

Poems from Death Valley Symphony by Jenni Brandon
Poems by Brandon Krieg

II. Clay Pipes and Spiral Shells

I'm told others in other languages flowed
through the changes here and left clay pipes
My being here is because of them
My being here is because of harm to them
I am pinned in my plural hurts to salt
like a pupfish that struggled across cracked salt and stopped

How could I do this to myself?

I'm told others in other becomings
channeled the changes through their spiral shells
and left their shells in the rock
and left eddies in the rock that will unspool
and be threaded again through what's left

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III. Erosion's Grotto

Rain-carved
foothills, oxidized
mineral piles pooling shadows, rise
scallop by scallop in
scalloped terraces, rise
from salt flats,
sand piles,
sans,
from sans rise, from
without to
without to a higher power

be held in red
be held in further red
released by rain's slow carve, be
hematite ledge
by countless rains rounded down
revealing red's tending
to yellow at the crest
tending without
intending, without that longing
of curve to touch asymptote

This is Erosion's grotto,
shadows pool and evaporate
into frying noon, pool again.
Neither Eros nor Error loosed this
mineral rainbow
chlorite casts
through wave on wave
of sunlight reaching
this shore this
strange shore
suddenly lost from maps

My mind long stuck in the groove the culture
cut for it,
my mind on its sick throne, long tuned
to monotone, used too long
by that monochrome

monolith,
if—

Nevertheless, here
I take covenant
in this wash this solvent
of wave, ridge, facet, pigment,
is

Ridges of blood-minerals
osmose into my eyes' pulse,
I seem to drink sight
to the roots of me, see
with the very nerves
in my spine, my skin, I see
lightyear-lit escarpments
take mauve-to-violet hints,
watch the tints climb cloud-ward,
spectral, like

chrysalis water
this landscape suddenly
broke from, wicked at the split
up through a litmus strip,
tint to tint but not
a test, not a measurement, this is
signal burns off its noise,

this is pressure finds aperture finds
ochre umber oh

behold!
the once-molten,
cooled-crystalline turns
crimson to coral, mineral rainbow
burns through again

(continued on next page)

the signal burns
the signal burns through the freeze
of pixel and text,
of spectrometer, altimeter, orrery
receive it
receive yellow
as the namelessness of through,
take covenant

take red as a breath you can breathe
and breathe it,
dissolve it, dissolve
colorless hurts wants
figments fragments fears
into these waves across
into these waves these wavelengths diffusing across
the blood-god barrier

be held be
be held be
be held be
held in this beholding

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IV. Dark Sky

Poem: *The Stars Beyond the Stars*

Go to the lowest place with me
I invite you lower
All ways will pass through if we go lower
all the lightnings we can bear
will write themselves on a floor of salt
fanning outward into wing-vein patterns,
into the vein patterns in the transparent
delicate skin
of ears that flicker at footfalls,

Come down under the big lights now and
unhide
See what you thought your self was
from the numberless points of night
With the tips of the spiny saltbush
with the tips of the creosote
disguised in its wind-caked salts as constant
lightning
let us receive
the stars beyond the stars

Beyond is all through us now pouring forth
Beyond is all through us now pouring
Come down where numbers dissolve
Relax your face clenched from its ledgers
The salt flat spider's web is a mirror
held up to sky's mirror
dimensioning this one great room
that flows around the salamander's pulse
this room whose walls are sweltering waves
of liquid dolomite rising up
rippling around the pool where the kit fox
drinks

There are no father tongues
To whatever larger is
To whatever listening is
through the I's dissolves
To whatever larger is listening

and we will feel the forkings of our blood
at the ankle and at the wrist

Here Ocean the source of all blood was
before us, and couldn't wait
like all things riding the blue fire down can't
wait
and got up and walked off
in blackfly and woodrat and wind

Come down from the incandescent sick
thrones,
You have hidden so long under the small lights
there are feather tongues that taste air
Hear hummingbird's wings tasting air
and become deliciously plural
and feel in your pulse all the pulses
that will ramify the salt beneath your feet
The sky is a membrane vascular with light
Let us take transfusion the old way
the way water wicks from thistle's involucre
through the veins in a swallowtail's wing
the way Adrienne and Adrienne sang

What are these close dark spirals
rhyming the far light spirals,
making eddies where time spools out of itself?
It is bats bearing up our blood
lifted into their milk by mosquitoes
they carry to the mouths of the measureless

Down here embodiment is breaking
The bone core is grinding its gears down
Come effervesce with me
let the rivers of the earth wick their way
through our bodies back to shimmering overall
and drop back again to new forms

through the I gone plural
the I gone hurting its plural hurts
through fathomless spirals
traceries in sand *(continued on next page)*

wind writes and revises
Here is a thread
of sicklight vibrating
like a wave-wall of liquid granite rising vibrating
like a tuning fork struck
by pulse's lightning
Let us reside in resonance
to honor all becomings
to honor is to laugh with creosote
at its trick of constant lightning

lightning is lightning
because it vanishes

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