

Trick Vessels

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Contents

The Night Grew Dark Around Us	11
The Unnamed Creature Said to Come from Water	12
Floating Vessels	13
Visa	14
Landslide	15
Cant	16
The Sea Emptied	19
Prefaces for Other Occasions	20
To the Centre of the Earth	23
Rooms	26
Changeling	28
The Oilbird	29
On Shadowing and Reading Dew	31
Fuddling Cup	32
Gluttony Cup	33
Pot Crown	34
Dutch Courage	35
Tusks	36
Seven Acts of Mercy	37
A Window at KFC, Frederick Street, Near to a Gaol	38
Capital	39
Golden Grove	40
Carnival	42
Aid	43
How to Put a Cat into a Hypnotic Trance	44
And This Note Was Not an Answer	45
The Marble Altar	46
My Father's Car	47
Prima Facie	48
The House Was Really Falling from the Sky	51
Dribble Cup	53
Afterwards	55

Watermelon	57
Prefaces for Seasons	58
Bolt	62
Trick Vessels	64
This Is A Gift For Someone Who Will Not Have It	70
Thanks	72
Acknowledgements	74

For my parents
Margaret Bagoo and Daniel Holder

The action of the device is as follows: three liquids of different colours are poured into a hole in the cover of the jar in succession; shortly after all the liquid has been poured in, the liquids discharge from an outlet pipe in the same succession. As is the case with Philo and Hero, the Banū Mūsā give few constructional details; dimensions are not given, nor are we told how the small tanks and other components inside the large jar were supported. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that these trick vessels were made, and experiments confirm that they would have worked.

—Donald Hill,
A History of Engineering in Classical and Medieval Times

Tissue and bones, it was a trick

—Grizzly Bear, ‘Ready, Able’

The Night Grew Dark Around Us

Let the daughter of that hibiscus say:

“His love has no end.”

Let the mother of the daughter say:

“His love has no end.”

Let the author of the mother say:

“His love has no end.”

Let the love, which is a flower, say:

“His love had no end.”

Let the flower, which is the night, say:

“His love has no end.”

The Unnamed Creature Said to Come From Water

Give me two pairs of shoes, burn one on the beach
Dip the other at sea and then will you be free

Hear this: the ocean is not meant to be lit at night
Instead of going to water I go to light

I have swum in invisible ink for thousands of years
Liquid and air have parted, empty for centuries

Now I change your habit of playing in the rain
Now you come to learn the danger of lightning

I have figured out how to enter your dreams
I have deciphered the cipher for these trick vessels

The black voices sank and were drowned in the sea
The noises hush beneath the neon pool

Shackles chain you now, cup of tea in hand
Day dreaming by the water, feathers in the sand

At nights you sleepwalk here, where dank moths die
You walk in rain and wake up sweating, his lie

Your mother cannot name her great grandmother
Your father does not know where his village was

But I have such knowledge, I ensure these erasures
I follow the stop, I do not leak

Floating Vessels

Are stained white.
Black ink declared
All men to be equal but
Spines, rigged like chains,
Choked other limbs:
Feathered men
Replaced.

These vessels have knowledge
Where the sea ends.

Drains in Port of Spain
Flow where blue blood
Opens worlds.

Visa

for the world is defined by your island
your garden floods centuries away
over concrete jungle birds congregate
and the latitudes are crutches

where ideas come worlds leave me
soon words come and questions flee
when countries come I long for silence
in silence are memories of the sea

it was easy to imagine your island
a furniture wed to agile spies
a stable is where they keep me
wrecked forever on memory

Landslide

What a stunning view.
Pity.

The land must now
redecorate itself,
pull the carpet out
shed
houses like yours.

The land must now
peel salt layers, put on
a corduroy mud jacket.

It does not need your help to dress.
Grow up.

What a pity about the house.
That stunning view of the sea.

How big a word, sea

Only three letters...

Cant

I

You forget it
 but it is true
 almost all of the earth
is covered with sand
pale grains tumble
under mountainous water
sustaining a thought
 across the centuries

whereas the stars are grains
whereas sleep takes me to them
whereas the eternal stretch is sleep
whereas your dog is a fur coat

 the dream breathes water
my hand gulps sand
 a bottle pounds the castle
knocking on the steel earth
 frothing
 making
a hollow noise

II

The man at the corner
 my eye is one
 the Three Kings

the streets of Belmont
 zigzag and then jump

walls that are waves
brick-tiled pink salmon

I tell left to right by the birthmark on my arm
The ghost beneath old newspaper photos

Consider the movement of this page
Caused by the shape of a poem

How the tips of white eyes
Have become black stops
 Pause when arrested
Stains

Contronyms are not discernable
Until it is too late. Versus

Moves towards its antithesis
 Two funerals for the King
 The missing sock is a key

I no longer desire to ask questions
But in silence more come
But in silence more come
But in silence more come
 My mother
 desired things

I want to sleep now
 until I reverse the outside
the burnt house he photographed
 trim from afar
turning to a ruin

An old man sits on the red love seat
 saved from the fire
For me to capture
With light

The Sea Emptied

i. Ms Jack's Daughter Leaves Us in Rage

In this crystal drain a fish grows
Until we abandon all things
Drain water of conversation
Clear softness of petals and weeds
As sure as that mossy drain:
She was enraged at broken terracotta men
Who picked plaster with scattered rain
A barren geography of drains
That the sea emptied
Now walls grow taller bodies

ii. Ms Jack's House Grows Wild Lungs

Held under by small hands
A floating plastic bag breathes salt
It swims away before it is named
A rose shawl freed of boats