

Poems from Ecstasy Facsimile

Mark Anthony Cayanan

When you turned off the engine, the late birds gossiped
in a sinister tongue, and the nausea scurried up his throat:
should someone have rescued the teenaged boy riding shotgun.

I trusted because no one had taught me otherwise; god,
however, rewards those whose beauty makes stories matter.
I wasn't saved. I meant you, the vocations I've carved out of you.

What slobbered all over my cheeks made me a stranger,
and when they found the stranger they saw he wasn't a freak
he was just another school kid who scratched his bravado,

his briefs a gloopy mess, his repurposed body a catalogue
of second-hand fantasies, chief of which was to be what tourists
pay good money for. He couldn't suffer because nobody knew

he was being punished. Suffering became shame, which I nursed
in earnest into fury, and every swivel of his hip divulged you.



Before I became holy I'd wake to you expecting my prayer of gratitude.
Cock-like, I gave it to you in time for sunrise. You knew of my basic need to seek
approval: I puttered around the house fixing messes I made so I could earn it.

How could you have turned away from ease? I've transformed my life into
a pamphlet of instructions, so take your hands off my eyes. Now

I no longer need to feel guilt for the evil I do because evil only happens
when life happens. I knot up the curtain, let sunlight in, and from inside

my belly my soul squirms free, completely without stage fright. She gives me a bullshit story when heading out, chooses a name with lots of silent letters and discloses it, never to me, for a ride to the beach. But she lets me go

down on her, caresses my bald spot as I do, and later spasms repeatedly at my squished face. My ecstatic face—This isn't a body worrying another in a car,

the thirst isn't there to make the void interesting, I'm no cautionary tale. This is a hagiography. I taste the word and give it the mighty shrug it deserves.

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That you've proved yourself able to manhandle my will, your presence the overgraced state I ask absolution for, the nonchalance with which you receive my voice as it grows strident to compete with your reticence: it exists as is, as the limestone of the cave redemption has echoed around in—I prise my soul off your thigh and apologize for its stubbornness, how it launches into ecstasy as if it were something special—as the boulder that preserves the dark, as glass my face presses against just so the world happens, just so we're nothing less than the nothing around which we gather, after

which we assemble a prayer to drive it away; here's a blanket for any body. And we're never the fact I'd hoped for us to have, the afternoons we idle into admonition, the pinpricks of sweat that hunger dissolves out of, the lies we disappear as, the times we finish in time for each other: we for each other are the degree of evil we were warned about, and you've become the gnawing fear that overcomes its source. When you are sin. As often I am the first stone.

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Why give us our bodies, beautiful and always about to fail?
Why have our souls harbor a different species of appetite?

We learn remorse and know blood on the backs of penitents.
We've readied names to pinpoint various tears: teres major,
thoracolumbar fascia, trapezius. Do you in your wisdom see
to the truths beyond vows driven through your children's palms?

And those who huddle to witness, assembled in your image,
accustomed to your reticence, some more troubled than others,
what from us will you take when, with a trust that's the birthright
of the powerless, we show our love enough? The force of the soul

striking the body. From this fire, the hope that we be spared:
we build ourselves an ocean out of it, stealthy lives in its depths,
trenches mirroring a pure dark and swallowing the water down,
we can build exits out of dreams if we're only told whose to follow.

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Have you traveled past the news
of the weather, there where it ceases

to be concrete, would you rather be
admitted back to the flat song of

this one life. The anthem of your
life: do you think there's a need for you.

You won't scoop earth off your own
prone figure and remake yourself.

Rest now, errant one, you have
wanted. Rest now, be remembered

as you should've been for yourself
as a torn free limb or its shattered window

as the gift of a tiring hour.
And tell me where you will come to.