

spacecraftprojects

we are all astronauts

transmissions
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ODE, AMPLIFIED

Appreciations first and foremost to the loudspeakers, the active
monitor 6,000-watt boom to fill cave or cavernous sky, the way
5- and 7- year-olds can empower a morning, expand
an afternoon, explode a summer bedtime

Much love to the microphones: handheld, wireless, lavalier, cardioid,
dynamic unidirectional, what inanimate object can come
this close to a kiss?

Shout out to the light-emitting diodes in the dark, cinders alive
phosphorescent bounce on the mixing board (some might say
dance) how century-old Lola's vital signs looked from the
St. Luke's bed after her second stroke

Thank God for the reach into the bag, the extra set of rechargeable
batteries, cells of gold in hand

Can't forget the speaker stands, tripedal alloy with the ability to hold
unknown heaviness, the way dad endured after mom's death
with slender elegance over the 5-year odds to double down 10 –
all elevation and stability and hidden hollowness

The cables, the cables! Aux, XLR, RCA, ah the satisfying clack of the 1/4”
plug in its connection, the way Lolo affixed the clip in his rifle as
he hid under the table, the first round slid in the chamber while the
Bataan Death March rivered around his abandoned barrio

Respect to the power strip, the extension cord, those immigrant
inventions

I see you zip ties, I see you gaff tape, tucking away cords how families
conceal secrets, preventing stumbles but still perceptible
underfoot, fault lines inching for years then erupting unwarned

Gratitude to the sound engineer! In dancehall’s early days the
soundman caught one in the eye if the mic ain’t sound nice. Thanks
to the thumb and forefinger, the twist of knobs EQs and frequencies,
also used to turn pages of favorite comics, sign debts, brush tears,
text loved ones, tease lovers

All these, all you, praise due for reminding us that brilliant craft is
unobtrusive – yet when connected and tuned proper – sounds
like redemption, amplified.

–for Choolwe

WEEKEND VISIT

x.

a year after the doctor gave
your mother the pill
that forced you
ex utero, you returned
with a vengeance

a.

first night you visited our youngest son
it was both warning and reminder:

his price for getting to be youngest

always. vomited a dozen times

howled and whimpered

did not sleep

emptied his digestive tract

tore the embers

in his skin

even at two years old

he will remember

z.

the next evening you came for the eldest
your *ate*, second guardian
it was a test:
you had to see what she was made of
she took it like the four year-old
boss big sis she is
holding her belly on the couch eyes half open
said, *daddy i think i'm gonna throw up*
leaned over the edge, over
the stainless steel palanggana
filled it with her lunch and dinner
leaned back on the pillow
daddy, i'm ready to go back to bed now
middle of the night she was up checking
on lil bro and me

d.

especially me, because you brought me the worst
and rightfully so
trying to sleep i felt the gnawing, the heat inside
leapt from bed damn near threw
my body inside out into the toilet
writhing on the couch my back and abdomen

squeezing fists and pummeling each other
flipping between shivering chill and drenching sweat
wasn't til i started moaning words
that i realized it was you
after the fifth repetition, *let me sleep please let me sleep*
turned to *i'm sorry i'm so sorry*
became *thank you*
fell into hot tears

m.

you spared your mother because
well, she's mama
you both bled enough together
plus someone had to hold it down
for the rest of us

x.

i have to commend your timing
you waited til a month after your siblings' birthdays
so they could settle into their ages
waited til friday night after
mama's big interview that morning
so we can eat and keep the house

after your daddy's thesis deadline
so i could close that book and make room
for you to bring the real one
you stayed a long weekend
made us all a holiday
gone tuesday morning
a crack in a little oakland house
with a crumbling foundation in need of repair
a negative space we paint life around
the cough in our chest that wakes us
the hole in the night time
a hole in the horizon

1998: GOLDEN SHOVEL MATHEMATICS

KNOWLEDGE

blasting

off this rock atmosphere burns slow silver total eclipse holes

in eternity's fabric universal aortic valves open in

and in and under this cosmic epidermis the

inhale siphoned inside the abyss' throat night

tatted up with shooting stars til

signature stretches the sky she

remembers black holes bled

rays of sun

ultraviolet shine

WISDOM

i

said

god whatchu

think I want

from this life? to

wait? to wish? to be

afraid? but never reach beyond? she

nodded her head crown sharpening sun said,

that and that and that too everything a

part: fear doubt despair joy love victory live live live live live get it live live live

UNDERSTANDING

universal

eternal metaphysical extraterrestrial seen unseen omniscient ever present law:

always give thanks truth seeks light always walk whatchu

talk and carry your weight and don't throw

stones from hidden hands don't call out

trouble not ready when it comes

always guard your partner's back

and children's spirits to

promise protect you,

my star

EL CAMPANIL

What I'll miss most are the bells. The ten are almost 130 years old, housed in the first concrete-reinforced structure west of the Mississippi. They sat quietly in a hall for 11 years before the campanile was built. Decorative. Heavy, in mass and silence. It took two wealthy benefactors and Julia Morgan, the first woman licensed as an architect in the state, to create the structural and engineering conditions for the bells to sing, even through earthquakes.

what iron silences are we
that others stroll past on breezy days
and overlook?

what designs what resources
will it take to animate silences
as massive as ours?

When I first moved here the bells kept me awake at night. They ring at 15-minute intervals, with the lengthier choruses falling on the hour, and what seems like a concert at noon and midnight. Now I have to pause, rest, and focus to really discern them. Outside in the back at dusk, eyes closed.

what voices are we
that strike and ring out
yet are not heard?

what pollution must be
cleared, of noise, of spirit?

HOUSING SOCIAL DISTANCE / DURING A PANDEMIC

while not surprising still / astonishing to face the concrete / wood and stucco reality /
that you save for years work / decades you and your partner / establish careers
earning / degree after degree plus / certifications plus side gigs and grow / your
children in a small / house you are fortunate / to own though much smaller / during
quarantine you still feel guilty / cause you have greater privilege / than your friends
who are hustling / lumpia out the trunk to make up for lost / restaurant industry /
wages or your students who don't have / a reliable enough connection / to sign the
paperwork you sent for the essential services summer jobs / you helped them line up
and all the same / you get your finances / together your budget / spreadsheets
weighing meals vs gymnastics vs / college savings and you go to see a house nearby /
that's close to your upper range maybe / a long shot if they get a bunch of offers but
it's on a nice woodsy block with a great oak tree / in the backyard which is auspicious
because / this is oakland after all and in a nice picture frame / on the dining table is a
letter to potential buyers wherein / steve and natalie wax rhapsodic about the blue
jays / and sparrows in the front yard and the family of wild turkeys / frequently
strolling by and the west-facing balcony / where they would sit with their glasses of
vino and as they describe / how their kids have grown you realize / they are about ten
years / younger than you meaning maybe in this moment / ten years ahead / and
while you're not one to compare what the next has / as you breathe into the
inestimable / wealth of the family waiting in the car upstairs you can't help but / note
that this property which you probably / won't be able to afford — was their starter
home