

Mute

Suppose we awaken stripped of speech.
No greeting issues from open mouths,
no mumbled word in return.
Hours before, we lay stark against crisp sheets,
fingers linked in one last ruse
of solidarity, until sleep tossed us apart,
and, past twitch of tissue, crossbow
of bone, clutch of mind and muscle,
our souls slipped softly away,
their journeys erratic, traceless. Separate.

When, bruised and dazed, we startle back
to breath, nerve, nuance,
our eyes skip away from each other, shy
from dark travel, from all we have seen
and all we have not. Memory, fragmented,
roars in our ears. How, without speech,
shall we silence it? How meet the coming hours?
How explain, justify, edit—
how shall we fill our selves?

The moments heap themselves before us
like foreign fruit. Action withers:
our arms lift, stop mid-gesture, fall listlessly.
Soon our minds cease even to label thought.
Thought becomes a vapor trail, dispersing
in a mute wind. Next
is a sensation of falling inward. Silence
is an empty room we must furnish:
we have only ourselves.
Simultaneously expanding and contracting,
we find ourselves—and each other--
in a steadied gaze, in a turn of the wrist,
in economy of movement:
we fear the heft of our bodies will split
the now jeweled silence.
We are warm, wrapped in wordlessness,
and the touching of our souls.

Gail Radley

This day, this long awakening, this newborn thing—
we guard it, cup our hands around its flame,
love it, that perhaps the days will reel themselves out
this way, until
 the Word,
 the new and holy Word
startles us, as the silence did,
to another new wakefulness, calling,
echoing across the canyons
like the sudden golden gonging
 of light