

BROKEN TO PIECES TOGETHER

Bin Ramke

*Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold,
broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the sum-
mer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away...*

— Daniel 2:35

broken is to whole as
anger is to angel

water is to wet as
mercury is to arsenic

through is to door as
gate is to gap

weave is to wire
as German is to English

a wire is a metal string
drawn through clay it cuts

cleanly earth to form
look at earth from behind

you see the world waiting
for its entrance. En-tranced

I think

*Where the black shingles slope to meet the boughs,
And – shattered on the roof like smallest snows –*

The tiny petals of the mountain-ash *Frederick Goddard Tuckerman*

earth
glitters at times,

at other times turns its back
Earth is to child as clay is

trance is to entrance
is to entrance

glance is to glaze as
ice is to glisten,

listen, listen, listen
again against.

THREE MEDITATIONS ON MATTER

Bin Ramke

nonmetallic inorganic compounds

1. *THE HALFNESS OF THE MOON*

We knew they saw because silence
meant humans drifted to the dark side, voiceless:
Borman, Lovell, and Anders.
Loss of signal at 68 hours, 58 minutes, 45 seconds
into flight when Apollo 8 passed behind the moon.
The first earth animals to look down
upon the moon;

at night I looked up
at the lighted sphere
which seems a disk,
a coin of rock.
Upon the lighted moon I saw
“alliterations of shadows and
of things shadowed,” my own
earth upon which I stood.

Wallace Stevens

If there is water on the moon it is not
in the form of water we wash
our faces in. Looking down
at the lighted moon in the bucket
I wash my face and the moon
wavers dangerously.

As a child of the south I know
the value of shadow, how the sun
kills and glitters across
the surface of a small lake
like nothing the moon offered
or ever will. A river is different.

*A little boat can go anywhere
and take me there, he said
his last words, the last to leave.*

2. INSTABILITY OF NONPRIME PREY CYCLES IN CICADAS

*even nonmetals may be metals. For example, in certain
situations, you may find metallic oxygen or metallic
carbon*

— Anne Marie Helmenstine

Calcium is an alkaline earth metal. Hydrogen
in its metallic state is an alkali. Description
as destiny is one way to know a world.

Lithium, sodium, potassium. Pronunciation
as a form of music. The world vibrates when struck.
A string of vanadium stretched across the acropolis

could make a sound in wind. Does, in fact.
To know is to gnaw, said the beetle.

3. *The Ceramicist Waits*

Hear the molecules mold as material warms:
as she melts earth, her fuel glistens
a cloud of earth a clod confirms
the form she gives – earth took of earth

*Erthe toc of erthe erthe wyth woh,
erthe other erthe to the earthe droh,
erthe leyde erthe in erthene throh,
tho hevede erthe of erthe erthe ynoh*

The Ludlow Scribe B, Harley MS

to make a thing, not man, of soil
is to garden or to be a god
or if the soil burns and melts
and becomes immortal

it is to be an artist who waits
while matter melts and melds then cools
into comfort, the only we know.

We, made of clay, stand
upon and drink from clay
and shatter it like laughter.

WHERE TO LIVE

Bin Ramke

*for Nathan Isgur, best known for his work on the excited states
of the proton and for his role in the discovery of a new sym-
metry of nature which describes the behavior of heavy quarks*

— Thomas Jefferson National Accelerator Facility

Locally Euclidean the land
can be formed and farmed
and still remind us of mind-
made things – the shape as
shape not as thing shaped.
Home is a habit.

A string strummed
is a voice given (allowed at least).

Imagine
a wave of clay (an earth)
at what speed waves travel
the speed of sound through
home, dirt. Remember a string
a tin-can-telephone.

(I decided not / decided to write
not a poem about a war not
a war / it was my time it was about
time and a friend / when I
was a boy Nathan was good and
kind and scientific; he left this land
he left us for Canada.)

A string is like a line but finite.
Other elementals include
how to make a clay whistle
in the shape of an animal
or perhaps a cloud

✖

The sound of a bat deafening
while I watch the shape a bat makes
a crazed astronomy *it zigzags through the air*
 like a crack through a cup. The way
 the track of a bat breaks through evening's
 porcelain R. M. Rilke, 8th Elegy

against the lighter dark of sky
she swerved stochastic
it would seem to the silent
but the flatness of a prairie was

at issue, and how to measure the mind
of a boy who escaped to a northern
realm.

 In your clod of hollow clay make
a beak a mouth then three holes
to make eight notes; to make a hole remove clay
to make a note

start with no holes /*do*.
Cut the first hole / *re*.
Cover the first hole cut a second hole to make *mi*.
Blow into your whistle / *do re mi fa*
cut hole a third hole to enable *so*;
get to *la* by covering the second hole
blowing into your whistle. *Ti*
by covering the first hole leaving two uncovered
as you blow into your whistle.
Leave all holes uncovered and blow
again your whistle for *do* an octave above.

How human it is to name the notes:
as with any physics, what is *isness*; *being*
does not announce itself the same
at all times and turnings – science
tricks itself into being itself.

The names came
from a song to John the Baptist by Guido
of Arezzo, our names for notes.
The song asked god to give us voice
to sing praises. Any thing that is in time
is a voice, a vibration heard by the wise.
Or by the lucky.

Clean the guilt from our stained lips,
O Saint John, it began.

✕

The loose string
of/at the end of the universe
to which you attached
your crochet hook
or was it you who pulled
out of curiosity only armed
with fingers?