stars caught behind clouds in the sky. We refuse to enter the glowing house, sit stubborn on lookout in a small clearing, leaning against each other’s backs. The sun emerges, soars slowly to its peak, a bird lands at my feet and suddenly we are surrounded by fire. We hug our shins and hide our faces as four walls of flame tower around us, climb higher and higher toward the sun above our heads. When the walls cool to clay, we crane our necks to see where they end, bricks against the skyline. Sweat cools on my skin and several moments pass before I notice the figure in the corner—a clay bird, beakless, its thin legs hooved, wings arched like bowls on the ground beside it. Tears well up and I am on my bedroom floor, bruised and worried footsteps tiptoeing from the hallway.
what i know | what follows

is doorway tall. can be heard
through walls. bedtime songs. home when
in the hospital. cooks fists. and the like sun
through gauze curtains. blanket warm. hair knots
downy on his chest. -drum- and
pillow-chested. Doctors. during breakfast. says love you when. says love you too.

Jesus loves me this I know. For the Bible tells me so. Little ones to Him belong. They are weak but He is strong.


strong
in the house of the gods of transformation give honeysuckle and make us sweet amen

we twins at the limits of discover a shallow stream to drink from, our backs turned to the glowing house – red walls trees. we are good this time. we have learned and we’re ready to send our dripping hands into dirt. we dig. we lift our arms to briefly rest we must race the rising sun to become statues of each other: him, sitting cross-legged in the trench, his fingers tucked in the winged nooks of the two of us at sun’s crest: fired ceramic, rendered

scrub our faces trying to make anew, working steadily until finally we have a vision of, sore, but calm, unlike a gentle presence our a sight
upon imagining the origin of my name

On the first day of my bloodless week,
I draw a bath and 
emerges chin first, seizing, a sudden slosh in rising tide, flinging soap on my face. 
I press one palm with the other, whisper our name.

carob fingers on porcelain tub, above sudsy water. a tar hollow, no teeth or tongue, but we share and I having ever met.
I turn off the faucet that binds us,

so I mirror her silence, try to make sense of her dancing jaw. Earnest, she points a palmful of water. I refuse to drink. She points, forearm trembling. grasp her hand, reach. I want to say

I need to tend to, but it feels and might make me a liar, so there’s only the rushing at her wrinkled feet. as she wilts, limbs curling. I untangle, pull my hand from the nook of her chest and chin, sit silent for hours, wake to
Having never seen the farm before, besides the pictures conjured by my mother's tongue, her sweeping arms—

...the yard was embossed with roses, planted scalloped like the tide, then acres of golden corn reaching... 

I’m a stranger in my own mind today, and in my feet, unsteadily shouldering what... This isn’t the place she romped as a child, muddying her homemade clothes. Neither is the warped image, the house more square, the kitchen smaller, the land less flat than I’d thought. The milking barn has been demolished down to a concrete slab, so she might have seen the distant silo as a chimney, instead of the lonely and looming pillar it seems to me, now. She’s trying to refresh her memory, imagine things before business went corporate and overseas, before tools were sold off and the nearest neighbor’s house was left to rot. Fresh in my heart is the single tombstone marked Cherokee in the town graveyard, the balcony built for
enslaved wetmaids at the local church,
for women torn from my father's homeland.

I'm walking where the roses were, the thorns,
and before them, feeling how entangled I am, and how inevitable,

how expansive the wreckage of capital,
how layered the sense of displacement, here,
in the soil, and in the hollows of my bones.
forcefield

the skin behind his —— ——
is a place i wouldn’t know i’d touched
but for a picture in which ——
scared of something ——.
has her palm and forehead pressed
to the ——.
imagining *things fall apart*

eyes gloss with age, he the road, faces near and far away.

At night he dreams of. He wakes, takes solace in the blur that replaces his memory, its keen borders and corners softened. His body

he stumbles down, into himself,

emerging a wavering in little

mouth curled around a village rhyme, tempo set with rhythmic

one hand turning pages, one arm rocking his

His vision of self whirls and stirs, turns in monochrome, murky
tiles rotating around the small dirt hills over his parents' remains; his uncle's dark ankles, waist-bent body triangling from palm tree to the black loafers he wore to nine fruitless promotion reviews; the wooden tray for shea and cream; the gleaming walnut desk never retrieved from layaway at Sears; the camera he pawned for baby formula, four rolls of undeveloped film in his top-right drawer; his Year 1 blackboard; his first composition book; a small black cat named Moon.

Gone too: is all he sees,
most mornings, blurry-eyed,  
solitary, shaving  
    by memory,

scraping slowly.  

He keeps  
his private.  
The he would  
utter darkness to  

is likewise.
a catalogue of colors to describe

the inside of

the glare of the sun

when

in summer,

the small black beak of a mourning dove,

the of limestone

and the.

the pointed purple tongues

in skullcap blossoms,

, creek mud’s

pale,

the roped leaves of a,

the pink-stunned branches of a springtime

, the candle

in a room when i
unsent letters
I walked [redacted], and found a [redacted] on the doorstep of my office building. I thought this an [redacted], and entered, still. Did it surprise you, too, how early dusk fell? I remember where

[redacted]

5-5-7 all clear. Being the one who left, this time, I have a sense of [redacted]. If it bothers you [redacted], you do not say. We are alike in this way, [redacted]. If the [redacted], I couldn’t see them. I saw no blood, no signs of choking [redacted] peering from the shrubs.

Actually, in your city, dusk is just falling, bars of shadow [redacted] stretching across the [redacted]. Your shadow will run parallel to the bars, no matter [redacted]. I learned this at eleven, [redacted]. There was so little I could [redacted].
There is so little, still. The small circle you will walk tonight is

It may feel bigger. You’ve in your legs, lost length in your gait, your knees

I can than I choose to: I could and I won’t. We are alike in this way, and we will be tomorrow.

~ 2 ~

I saw an article today that I wanted to show you, about

From what I’ve gathered, yours is a culture in which is boasted, a toxin kept to oneself. I can appreciate

as a protective impulse I haven’t developed. I might be happier if I had. Lately, I haven’t been able to without, or wanting to. There’s a

I’ve grown less able to quiet. There’s a we have, a heat behind my . Listen. You’ve said your people were

I read this article and wondered thinking it now, for the first time, the latter.

~ 3 ~
I once found [redacted] in your backyard, [redacted] in a skillet on the stove. To my knowledge,

[redacted] there were strange men or both. No one spoke to clarify and I [redacted] as I [redacted]. Are we alike in this way?

I think I [redacted] sometimes. Goats, I have read, sound like [redacted] so they can be harder to kill. Fresh off the animal,

the skin is [redacted] sunlight through the thickest parts. [redacted]
harder to handle. Having [redacted] you know an animal’s [redacted] to tan its own hide. The body is [redacted] at its own [redacted]. [redacted] are made, and we cannot [redacted]. There’s a [redacted] as they bubble up, little [redacted]. Last month, I learned [redacted] I still haven’t heard you say it. I think [redacted] on [redacted]. It might help if you let them [redacted] We are alike in this way:

[redacted]. Dusk has fallen, there is no [redacted] and failed. Did I tell you yet that [redacted] when I open my mouth in public. Do you know what this is. I’m not looking for [redacted], just something [redacted] between us.
[visions on a horizontal axis]

There’s a spot that appears in my vision sometimes,
a dark mark evanesced,
always sudden, always washed
with my pulse thumping at my eardrum.

I think once I caught a sense of its shape:
a stooped figure, knob-kneed and -elbowed,
hips low, bent at the waist.

Can you imagine you said of blazes in California,
running, being consumed?

I sat quiet, sad and useless, holding the phone.
I might have said that goats are used
to, thousands rented out
each summer to graze, I imagine they have done
what they could this year, everything in their control.

I can’t imagine not like you can:
memories

There’s a spot in my vision sometimes, brief moments
when my focus collapses flat as a quilt, narrow as the pupil,
on a mark in my line of sight—
evanesced, always,
at the moment of recognition. Over and over and flattens, my heart fills and flattens, my pulse floods my awareness—useless, useless, useless—unable to rescue you, us, anyone.
I still have the photos you gave me. The mystery of them has been a constant, not knowing their heights, their scent, the timbre of their voices. I am thinking now of the mystery of the gift itself:

these are your only copies. I’m unsure if I should call you unsentimental or generous. It rained all afternoon today, the sun shining only in pockets. I caught a glimpse, blurred by water, and turned away before . The brain fills gaps in vision to make sense—some of my gaps are constant. I caught a glimpse of someone in a window, and couldn’t place her.
There’s a spot at the top of my head where

The curls there grow more tangled.

and it’s itching as I study

the ground is the color of

The sky: the shade of

I am of the place

From any other

I couldn’t tell it apart.

Do you catch

sometimes

or is

more constant? On the back of each

is a name and date of death.

If you are sadder than I am

You might have given me

my hands.
[sphering the mirror]

My knowledge of [redacted] so flat and quiet, so stuck in paper’s pulp,
photographs and books, what ink I’ve scanned in search of [redacted]

I saw her in a news report, displacing the poor for oil money in the [redacted]

I fear there is more violence [redacted].

anger so hungry to burn it never yields.

Tell me what it was like to find [redacted]

Did you recognize him?

did that make a difference?

The world is a mess and I [redacted]

constantly flattening to be [redacted], to be justified

by the [redacted]. I have wanted
too much, I think guilt gets

so, it never heals. I think
you might get this: I have

and would like to be less. Let me start
with a spherical view of myself. Let me start

by admitting I could.
I heard Otis Redding singing today. I think him in some ways:

I once watched you listen to an Otis song, restarting four times before you let it

So perfect his expression of yearning that just four seconds

Does that make sense? I got it then, the distance between.

A measure of *tenderness*.

I’ve been writing.

I’ve been told to get closer to it. So I am.
But I’m no less tripped up on it. There are two stories

In one,

In another,

Only you remember the latter.

I keep trying to return the favor. Does that make sense?

your arm draped across the back of a wooden chair,
the cigarette in your fingers,
around the smoke of what you’d
I will always remember when the stars fell down around me and lifted me up...

—Faith Ringgold, *Tar Beach*
there are so many ways to keep quiet (and as many ways to hear)

Austin, 2018

I visit our childhood field, on impulse,  
my tongue passing over the raw spot

where I’ve peeled dry skin from my lip.  
Behind me, the grass mowed low at my feet.
The city is changing, rent’s gone up,

just short of unrecognizable. It feels

the earth having lost its

on the backs of my legs. I will not rest here,

like I used to, I will tell that we lost

our small patch of southern wilds.
I dig down to a cool layer of earth,

seeking. We buried dozens. No one could stop us

weighing them

stashing the ones with the right heft

in our pockets until we got back to the field.
Each was given its own plot: a shallow hole,

carefully patted dirt. Builders will develop
this lot next year. Today, it’s more hushed
than it’s ever been. I want to whisper. The bulldozer won’t know to listen.
i’m unfolding my childhood again, convinced it’s a map i haven’t read right, convinced there’s

For so long, I’ve been unraveling Uncomfortable language crowds my tongue

and I am tired of my thoughts, I want to think

we can let it go
lessons i like to think with the gift of a pet rock, the lion king band-aid on top

quietness isn’t necessarily empty, be . there’s a whole internal world you cannot see from the surface, it’s worth it to attune your ear to hurts that go unspoken, it isn’t always foolish to a thing that cannot love you back. whenever you can, is a healing practice—what power you have with in your hands, be tender-hearted, my , you are right to think that everything around you holds a little pain
the moon is curved and ********, and i am skilled in its shape

*
Toilets on space shuttles
convert urine to drinking water
so there is nowhere for women
to bleed.

*
Constellations are culturally defined.

Cassiopeia: a dolphin’s tail,
a woman’s breasts, five unrelated stars.

Let’s call it a bite mark, a burn scar.
A cesarean incision made unsteady in the dark.

Let’s call the black sky what’s survived.

*
The first astronauts were former airmen.
Their fighter jets severed the wind,
left contrails of keloid smog.

*
Military women often skip their periods
when deployed. The nuisance of bloodshed
managed with small white tablets.

Not unlike chalk.
Not unlike old-school punishment:
copy 100 times I will not.

1461 pills will cover a four-year contract.
There are more likely causes of death
than a hormone-induced blood clot.

*
Spent gunpowder is an earthly scent
akin to moon dust, so say men
who have visited the moon, men for whom gunfire is an obvious referent.

*A difference between astronomy and gynecology is that shame has never governed our study of stars.

Let’s say ours is a mammalian moon caught in constant oogenesis,

a gleaming ovum coaxing oceans’ longing strokes against the shore.

*Amniotic fluid alters the fetal feeling of gravity. Liquid buoyancy nears zero-gs early in pregnancy

*If we had done an exam of pre-cosmic night, speculum inserted, through the stretched sky we might have glimpsed a heat-hazed image: a canal coated in molten black mucus.

We might have witnessed a birth. The Big Bang. Felt our vision photodegrade, blaze and temper as the burst scattered and darkness recovered our sight.

If we had done this, would we praise any less the light?

*The first gynecology patients were enslaved. Their flesh wept meteorite metal, stained sutures with iron blood.

*Science suggests that menstruation is a type of reproductive right.

For example, the human uterus sheds unfit embryos before they fully implant, preventing maternal injury and eventual infant death.
The moon’s familiar bloom might have soothed enslaved Yorubans. It was their lunar goddess, long ago, whose water broke to flood our barren planet, bearing life of desolation.

A space journey is called a mission. an astronaut’s travel a tour of duty. So it is: we cannot explore without meaning conquer.

A difference between the night sky and black bodies is that slit air won’t scream in the absence of anesthesia.

NASA discovered 7 earth-sized exoplanets and called it a treasure trove.

What can be extracted remains unknown, but we seem particularly interested in water.

A difference between earth and exoplanets is that imperialism in outer space is still imagined.

Rat studies suggest that zero-gs could stunt human growth before and after birth.

For example, the woman would struggle to pass the placenta. The child, untethered, would struggle nursing.

16 seconds before flight, water floods the launchpad, dampens the sonic impact of blast-off. Rockets launch undamaged due to flowing liquid.

Let’s say stars and planets are contaminant relics
streaking, swirling, spotting the sky.

Not unlike dilute blood.

Not unlike a woman’s endometrium sinking in water.
Boko Haram abducted more schoolgirls. 

sandals are strewn in the sand / in the glassed image in my hand / and the wrong questions scratch at my throat / i want to know / what size the soles / how flat the feet they were torn from / how rough the thong-rubbed skin between the toes / i want to know:

i fix my mouth 

i want to say / no / how many degrees of girlhurt away /

i placate / my phone’s sleep screen veils the sandals / black and skinwarmed / against my cheek

* 

there are many things i will never tell / some of these i tell no one / like how / i claw at the mist of it / the light untorn / so when the stolen girls / (returned) / say they were fed and well-treated / downplay the deaths of five peers / i don’t trust their reports / i know how a schoolgirl assures
they didn’t harm us / and i hear [redacted] the shutter / the untold:
in which love is a practice of \_

under the gaze of a racist state

it is a peculiar sensation...this sense of always looking
at oneself through the eyes of others. –W.E.B. Du Bois

the man i love prepares for death
as it seeps from the television,
hangs in the air like water wanting mold.

\_ to catch the bullet slicing air.

from up close, the iris and its pupil
are like any other reflective surface, meaning
the officer could be thirteen inches from his face—

shuts out the world with me in it.

that night much softer
than asphalt.
in which the small god of perseverance

Praise the big head that never snapped the neck’s stem, despite looking for years like

Praise the small body that rushed none into grownness, sprinted and spun, squatted and dug a hole in the empty lot up the block to lie down in.

Praise the bronzed grit on the calves, the red undersoil. Praise the greyed knees. Praise the translucent eyelids, their turn toward tilled dirt and weeds, seeking relief from sunwhite glare. Praise the boy in repose, black and unbothered in broad daylight.

Praise the fine creases of the throat, the scar there where skin was slit, bled, and stitched, the bruise releasing its grip on the windpipe.

Praise the wound, the removed tissue. The cancer that lived short and died hungry.

Praise the hairless armpit, bright brown and sweat sheened, the palm nestled between earth and earlobe. The hospital wristband faded and dirtied by the business of being.
is gentle before he knows it

doesn’t nick himself the first time he shaves, checks and re-checks his cheeks for specks of blood. I watch him find his face unmarred, knowing already he’s looked beyond himself and slipped through. Above his bed restless, adrift in a body he’s unsure A pebble hit the windshield once and broke his thoughts, left a web of tiny fissures in the glass, proof of impact arched like.
there’s a recurring thought that we should change the name suggesting we belong to a family, a tribe, a nation we do not know, a man we hope to never be like.

we designed a symbol once, with a matching sound, and kept it secret. we made a name that fits in no mouths but ours.
improvisations on versions of what we’ve been.

The black princess isn’t dead.

She hears the gods and builds the drum to channel their voices. She tells her father, a harsh man, but goes unpunished, for I arrive with a goat on my back, its front hooves crossed and it is martyred instead. Or, I am, drowned in a river—

in this version, everyone lives. I kiss her hands, she palms the nape of my neck.

We keep to ourselves. No men arrive to bind our wrists and issue penance. Or, there are no men, only women.

We women float on the river, breathing, softly, at rest. We climb trees and rest, we dig dens and rest, we rest on an open plain, safely.

If we are ravenous, our bodies growing to be mighty and soft. No—

No god descends on and build continents. All water and earth is in constant union.
We all have scales and gills.

Or, we are and we open our whole bodies to hear, to see,
We are never strangers. We accrue no, and seek no.
We are untethered,

like goats on a hillside with no fence and no shepherd. We are
in which [missing word] humbles the sky

He used to confuse the words [missing word] and [missing word], thought it all [missing word], thought it magic that our [missing word]...

or solidify in the winter, like the icicles that formed on the gutters overnight.

[missing word] honed his eye for the mystic while I read my books, both of us building a sense [missing word].

In college, I pointed out Aquarius: water bearer, that’s your sign, took his hand in mine to trace the constellation in the sky.

When I described a man pouring water from a jar, he flipped my hand to draw the stars on my palm.

He told me what he saw: [missing word]

[missing word].

he said, [missing word]
in which i refract the inherited world to

*the origin ritual is this:*

...in a large round pot.
My ant-pecked palm
  is the first,

the water I trickle to make clay:
  the first,
I shape,

  flat-lining feet to legs,
torso to neck, one column.
  I add an arm, pressing clay
to side-body, carving grooves
  for her fingers at hip.

*Child of*

...this one will be

...Until then,
  I’ll hold her lone hand,

sculpt a small

...or:

Wading shin deep in dark water,
like a leopard's lapping tongue.
   As the heaving water calms,

my floating
   slightly foreign, buoyant
and slick. My fingertips find

tracing them like
   toward the

is and and .

and at the touch
   of
the only light a small gleam
   on

the sound of
   slipping from
sometimes i try to inhabit myself before i could spell violence
Texas, 2016

the dead of summer finds me
tight-roping the concrete blocks
between a disused parking lot
and a vacant field.
    the hip-high grass is still,
    the tip of each blade
    blurred by the sun’s deep light.

~

the sun’s quiet seeps into pavement and echoes through the clear flames.

~

someone approaches, distorted,
the barrier of lapping clear as rain.

~

someone, somewhere
between and seeps into my field of vision.
this, how find me,
unsteady on concrete,
wishing myself

~

somewhere, i am ,
or someone i was
is (how easily i stray from the point).
a small point—
small too: the point where light
hits my pupil, rendering
their heat visible.

what violence Man has done
(what are the poetics
of genocide?)

i should walk this rope
right out of the world.
look: my toes already
the only part of me, here.

the point:
i choose
with all my heart.
   but look: i walk a world
   built to destroy it, destruction
   at the root, in the limbs,
   in my wallet.

in the air: shimmering
flames, or water streaming
the sides of a glass box.
(what color is

a wall of echoes