

SILVER & BLACK HOLE

JOSEPH HOLT

[Lester Hayes]

Separation is not knowing your father's number.
It's postmarks from Tucson, Grand Cayman
or Vermont. It shows in his old handprints—
gummy and dark, permanent as tar.

[Fred Biletnikoff]

The lone smokestacks, isolated chimneys
in overgrown, infertile fields—you'd think
they were once part of some larger structure.
And now the structure is what—silt? ash?

[Jay Schroeder]

My windows shattered and my lawn salted,
my tires gouged and my name a trendy curse—
why might I expect fanfare the next town over,
tickertape, free dinner, a warm towel?

[Bo Jackson]

The comet's tail is an illusion,
like fan blades tracing the air,
wisps that signal an absence more
memorable than the object itself.

[Ted Hendricks]

I lie awake hearing tragic
old ballads on frequencies
that no longer exist, fearing what
my father was I'll become to you.

[Vince Evans]

For every scab
there's a scar
made worse
for the picking.

[Jack Tatum]

Earthquakes are a fact. Just try debating
a hundred-thousand tons of toppled concrete.
We hardly know which way
to point our ears for an absent apology.

[Al Davis]

A streetlight blinks out, bottles
shatter against brick walls, an engine
rings and the moon glows and in our hearts
there's nothing so seductive as darkness.

[Kenny Stabler]

My fear is merely winding through your life
like a snake, close to the ground and half-hidden
in weeds, choking on dust, sleeping in pits,
given only the notice deserving a twig.

[Bill Pickel]

The smoke should have reached us
before the fire. We should have sweat
through our shirts before the walls burned,
taken alarm at the cinders hissing by our feet.

[Dan Pastorini]

The word I want is *senseless* or *selfish*,
when it means mourning
the war horse with a broken leg
that now feeds a family of fifty.

[JaMarcus Russell]

In the worst droughts we find stones shaped
like potatoes and roast them in a pit,
scour the pond and grind fish bones
until they're fine enough to swallow.

[Marcus Allen]

There's exile and there's *exile*. One you leave
on your own. The other you fear what lurks
in shadows, shiver at the slightest breeze,
blink fiercely into a vacant mirror.

[Howie Long]

In one dream I strike a match and cast myself
in darkness across an empty room.
As the flame shrinks into my fingertips
I vanish like sulfur carried on smoke.

[Ray Guy]

And I wish to be whisked into the stratosphere
not by jet stream or current but by force alone—
when I descend you'll know it's not helium
that separates us, but my own goddamn will.

[Gene Upshaw]

Our histories ferment in attics, in boxes
taped at the seams,
spotted with mold, awaiting
combustion from a merciful arsonist.

[Sebastian Janikowski]

I've seen monuments and mountains exposed
to the wind, moldering into domes, fractured
by ice and carved by rain, swelling
with rivers washing mud to the sea.

[Dave Casper]

I'll disappear and you'll be left
grappling the floor. I'll evaporate.
You'll sense me drifting along
the rafters as reachable as a ghost.

[Todd Marinovich]

I've learned too many words for regret,
remorse, family fled and legacy busted—
yet without loss there'd be no redemption.
And what did we learn from our fathers?

[Tim Brown]

The years pile up like leaves, silver rain
chipping at the windows, black mist
blending day with night. I huff into my coupled fists
only to conjure you in the chair beside me.