

The City

Laura Winton

I.

The fool, beggar, collector of things—
a scavenger trashfarming
a strange organic tapestry from
the rubble of a city. Pompeii. Atlantis.
Punctures flesh bloody
and droll—the rubble
of a city not bombed
or burned. Apostolic.
On guard: visions and angels
in broken bottle shards; extinction
in a chicken bone: Toucan beast,
nose-heavy, grounded, domesticate.
A city dead: mammoths and saber-
toothed visions of eden.
Evidences of Christianity.
Archeologist of the living.

Laura Winton is a writer and performer whose work focuses on turning text into performance. Her writing and performing work ranges from surrealist poetry, manifestos, fiction and creative nonfiction to spoken word performance, performance art, and absurdist theatre. She also publishes *Karavane: Or, the Temporary Death of the Bruitist*, a journal of experimental performance texts. She is currently pursuing her PhD in theatre at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities, where she has also lived and worked for the past 11 years.

II.

Refineries burn all night, apocalypse
city whose towers and pipes blossom
into fire, the sky red all night long, northern,
nagasaki nights: six months of unnatural light.
You'll learn to sleep in the blue
indoor glow of television test
patterns and practice for
unnamable emergencies. Apocalypse
city: name spoken in whisper.
Shadow monuments.
Red sky at night . . .
Red sky at morning . . .

III.

In the suburbs they are building the cities of the future: high rise
teleports in beige symmetry. George Jetson flies overhead, dumps
coffee on the city of the past. Green glass mall windows make a hot
house, as if something will grow there: hospital-sterile clean buildings,
smog-repellent windows with unnatural air and noises inside.

The inhabitants of the old city are bused out to sweep the streets,
collect the trash, and take it back with them.

IV.

Ask the Question:

How does the wheel stop on
America / Small Town / White / Girl ?
How does it stop
on Gaza / Palestinian? Bosnia / Moslem? Iran / Woman?

Where are the new cities to be swept and sculpted there?

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V.

The city spreads outward in
faster and faster concentric circles. The city
spreads like water rushing off a table faster
from the center
from ground zero,
from buildings shattered and abandoned
not bombed or burned.

Plywood windows are billboards
written in strange languages
— dead languages
birthed from the old city; stillborn. Window frames
hang heavy like fenders bent beneath truck
tires, sidewalk shattered. I could be
anywhere. Belfast.
Oklahoma. Beirut.

Asbestos snowflakes float
overhead, the ashes
of Jews, nuclear winter remnants
of a city
at the epicenter.

VI.

The city spreads outward into
Sisyphean hills rolling on and on push
the stone it rolls down the next push
the stone it rolls down push
the stone.
Push.

VII.

Evolution in an assembly line.
Life awaiting a patent.
You can build a rainforest with plastic battered-birds and chlorine
salt water.
Child toys remind us of what used to be: the quaint old city and its
jungles outside.
Domes hold the sky in place, refract the sun in 3-D prisms,
Zoos and seedbanks are old-age homes for what was once wild as
the memory of home and habitat disappear
in chromosome amnesia:

Extinction.

Re-invent yourself.
Excuse yourself
to make room for what comes next.

VIII.

In every silence there is a prayer,
and this moment is already
writing itself.