

TOWER TWO

- 1 In times of crisis, poets lose words. Find some:
soul, soul I say, to name the smoke-beings like
constellations in the night sky of this city and cities to come.
Focus the Muses, write while trembling, deliver eternity
sky of this city and cities to come.
- 5 gone gone away down in the downward up. ward rush of howl. ing graveyard lava air
Earthquake/shatter, volcano/ash, tidal wave/fear, fire/purify, wind/words disappear
Amazed I wake /committed crimes/vanishing eyes/it's different now/vanishing
I expected a second moon or sun to appear
And radiance, the gleam of it at the edges of clouds, the
gilt of clouds in the blue sky, the blue sky, the blue sky.
- 10 A tremendous roar came over our shoulders, ratcheting our heads slightly to the right, a
huge what looked like a 747 at eye level & moving, then steel into steel, glass into glass.
Women in the Middle East knew nothing about it. They were washing clothes.
Planes crashing on the windowsill.
“Did the pilots get hurt?” asked the lover of pilots, a young
boy still in love with heroes, when the second plane hit.
She held her breath—but, more, wished to hold his. Him. A hymn. A him of words.
- 15 I, no victor, saw birds in flames. What were their names?
Victor’s daughter dances the deck of the red tugboat,
marks of embers on her arms, soles of his shoes molten.
Dusty seagulls, powdered roaches, gray-flecked squirrels, ashy mice.
White birds with brown bellies high against the blue sky in Brooklyn, escape of the charred memos.
My child walks thru inches of dust that is human and she weeps for her mother.
- 20 We are breathing the dead, taking them into our lungs as living we had taken them into our arms.
“*We are all just walking each other home.*”
two horizontal towers were born, those fleeing fire and those coming close. help help helping out!
She cries, her hair a morning ruin: See our burnt balconies of air.
We’re breathing it in, all of it, all of them.
- 25 Ash-light this mask my eyes refuse to hide behind.
I look through a pupil of fire, an eyelid of ash
while running from a truth we cherish yet cannot abide.
into the residue of those screams and shouts unheard in the multilayered collapse revealed again
and again via satellite as above and below the creatures deny the supremacy of architecture,
a lock of flame-red hair or a spoke from her wheelchair,
30 but grief is my address.
I rise through the air, prayers are not what carries me.
I face the universe when I speak to the dead.
He was a friend of a friend of a friend; he knew his own mind
But never imagined how mornings can turn, how day is
relentless, how night under the lights is a burning zero.
- 35 Sunset over Jersey catches the sky has changed. Cranes slam metal into the barges somebody hose me down.
We stood in crippled traffic, on our way to close Claudia’s Brooklyn Heights window against invading ashes.
The pigeons are confused. Me, I keep my head down
I send my eyes to penetrate the heart of the city.
New York City, capital of pain, capital of desire.
- 40 The emptiness at the center has made the city sacred.
That is our own black milk crossing the sky.
All afternoon, I watch a thin stream of water shoot into a flaming highrise. The fire never goes out.
The image never fades,
The smoke from that skyline stings the eyes of a nation,
- 45 Not even the ash of Vesuvius could cover the strata of terror that day, the day before or after.
every citizen to smash ash on their foreheads, ash Tuesday, ash robes, ash socks, ash in your soup.
I still have dust on my shoes from standing too close to ground zero,
So named it got so quickly, like pinning captions on a blizzard.
new york city is in a state of raw war, manhattan a battle ground zero.
- 50 The military saviour’s spine is over-straight, like a full-bellied sideboard, comportment of a chief.
Let’s trade, my Hank Aaron for your Nolan Ryan, bologna for tuna, my 35 San Gennaro tickets for the big yellow bunny,
my sister Rebecca for your brother, Abul.
Unarmed Afghani women bare their faces to print’s dead eyes in America.
In Bhopal they’re still looking for Warren Anderson.
guilty, me guilty, you guilty, the whole damn country guilty of Middle East/non-white hostility
55 —i.e., “If anyone was ever right or wrong, this time they lost it.”
“But war it is and it is our destiny or so it seems,” sighs the old man on Flanders fields
Maria asks now: how attain twin-towers attar-nirvana; now ever we’re yester- or reincarnate kyries?
because it is the dream of every artist to contact the world
of CNN and mashed potatoes—“comfort” food in, along with Ralph Lauren American flag sweaters.
- 60 I never much liked the news—and now I know why!
Too much African bones buried under all that money.
Bow-legged thieves, insolvent priests, con artists, tender beggars, all come upon you to salvage what’s left.
Corrupt souls bring death to innocence and fear gives birth to Madison Avenue pictorials,
Wanting to be mistaken for one of them, always so busy so noisy.
- 65 I want to know did the pyramids have a 110th floor?
When I was on the very top I was lost in a cloud.
You lifted me up and showed me all. Will my love survive your fall?

Please see reverse side for the rest of the poem and the names of contributing poets

Do shaking & silence yield to reason and reflection/to mirrors red, white and blue?
 Let us not tremble. Let us not be quiet

70 A maze of grace? How great the art? We shall overcome?
 Wisdom and Dharma shall prevail!
 Sleep with the radio on all night.
 blast blast wakens us, then sleep—we've become infants of these putrid waters, sad-dream dark.
 Have you ever seen a suicidal parakeet?

75 Well it's been about an hour since an hour ago.
 Absence is the essence of being here & everywhere at the same time.
 A grief lab is built with a thousand entrance doors and a million potential exits.
 Winter is coming. I tell myself to tell myself warm.

Where does a life begin & end? How fast? How far? Who but the dead can claim an end to numbers?

80 do not give up on me us you them lucky lucky lucky number number.
 someone rolled the dice: chance still unabolished.
 Once we knew how to count by the billions of years we were not here.

Death has done its thing and moved on/an
 eternal stillness in the south of motion,
 Shadows feign surprise at how frail they are,
 how easily they vanish, own the peace.

85 Now that death has spoken, let the angels speak
 from the white porcelain city,
 So many wings; with eardrums open.
 Dundun speaks because of tension on skin, squeezing the bandages of injured history.

Future Day of Remembrance: They tried to destroy us. They didn't. Let's eat.
 They? We are they, and they are us, united in our fragile humanity

90 How does the healing of so many extreme days begin?
 When all the meanings have changed, where is the path?

For the first time, I don't have an answer, instead I'm listening.
 I hold these syllables like hands on a clock feeling the sound of time through its fingers.
 With one sullen syllable, I peel back a segment of sky.
 Afraid of syllables used to attach wings to breaths,

95 The words irreversible, unmistakable, come to me. Invincible leaves.
 Words on page, mete out this woe; words on page undo sorrow.
 Bury your breath, then sing this woe a wing a minute these days
 Of black and white marks that express shades of grey in charred hearts.
 Forgetting names is when it hit me,

100 a line that ends, ends at the sea.

And just think of literature, of literature we have not learned to do without.
 sour hearts blacken the new page, rage is only one emotion swirling in the rubble.
 26 letters is all we've got to make sense of the space between the canyons in our hearts.
 Dante's mythic animals, Chippewa, Sappho's curse, village-explainer American flags? flags?
 How about poetry's long stride, Whitman: we need you to save the covenant, we can't cover up
 the genitalia of old Roman copies in the Justice Department, too late & soon.

105 As if you could or could not, would or would not, were or were not; as if the day ended and a new
 one popped out of the imagination, free of the shadows, hurtling to an end of hurt, beyond
 sorrow's gate; but could not nor can not, would not nor will not; as if promise were just make-
 believe and make-believe a veil behind a veil; as if the news were never told and ignorance took
 the place of this incessant, miserable rain.

Love in the time of globalized greed and Day-glo diarrhea, of privatized prisons and public
 poverty, of preordained propaganda and gentrified genocide, of homogenized hate and
 consumer circumcision, of paranoid patriotism and preemptive poverty, of
 prepackaged pollution and preempted poetry.
 eye travel underground over rails of thigh bones, surrounded by my caboose of poetic lines of love,
 eye surface above ground at the speed of light, on time, inside time, singing the blues, riffin'
 licks of jazz & rock n roll, survey the empty space of once uponatimesleekhighsteel & glass
 twinedificesofhubriticglory, see them smoldering there now in a heap of smoking memory,
 after castration by two swift blows of "blowback"

I wrote this entire poem my line not among the living lines appropriate lines
 disappear pure empathy with those who disappeared.

We are on the verge of imagining something else, aren't we? Can you feel the sentence forming?

110 "Love should be put into action," screamed the dirty hermit of another poem.

1 Bob Holman/Eileen Myles, 2 Martin Espada, 3 Ed Sanders, 4 Anselm Hollo, 5 Kamau Braithwaite, 6 Clifton Joseph, 7 Tish Benson, 8 E. Ethelbert Miller, 9 Honor Moore, 10 Maureen Owen, 11 Naomi Shihab Nye, 12 Joe Dobkin, 13 Jill Bialosky, 14 Kimiko Hahn, 15 David Lehman, 16 Kathleen Masterson, 17 Ed Friedman, 18 Bob Hershon, 19 Ntozake Shange, 20 Hettie Jones, 21 Alex Jacobs, 22 Cecilia Vicuña, 23 Meena Alexander, 24 Martha Rhodes, 25 Andrei Codrescu, 26 Edward Hirsch, 27 Roger Bonair-Agard, 28 Wanda Coleman, 29 Dara McLaughlin, 30 Lee Briccetti 31 John Yau, 32 Nancy Mercado, 33 C.D. Wright, 34 Edwin Torres, 35 Max Blagg, 36 Everton Sylvester, 37 Suheir Hammad, 38 Anonymous, 39 Jessica Hagedorn, 40 Eliot Weinberger, 41 Galway Kinnell, 42 Maggie Dubris, 43 George Tysh, 44 John Kulm, 45 Michael Warr, 46 Nick Carbo, 47 Toni Blackman, 48 Jan Clausen, 49 Tato Laviera, 50 Anselm Berrigan, 51 Dave Johnson, 52 Carla Harryman, 53 Steve Colman, 54 John Rodriguez, 55 Robert Creeley, 56 Bart Droog, 57 Maria Damon, 58 David Trinidad, 59 Denise Duhamel, 60 Elaine Equi, 61 Willie Perdomo, 62 Russell Leong, 63 Terry Gelber, 64 Robert Kelly, 65 Regie Cabico, 66 Hal Sirowitz, 67 Reesom Haille, 68 Sarah Jones, 69 Indran Amirthanayagam, 70 Thomas Lynch, 71 U Sam Oeur, 72 Robert Chambers, 73 Luis Rodriguez, 74 Jeff McDaniel, 75 Kenneth Goldsmith, 76 Raymond Federman, 77 Eliot Katz, 78 Lucy Grealy, 79 Jerome Rothenberg, 80 Joan Retallack, 81 Chris Funkhouser, 82 Richard Martin, 83 Emily XYZ, 84 Vicki Hudspith, 85 Janet Hamill, 86 Gary Mex Glazner, 87 Adrian Castro, 88 Danny Shot, 89 Marcella Harb, 90 Sandra Esteves, 91 Brenda Coultas, 92 Quraysh Ali Lansana, 93 Patricia Smith, 94 Saba Kidane, 95 Mary Ann Caws, 96 Maggie Balistreri, 97 Bill Berkson, 98 Gary Lenhart, 99 Michael Gizzi, 100 Vincent Katz, 101 Marjorie Welish, 102 Staceyann Chin, 103 Jerry Quickly, 104 Anne Waldman, 105 Charles Bernstein, 106 Tony Medina, 107 Quincy Troupe, 108 Anonymous, 109 Marie Howe, 110 Adrienne Rich. Some lines were added after the graphic image of the towers was created.