

U n d e r A n o t h e r S u n

Jonah Barton

I been eating peaches off some mighty fine trees

Wendell Berry



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Chopping Wood

A goldfinch flew through the screen door
And thumped to the ground like a bird.
I stand as I have for my life,
Still, so let these hills climb over
The ploys of unpicked apple trees
And the stones that roll beneath them.
I have been ready to raise the
Straw hatchet above my head and
Strike about that which I have loved,
As the bird throws his weight to the side
And flies away.

On a Walk at Sunset, Thinking of the Promotional Quote on
the Cover of a Tourist Pamphlet for the Middletown Historical
Society

*"Middletown, I think, is the most
beautiful town of all..."*
John Adams, 1771

It might have been October
and the clouds were milky white
when he saw a bee stroll around
the edge of a morning flower.

Or perhaps he was there in March
for the last snowfall of the year,
a silent cover of powder
resting above a muddy field.

But last evening, as I sat
on the top of the hill overlooking
the cemetery, its teeth
of memory and stone,

I was too occupied
with the mosquitos on my arm
and the single droplet of sweat
crawling down the back of my neck

to notice the small line of ants
parading along a fallen birch,
their shadows
stretching the length of dawn.

I could only see the wind

as I sat under the oak
in the tall grass that afternoon.

Bumps of roots and trunk carving
their names into my back.

The branches hang low,
extending direction

and for a brief moment
they are an old parachute

falling slowly to earth,
moving air through

until a dome of fabric
is all that is around.

Warm sunlight pokes
through frayed stitches,

the grasses now
still with the day

and I think of the last time
we sat under this tree—

the quiet
whippoorwill above

and how you said
you always felt

you were sinking
into the ground.

Word of the Day

For Mom

ingeminate cenatory spindrift hyponym ideographic discursive
sinology collywobbles inkhorn palinode rifacimento prolepsis
extemporize exigency nonage anodyne peripeteia fugacious

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Ny, ny

I want to get married to a rat in New York but I've got cold feet. I'm staring at the gutter on the street and I want to put each of my fingers in between each bar until my hands are spread like a frog. I get stuck and someone calls the fire department to let me loose and they give me one of their sexy calendars for my troubles. I can't hang it on the fridge or my rat wife will be mad. I figure I better get her some flowers and on the way I stop at a corner stand. I'm trying to negotiate hotdog prices with this guy, but he starts yelling at me and his face turns into a pretzel, all weird and twisted. I'm walking away and step in dog shit so I ask a woman nearby to spray me down with her hose. She's in her mid 50s, and is wearing a floral dress of hydrangeas and lilies. I tell her that she wouldn't believe the day I've had and she starts peeling the flowers from her dress and hands them to me in a bouquet. Late that night when I get back to the apartment I'll set the flowers down on the kitchen table and see my rat wife tucked away in her matchbox bed, the sounds of humming trains and feet on the floor closeby.

After a Big Rain

I didn't know you
when you asked me
to write you a love poem.

Who could be sure
that being with you
was like sitting under

an almond tree and
not eating a peach
on a warm day?

How could one know
that your eyes were pale
like the shell

of an egg
and not
the inside of a coconut?

So instead I held the page
and carefully
folded for you

a paper crown
to wear upon
your head

which, as you later
learned, could be
fashioned a small boat

releasing it at
the top of the creek
by your house

navigating currents
when the water is up
after a big rain.

Threshold

I have tried to enter the swollen cathedral
to drink the blue glass and aged wood inside.
An old man stands at the door,
a bottle of stale whiskey in one hand, a bouquet
of wildflowers in the other. He has stood
on this stoop himself before, has cut flesh,
ridden through the folded snows,
only a shadow against those splintered doors.
When he leans in close to speak
there's a certain look to his breath,
the way it curls over itself like a gray sea.



The Olive Tree

The olive tree
is lone
but for a
young girl
standing near
with a tool
three-pronged
and long.
Each morning
I have seen her rake
the empty shells
that meet
at the edge
of the roots.
They gather
in piles of
scarlet clusters
up to her shins,
as she combs
their shapes
into soft lines
of three.
When she has
finished the day
she sits
on a bench
facing her work
until the
sun rises
again.

The grass
was still frozen
from the morning
shadow when
I approached
the bench and asked
the matter of her.
Why do you tire
yourself for this tree
I ask, she is but
another tree
in a forest
of one
thousand trees?
The young girl grins
and points to
the corner of
the basket
beside her:
a small
toy airplane and
a jar of olives
carefully picked
for another.

Stitches

a man lays
back in his chair

a hole
where the skin

of his forehead
once was.

he laughs at the stars
so they sow

his scalp back
with honey and twine

for one last look
at the bowl

of drunk plums
and salt

resting
in his lap.



Poetic Wandering - A Reflection on the Unsayable

The preceding collection of poems, Under Another Sun, was written throughout the semester in Danielle Vogel's intermediate poetry workshop.

Fall 2023

How does one approach what cannot be said?
Do you tiptoe towards it? Grab its ankles from behind?
Greet it with a warm smile? If you scare it, will it run away?

Maybe wander through,
I decided.

When I first approached this project, I thought of my adventures.

Sitting under a tree and watching the day pass by.
Picking up weird looking leaves to keep by my desk.
Finding a cool stone, too round for its own good.

There's a feeling I get when I wander. My chest is light and my
nose is cold. I smile at the sky.

These were the days I spent and wanted to share.
Wanted to put them in a nice little mason jar for you.
Air tight seal so you could keep it in the cabinet above the fridge
for a few seasons.

Then we met the dreamwriter, his pink envelopes, and small
letters: a fearless wordsmith.

Sometimes it feels like there's someone standing over your
shoulder when you write, making sure you don't scribble down
something terrible. Something that just might end it all.

He taught me that it's ok to peek behind your back every now
and then to remind yourself that when you're writing, it's just
you and a piece of paper.

He is a wanderer the way I want to be.

When one has a plan, there is no room for the strange.
No room for the beauty of what arises naturally.

Plans are for the lazy, then.
There is a certain courage to love and hope for what you do not
know.

I've found a love for language in this class that I never knew I'd
have. How a word feels in your mouth. In your bones. Sitting
across the table from one and looking it in the eyes until you
make it laugh.

I like to pick em apart now too. Like ribs or fried chicken. Each
sound, the shape of your mouth when you do it.

The rythm of it.
The way it pushes and shoves itself around you like a two step
beat and rhyme.

So, it is here ---passed along through the woods, the sidewalks and
neon signs---

I find myself sitting at my desk, moonlight shining down
on my notebook,

thinking about how grateful I am to have wandered
these past few months.



Gratitudes

For Danielle Vogel

For my classmates (and fishermen/poets Ben and Chloe)

For Mom, Dad, Ruby

For Hank, Coco, Charley

For the poets whose work I've spent time with this semester:
Margaret Atwood, A. H. Jerriod Avant, Joshua Beckman,
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Evie Shockley, Kathryn Smith, Mathias Svalina, Matthew
Sweeny, Danielle Vogel, and William Carlos Williams.

Notes

This edition belongs to:



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