

Headquartered

I.

evacuated use
when you rule :

out the words you use too much
the retail empire

at the end of each line a little notch of rhyme
and in the middle a flood lamp
that splays furniture across the floor
the table and person clipping his toenails
into a plump of blue paint
are opposite-facing but self-same

Pound is led in on a patent-leather leash
bedazzled with the word BUTCH
and Mauberley congratulates the state on the assassination

in the afternoon of the assassination
I confess to using Pound as a human shield

dead / art
/ sublime
/ weight
/ full of use

the photograph can be aesthetic or evidence
both pushing your hand
against atmosphere to make it less transparent
and to shield you from the sight
of a naked man's milky back
then a confession
to hate this small difference

do you remember the first time you felt the empire lurch
when you had one way of knowing and then suddenly another
a way of not knowing and suddenly a word for it ?

I want very badly to be watched through every camera
to be followed like afternoon by night
on the camera I'm bluish and mapped

suppose for me / my pin-up

/she wears patches on her hips and shoulders\

/some to push in juices and some to leech them out\
/she grips her patent-leather sandals with her toes\
/and doesn't need to look where she's walking\
/she's suspicious of metaphor\
/with literal hands and feet\
/she climbs to the top of the radio tower and buzzes\
/in the car we pick her up to lose her\
/what happens when you're not heard but intercepted\
/your metrically perfect lifespan becomes blip\

when the state announced it
we were on our computers

Pound said / civilization / in / its / most / Western / sense / bungles / by / bristling
/ that was a lie in that he didn't and it arguably doesn't
/
/ a sensor over the door blips to the register
and calculates the ratio of those who bought
something to the total number of shoppers
that percentage is called CONVERSION

%

the child with a dead cicada in his hand :

if you find one with blue eyes
they give you money
but this one has black eyes

a nice thought :

to be rewarded for finding
something rare and dead

%

when the state announced it
we drove away and listened
to a voice speaking in numbers
page / line \ word
unbreakable code
as long as the text is a secret

a state-sponsored realism
leaves me hungry / no / ugly

II.

a man with a painted mouth
 hands the child with painted
eyes a bag of belts and says
 you can punch new ones
 or grow into these holes

 all four cheeks rouge

there's a device clipped to my belt
 when I press one button the camera
pointed at the register snaps

 I sell shoes matching belts a few
handbags made of paper paste and glitter
 that match the strappier evening shoes

here the button is a unit of thought
 when you press two the police are called
and when you do it by mistake
 they arrive anyway and explain
 how false alarms are the most dangerous
 because they waste time

when they had the pictures developed
 there was a killer painted into the shot
or was it a painted killer in the shot

 I'm up to my eyeballs in debt
is no excuse when they find you
 elbow-deep in the till

the woman with painted hair
 hands the child a painted horse
that plugs itself hoof by hoof
 into the blue carpet
and shrinks to the size
 of a tarnished buckle

.....ways in which slacks begin and end
a professional body upheld

proper cash handling procedures forbid counting money with your eyes

that outfit requires a third piece like a scarf or statement necklace

take the shoes from the customer's hand before she can change her mind
never say that belt becomes you in case the customer believes she's becoming the belt

some men
have squares
of hair
connecting
their napes
to their chests
and rules

the afternoon she arrived to steal the money was a bungle since all the money had run out

\$

I pressed the buttons and haven't stopped panicking for three years

—

all merchandise is bagged and wrapped when it arrives and rewrapped and rebagged as it departs
so please forgive this tick of saying everything once and then twice with a little revision
but what's witnessing if not a second time / worse / recast / second shadow

~~some men are mortified at the thought of being stolen from~~

III.

Say with authority: "It's Realism,"
though *Madame Bovary* is the incalculable kind.
Emma's expenses never quite add up
and time in the black hansoms collects
like perfume above the clavicle:
a sumptuous count.
But imagine how far a little thrift would have gone.
Imagine Emma in enamel and paste.
No one wants to say that she did it
over money even though it's the only reason to.
Flaubert is becoming with anything cheap.
When was the first time you stole from the company?
The boss is trained in the calculated
grapple of partial non-confrontational
interview and interrogation techniques.
The only thing we don't know is why.
Hands like turkey claws on the otherwise handsome
man with all the questions. I know
that under his black polo a cameo hangs
from a chain snagging thick
black chest hairs. I never know what I want.

V.

that I mean DAMAGE
is a line from that song
but everything means DAMAGE
to the salesperson
of a red-cloud country
there's only one difference
between FAIRY and FEE
one falls through the blue-eyed
nudities of the other
my computer is gummed
from viruses I've downloaded
I unscrew the casing
and something mammalian and eyeless
dead from the virus
asks for a Christian burial
from this window I see Emma
in clearance flip-flops
available in three colors
yellow / fuchsia / turquoise
her eyes all three colors
black / brown / blue
a sort of nightmarish economics
and I can imagine such nightmarish
metrics that my supervisors
check my pockets
and find me full of fast ornament
my bosses coach me
through their circular mouths
with teeth that go all the way around
ivory O
the families dance in circles
around piles of shoes like bonfires
when doomsday came and went
as it does every year
I was driving through a heartland
a voice on the radio
listed off our sales goals
for three years / three years / three years
hysterically I drove into a ditch
when was the first time
they asked me while I was upside-down
blood draining into my eyes
when was the first time
you stole from the company