

ROPEWALK

R and S enter.

S takes place at crank. R, holding a rope, takes place at opposing end. R begins threading rope onto the mechanism, walking back and forth. S watches.

R returns to place at opposite end and picks up paddle from floor, placing it between the lengths of rope.

(pause.)

R and S hold eye contact.

S:

Forth. West. 4 or 5. Occasionally 6. Slight or moderate. Fair. Good.

(pause.)

S begins cranking mechanism.

R:

200 miles a day. 17 to 22 miles per hour. no more than 35.

they arrive in april and may. they leave september and october. constant fluxes of to and fro.

red throat. tail streamers. a coil. contraception. seafaring. winches. capstans. nets.

the fishermen return home to their wives. hardened skin on your palms from pulling. a knot to bind

french whipping. alpine butterfly. bowline. cat's paw. true lover's knot. figure 9. zeppelin bend. overhand bend, knot, loop knot.

confine the thought. squeeze it down like a boa constrictor

the confessions. a ferryman. separation, transition, incorporation. limen, threshold.

out of us, who holds the upper hand? do our understandings of control collide? are we aware of who is on top, who holds the power from underneath?

words to fill gaps to become placeholders for glances.

(CONTINUED)

a bucket descending into a well. a constant state of
abjection

rouged cheeks. the natural beauty of embarrassment

i jump board your ship in order to leave that land. an
aid to forget about them. climbing sheer rock face with
no guards

cuckoo and the cherry tree. eat three good meals before
the bird stops to sing.

cherry blossom. luh. mac tire. earths son.

sometimes you forget that knowing is the smallest
amount you can do. to care for sometimes means to
ignore

this is a correspondence

between you and i and between our past selves and
current ones

am i speaking to her, to you? the one sat in the bed
waiting

you hold the upper hand, grasping my neck as i gaze up
at you, eyes beginning to water

you release, my skin red and throbbing

i take one look and spit

i look towards you but as you opened your mouth no
noise appears

(pause.)

R and S look at one another.

S swallows.

*R breaks eye contact and begins leading paddle up
the length of rope.*

S returns to winding the crank, still watching R.

S:

From Middle English swolowen, swolwen.

from Old English swelgan - to swallow, incorporate,
absorb, imbibe, devour.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

S: (CONT'D)

from Proto-Germanic swelgana - to swallow, revel,
devour.

from Proto-Indo-European swelk - to gulp.

Cognate with Dutch zwelgen - to revel, carouse, guzzle.

German schwelgen - to delight, indulge.

Swedish svälja - to swallow, gulp.

Icelandic svelgja - to swallow.

Old English swillan, swilian - to swill, wash out,
gargle.

from late Old English swelg - gulf, chasm.

R meets S

(pause.)

R:

swallow.

S swallows.

R:

in the short time that we've known eachother, i am who
i am because of my surroundings

swallow.

S swallows.

R:

my environment has been my world in a way that differs
from yours, you move around the world for your
environment

swallow.

S swallows.

R:

i was not put here for you in the same way i was not
put here for them, for him or for her

swallow.

S swallows.

(CONTINUED)

R:
maybe if one day i have a child i will be put here for
them but until that moment comes, i am here for my own
swallow.

S swallows.

R:
what things do you find yourself doing on a daily
basis? rituals? aside from the obvious. what things do
you feel drawn to doing, day in and day out without
exception, whether or not you feel so inclined to do so
swallow.

S swallows.

R:
what things do i do?
swallow.

S swallows.

R:
what purpose is it to ferment?
(long pause.)

S:
(crossing the space.) Sole. West. 3 or 4. Occasionally
5. Moderate. Fog. Moderate or good. Occasionally very
poor.

S takes place at opposite end of mechanism.

Both produce knives and tape.

*Both tape end of rope and, with knife, cut it away
from mechanism.*

*Both hold end of rope with two hands, facing away
from one another and pulling rope in opposite
directions.*

S:
As springtime passes overhead, finding its close ,
the branches are weighed, one by one, as a grey cloud
falls.
Our summer visitant, the swallow, brings the heat,
borrowed

(CONTINUED)

from its desert passage and dispersed. Sweat drips,
lips stick,

a hand, moist, feeling its way through woodland, leaves
a

glistening trace - plasma, a snail's trail.

R:

Stroking flora like bodies

How do you tell the difference between the sky setting
at night or rising early morning? Summer sun

Gush. Violins play.

S:

Negotiating the forest, I'll spit to mark a territory.

Every stone upturned, every glade crossed - a fresh gob
with all of me in it. I've found comfort in expulsion:

three nights this week, with my glamorous assistants,

a sort of disappearing act. I consume the world

so that I might regurgitate and live amongst it.

A snake in the grass.

R:

A door slams, my heart beat quickens, bird song

Bird noise

Flying north for summer

A mother carrying her child, a quickened smile

I bite my lip

Something to get it out of your system

S:

But like the snake, my venom reveals the secret of its
antidote.

I think of Tiresias, with his big stick, afraid of what
he saw

and left blinded, fumbling. A life spent listening,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

S: (CONT'D)

ear to the forest floor, seeking that white light of truth.

The swallow's call: tight awful sound, like a twist in the neck,

and the leaves quaking. I shudder in time with the wood...

a warm breeze, a cold sweat - this hand is moist.

I, too, have lived a dual life.

R:

You're standing on trial

Water at your feet

You don't know what for, you feel guilty

Branded, susceptible for intrusion

Bird song, a serenade

Church bells

S:

Making my way along streams, rivers. The water, charged and flowing straight for the sea. I'll follow it, the swallows,

a chorus for my pilgrimage, an audience for my bathing.

My tossed shirt recalls the lightness of a wing.

R:

A dog runs towards you, locking eyes

Scratched across the chest

Locking eyes, walking towards one another at the same pace

Low hum of conversation

Locking eyes

you walk back and forth and back

A blister on your toes

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

R: (CONT'D)

You need to pack a bag

S:

As light cools, I'll meet the mouth of a great estuary,
open

my shoulders and, with the swallows, make haste of my
abandon -

whip like the wind and flurry to warmer soil.

R:

You and the dog stand tied up waiting

A yap, a howl, a whimper

I get this feeling in my stomach

When I think you're going to be somewhere, when I know
you're going to be somewhere

S:

Or not... Perhaps I lack the wingspan of these
migratory companions.

Reaching the coast, kicking about in pebbles, rocks,
amusing myself with shells, the lint of the sea,

I learn contentment. A beam of light reflected in a
Rockpool,

that pure joy.

R:

Swallows across cities

S:

No, do not fear the wind. Greet him as you would a
friend.

A hollowed out tree trunk could be fashioned to a raft,
and what for a sail? The clothes on my back? A
bedsheet?

R:

Coincidences that line up,

S:

Little pioneer, how sweet was your naïveté,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

S: (CONT'D)

the day you made an enemy of the waves.

R:

Hook, line and sinker

*R and S turn to face one another. Both lean back,
pulling the rope away from one another.*

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line to cast at sea

Little trawler boat, sifting the lint.

Rainbow trout, mouth hook

A fish in each hand

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line drawn to cut a space

A line hung and quartered

Bodies on slabs, laid out as they have been.

Dominoes, Falling to a path that stops at my feet.

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line drawn between points

Coordinates on a map,

Marking a territory

Lone Ranger, riding the land.

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line drawn and it shoots you dead

Quick wit, serpent tongue

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

S: (CONT'D)

A spit hello and a spit goodbye

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line drawn and a line crossed

Border of sorts, Great Wall,

River Styx, broken bridge

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line drawn from here to there,

A train through a tunnel,

A pencil along a ruler.

Stupid finger, my line splinters out

R:

I'm drawing a line

S:

A line drawn and bent to a curve:

Great O-mouth, calling like wells,

Lakes, the tarns that speckle hills

nearby where I've grown up

R:

I'm drawing a line-

S:

And it falls at my feet.

(pause.)

R begins to knot rope as S stands and watches.

(pause.)

Facing one another:

(CONTINUED)

R:

A space you don't know about, an in between. Purgatory

Long summer shadow. When you spend too long with people
who lie, you believe

How to place everything I know and let it sail the sea.
You and I are on two passing ships, they sail towards
one another, meeting briefly for a moment. We stop and
wave, sharing for a while the same body of water. We
know the same waves, but not once do I cross board
towards you, or you me.

Held in suspension. A clasp around the cheek

That's the nature of the beast

Together, R and S place rope on floor.

S:

Rockall. South. 4 or 5. Occasionally 6.

R:

North. 4 or 5. Occasionally 3.

S:

South. Showers.

R:

North. Showers.

S:

South. Good.

R:

North. Good.

Exit.