

Dissolution

Category: Poems

written by Jocelyn Jiao | August 6, 2010

Jocelyn Jiao

the articles went first.
then the pronouns, the verbs,
nouns. they melted away, leaving
only memories of warmth
cradled by salivary glands.
adjectives flutter behind
my front teeth, ready for flight.
only adverbs remain,
curled beneath my tongue—
yawning, drowsy:
the softest words of vocabulary.

the lilt of my voice has left too,
soapy Californian vowels
scrubbed clean.
when i speak to my mother,
she complains of my consonants,
how they have begun
to iron out cadences, climb
over inflections, ride
them into deep sand. she says
only my whisper remains whole.
but not for long;
already the throat whistles.

it all started at your
bedside, when your lips
were parted, straining
to form one first, final word.
a sudden embrace of cold
concrete made you into
some bright thing with eyes
translucent, gasping
for the comfort of
water, empty and clear—
when ebullience
once spilled from your lips
as a sun warms an earth.

do you see? words are meant
for creatures of air. i have no use for them;
even fish can sing.

gently, carefully, tenderly,

night arrives; it pivots and
provides no answer. i feel your name
coil in my mouth, watch
as it ebbs away
with the receding waters.

About the poet:

Jocelyn Jiao just graduated from <leo_highlight
leohighlights_underline="true"
leohighlights_url_bottom="http%3A//shortcuts.thebrowserhighlighter.com/leonardo/plugin/highlights/3_2/tbh_highlightsBottom.jsp?keywords%3Dstanford%2520university%26domain%3Dwww.pulsevoices.org"
leohighlights_url_top="http%3A//shortcuts.thebrowserhighlighter.com/leonardo/plugin/highlights/3_2/tbh_highlightsTop.jsp?keywords%3Dstanford%2520university%26domain%3Dwww.pulsevoices.org"
leohighlights_keywords="stanford%20university" id="leoHighlights_Underline_0"
style="border-bottom-width: 2px; border-bottom-style: solid; border-bottom-color: rgb(255, 255, 150); background-color: transparent; background-image: none; background-attachment: scroll; cursor: pointer; display: inline; background-position: 0% 50%; background-repeat: repeat repeat; ">Stanford University with a bachelor of arts degree in human biology.<leo_highlight
id="leoHighlights_Underline_0" leohighlights_keywords="stanford%20university"
leohighlights_url_top="http%3A//shortcuts.thebrowserhighlighter.com/leonardo/plugin/highlights/3_2/tbh_highlightsTop.jsp?keywords%3Dstanford%2520university%26domain%3Dwww.pulsevoices.org"
leohighlights_url_bottom="http%3A//shortcuts.thebrowserhighlighter.com/leonardo/plugin/highlights/3_2/tbh_highlightsBottom.jsp?keywords%3Dstanford%2520university%26domain%3Dwww.pulsevoices.org" leohighlights_underline="true"
style="border-bottom-width: 2px; border-bottom-style: solid; border-bottom-color: rgb(255, 255, 150); background-color: transparent; background-image: none; background-attachment: scroll; cursor: pointer; display: inline; background-position: 0% 50%; background-repeat: repeat repeat; ">

About the poem:

"Language is probably the most precious of gifts. Without it, we are utterly alone—smothered and helpless. While not all of us may have experienced the same kind of loss, we all have lost *something*. I think we can all relate to how, at the most terrible and profound of times, what comes immediately is not a shout or scream. Words escape us. Bodies take charge; they force us to mourn, properly, in silence."

Poetry editors:

Judy Schaefer and Johanna Shapiro