

# **A SLOW ARCHIVE**

*Poems*

Josh Honn

*for Pam*

*Those who attend to the dying have their own language for prayer.*  
—Alejandra Pizarnik

•

How can I speak  
of trees  
when we've created  
immovable systems  
without roots

& then I think

Bird's nest  
breath leaves  
wind and shade

## AN ACORN

Please, please,  
    leave me be—  
let me be  
    a tree

Being a tree is a fine thing  
    to be—  
to aspire to provide  
some shade

•

In the shade  
    mosquitoes swarm  
but they do not  
    land on me

I should feel lucky  
    but mostly I feel  
alone—

What future shade  
    will I seek?

## AN ORCHID

Dried-up and purple-black  
    hanging and attached  
a lifeless limb alive

Not memory,  
    nor remembrance  
but reminder—  
    shadow  
    subconscious companion

*ghost*

Yes, of this beautiful necessity  
    a singular inevitability  
    an ever-presence

*Yes.*

And also      a never-end  
                 a lifelessness  
                 a process

Dried-up and purple-black  
    hanging and attached  
a lifeless limb alive



•

Whether the weather  
withers or not,

the sun

•

One of us asks  
but does not  
say,

Which ways but side should a tree sway?

Screened-in & dew-dropped  
we watch a window  
for

should we look at each other  
another kind of rain

# LITHOPS SALICOLA

Only the living

stone knows

that every

stone is a life



## OF NUMBERS

Maybe the number of leaves that fall  
each year is equal to the hairs on our head,  
but what of wonder, wind?

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Death as consequence of being  
*(beyond)*

literature

# **BENZODIAZEPINE**

Yes, the river dried out, but this bed is still  
the Lethe. (What have I forgotten? What will  
I forget? How do you swim from sleep?)

I want to make soluble again the dust of my past.

## MARGINALIA

He wrote, *phantom?*, and a few moments later  
erased it and in its place wrote, *conscience*.



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The title of  
every photograph  
is

The wind,  
pictured and not

•

A man —me, not me

repeating,

*... less of a floor,*

*... less of a floor,*

*... less of a floor*

•

Some say, *before death the past flashes before  
your eyes*, but for the lover it's the future.

And so I look for places to move memory to.

# MOONSNOW

Moonsnow glows  
    through sleep  
achromatic insomnia  
my head weighted  
with memory,  
    saudade

How does a dullness  
    have a depth?

Oh, it illuminates  
a paleness against  
the reflection of your  
    sickness

There, futureempty space,  
I hurt and hold  
    and hoard

as if this winter  
were my only  
stomach

How does an emptiness  
have a hunger?

To know,  
that the thing  
you want  
is the thing  
you do not want

# HOSPITAL NIGHT

As patient

care

is labor too

A working

dream

of rest

•

Barbarous and beautiful

this bracing

for

A with

beyond

without

A length

lost through to

length

## A SLOW ARCHIVE

Soft petals turned and fallen

The plants know

they sense

and have sympathy with the dying

a dry run at death

Now alone

and with no

discernible rhythm these

dry drops they

accumulate like

cumulative symptoms

and lighten like

a slow archive

of life



- 

This thing that cannot be

This thing that

This thing      used to be

•

To seep back  
and form  
a soft space

To step from  
and break  
a hardness

To float by  
and share  
a safe pace

To remain again unnamed  
and to ever ask  
never say

•

When the wind has stopped  
do you remind yourself  
that the wind  
does not stop?



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in 1979, and lives in Chicago.

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