

Swimming Pool

When through the water's thickness I see the tiling at the bottom of a pool, I do not see it despite the water and the reflections there; I see it through them and because of them. If there were no distortions, no ripples of sunlight, if it were without this flesh that I saw the geometry of the tiles, then I would cease to see it as it is and where it is—which is to say, beyond any identical, specific place. I cannot say that the water itself—the aqueous power, the sirupy and shimmering element—is in space; all this is not somewhere else either, but it is not in the pool. It inhabits it, it materializes itself there, yet it is not contained there; and if I raise my eyes toward the screen of cypresses where the web of reflections is playing, I cannot gainsay the fact that the water visits it, too, or at least sends into it, upon it, its active and living essence. This internal animation, this radiation of the visible is what the painter seeks under the name of depth, of space, of color.

— Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Eye and Mind*

Virtual. *This* time there wasn't much of a difference,
I spent the whole afternoon listening to you articulating—
A mangled variant of something I'd heard before.
It came as something of an uneasy revelation
As the sun beat against my body, not the 'Eureka!' of freshly
Unveiled land but the sad awe sometimes felt watching, through
Sunglasses, an old place you used to know
Roll away. It is white like surf then again the cool, surfaceless
Blue, an *Animal Collective* song under a new name,
Modular and single-use, the better the more mindless etc.
But I wasn't restless, everything had that special clarity to it,
That kind of airless space Cézanne saw break
Across the fields surrounding the pale mountain
For all those years, the landscape morphed and
Unchanging in blue and orange oblongs. Ambivalent,
The question arises as to *how we got here*, sipping
On this sunned plateau, how this view came to be ours.
The rippling air sighs over browned fields far away.
It must be California, or else some place yet
Unvisited, now stumbled upon from your drafty attic
Where we found you laid alone dawdling in the same
Illusions until you convinced yourself to come here.
Yet you remain unplaceable in the flat green of the hills;
their denial of any single focal point makes my eyes
Move restlessly, languidly, over the hot stasis.
I realise that I love it here and am finally happy.
The sky is different here, wider and cooler.
(Peppery clouds expanding perceptibly at a constant rate.)
I recall that I always liked *Arcade Fire's* idea
Of the 'reflective age' because I too find myself
Living in the reflections on the water— though I
Can never seem to forget the two double doors
Flickering at the end of the near-symmetrical room.
It is the 2nd and possibly the last nice day of the summer...
I see harsh blooming green flooding each wall-window
Which confines us appealingly like a log cabin,
And I forget that the room is outside, on the hillside,
This unrelenting plateau. And as it comes into focus

Around the pool, the main event, I cannot see
It for the whiteness of its blinding surface. I sip a bottle
Of beer before twilight, drying in a rainfall of glass.

Turns out I'm gay, (though I prefer the word homosexual
Which I find more comedic though I guess it
little matters what you call it other than the fact
Of my differentness which is a quality everyone has
and thank god they do) in other words attracted to guys
though I guess that was already in the subtext. Pulls
me into this strange sense of contingency; at this hour
the leaf-litter after dark looks like fireflies, though you
swat at your thoughts like windows... solar panel or skylight?
And have the guests even moved in yet? There was a weird
light out that evening as we crossed the road for a drink,
I felt at home though was perhaps very far away. Large pupils.
The moon was out. The weather was clear that night like
3 stones/marbles/jewels placed on a black cloth (on a table?)

I decided to go for a swim and walked in my shorts and sandals.
Image of Colonus: dark forest on edge of Athens, dusty ground etc,
Rural-Urban fringe like Hopper's locust trees. The
leaves droop like dark fur I turn on streets uncomprehendingly
like a silent god—the night is changing...
night trees immediately haunted by harsh electric light,
splinters, white splinters like blood vessels, hear it...
we are not free and we never were
I walked along forest at 5pm lighting to pool
bone white antlers trees
I am electricity and hunger, I arrive at the changing rooms late,
jogged across the car park. We spent *too long* in the sun today.

A bright set of shapes cast on my drying body;
it's nice for yourself to be the canvas for once.
Though this opens me to the possibility of drowning.
(And?...Where are we now? Is this your tragedy?)
Here the hills return no echo, we are transparent and lone.
The gloom of grey days is oppressive
but I enjoy having a schedule, hours to kill, a free anonymity,
something to be getting on with in the meantime as I work facing the sun...
Though it's always somewhere far away, as these things tend to be.

Still the pool sits, sunned, warming, without algae
Or rust. Torrential. Feeling restless. Are you ready
to go for dinner? Go on, get your shoes from the balcony.
A man lies on a sun lounger. He reads when
he gets out the pool and doesn't mind getting the book
wet. I'd like to get lost in the forest, it's so warm out.
You breathe, hair slicked back, wet from the shower.
Statue-esque, so greco-roman,
We bought baguettes and butter at the supermarket
In the morning for lunch. The pool surface, open to the air,

cleans my hair and my skin. I smell vapour
evaporating from the edges, chlorinated;
the empty set of sun-loungers drying in the shade;
a left-over plastic cup; the water dispenser glugs;
though again I forget that *the pool is outside and my head is under water*.
It is, like a jellyfish, candescent, crystal neon, a gelatinous membrane
where the moted god-rays meet the aztec tiled floor
in a pattern that resembles
what McLuhan calls 'information rubbing against information'—
fishnets, though I don't own any, and a skylight nobody tries to notice anymore.

'Whither I go you cannot follow me,' you said. Still, I could never point
to myself on a map (I know we are somewhere near the sea,
in this white block above the cliffs
or whatever hotel or stately home this place is attached to).
An electronic fuzz of pixels in shades of blue (Cézanne again)
but from underneath, the reflections on the undersurface are almost vascular. After
a few days one wonders whether water too is alive: Ticking sounds,
the vending machine, the ice box, the dripping shower-head,
the absence of pillars?
The doors. These iridescent openings are haunted by the bright classical stately foliage;
monoliths of our shadowless climate
and though it doesn't even have a brain
the rays warm my abdomen for a moment half-way up the length
And suddenly I am falling towards the glistening white strip of ocean
which I had thought was horizontal to me. My book got wet; it dries crinkled like surf.
By this point in August I take it all for granted
and in winter my breath falls as powder:

these pine forests are inexhaustible,
there whenever I need them—
particularly necessary when the world is shut off.

Like many things, the *idea* of living in New York, for a few months, or years, is perhaps enough;
I found this confusing, and somewhat comforting but needed something to take its place. If
we're not going to live in Manhattan eating snow-cones all summer-long then where will we go?

why do
these five porches dominate me so
blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water
you
stepped in and troubled the water
five porches
repeating

because *yes, art is better than life*, but art as it exists in the mind, not silent-blankly-staring-from-a
museum-wall-after-closing-time, not in conversation, but alone, excited and trying to sleep,

Sunbaked, the ever-changing surface fizzes
reflective stores absorbs like light the sunglasses
I can barely breathe, I say my skin stretches as my chest rises

slowly we wanted and began to understand that this was so. We queued at the electric checkout with two bottles of wine clinking on the rubber conveyor and your hand opening your backpack. Walked into the cobbled night we were blind and walked blindly though happy and warm carrying the wine. I want to wander back but we don't have a pool so stay at the bars drinking aperitifs late into the evening chattering like tourists.

I see silver hoops cast on the skin like TV static. It
morphs like white plasma—utterly architectural, the sunspoken
waves and ropes in the moving pool radiate
then shrug off a dimension at the tiled wall,
30 centimetres from the enamel lip: they
cast against it- the tiled wall- a wave function
on an unannotated graph
and a 3 by 2 grid of bright-blue rectangles cast from the window frame almost reaches the lip
of the pool's container, and were it only sunshine for a while we wouldn't be so depressed.
Your words pile up
like a garden of slate

Broke, and you broke it. And now I understand that this particularity is very closely related to
my intense desire to go abroad, and the colour pale blue,
I didn't want to go home
my replies could be wiped clean like condensated glass
the voices empty themselves
and in the morning I realised he'd carved his name into several areas in my room, especially the
windowsill where I used to sit taking pictures of the sky and I was in love.

A mall, palm-trees.
It can be pasted anywhere,
It becomes strange, generalised,
All possibility like the silhouettes of Botticelli's *flora*.

It is here that I want to spend a while. Where an open door admits the coming night
and two glasses sit on a table. Glances taken out of context, unimaginable the scalded
daydream drank my need to breathe. Warmness and for some reason I am never tired.

A lightbulb rolls across the tabletop, the whole week rained in.
(Though I made a friend in the rain)

If holes were plucked
through the floor the water would fall single file down,
in clear strings down,
into the assumed other pool beneath. They could be played like strings—
Who knows how many are down there. Still, one would never jump in at evening once the sub
lights have clicked on automatically; I wouldn't want to get my khaki shorts wet before walking
into this little Spanish town; it will still be warm later, though a breeze will be swept off the
Atlantic blinking
runway

And as the day melts I get the sensation
Of being surrounded, outnumbered by myself. Of conversion rates,
How much to tip, how great *Coca-Cola* was and is.
It feels as if I am swimming directly toward a headlight.

She went away for a long time, and said little. Though
You did receive a postcard, written drunkenly: a picture of a sunset over water,
sent a few weeks ago. She said where she was reminded her of you.
You wrote back: "But if you're going to continue this charade of our communication,
If you're going to say anything at all,
Say it with authority, like your life depends on that belief, and I can choose whether to trust
you/it or not. The porches at the pool-floor. Prophets rang true— standardisation *is* possibility:
Tell me how the half-cup of water, like Eggleston's cup, is a miniature pool, a miniature city
block in the rounded window, dislocated, the fallen leaf that never ceases to be part of the tree,
only a pressure in the ears."

Sometimes I think that it is only the creatures in the ocean that understand three-
dimensionality, maybe birds there is no blood in my hands

don't dream it

to be disillusioned there must've been an illusion to start with
the water out over the lake
something in the corner of the eye that made you jealous and insular as time went on—
an inverted nostalgia, a fumbled remonstrance stripped of reference,
in the time of angled light and emptiness,
y'know, back when we used to be happy?
(The swimming pool: sunned, warming, lizard-like, without algae)

But it's the pool's containedness,
the way it occupies a fixed space, that makes it unlike the sea.
The sea, too big to be comprehended,
waits until right before the credits: restless, deadly, oscillating,
(or should I say ocean?) Anyway, I threw away the postcard.
I can't have that clutter in my life.

The explaining presence that we are all 'ushered' into
hides its reasons like a magician but continuously unveils its spectacle
in front of us. The theatre doors are locked, and we couldn't
even leave our seats if we tried. Regardless it seems important,
and soundly I wouldn't want to look away. Its edges, rounded,
deeply coloured, are divine in the way they fit
the exact same shape as our field of vision. It goes blue.
You sit there dripping with gasoline. I love talking to you
so please don't forget me. The landscape beats like waves.
Sadly you smiled. Drunk as a glitch, the scene flashes blue.
Then grey. Your face lit up. *I love the sun*, I said, and the trees,
and how the pool ripples, its lights that come on each night, and the trees,
and the footprints, and far out, the hills un-rendered, sheepish to be there.