

Elegy of a Prisoner

For Ben

I knew a boy once who stole an anthology
To read just a phrase from a line from a poem
Over and over, the right hand fondly tracing
The veins that veered like vines from the left.
I knew a boy once of muscle and youth,
Winsome, funny, forthright, and improper,
And licking often the chip of his tooth.
'Starry dynamo in the machinery of night.'
Two years, then his casket was heavy.
I'll advance the following theory:
That souls don't float away, they pool,
Filling their compartments up,
Be they blood vessels, yew, or black suits of wool,
Watching the delicious machine crumble.

Note: An earlier version of the poem "Elegy for a Prisoner" appeared previously in *Anti-Heroin Chic*, entitled: "Dope Sonnet." For reference: <http://heroinchic.weebly.com/blog/dope-sonnet-by-logo-wei>

The eighth line reads, "'Starry dynamo in the machinery of night.'" It is a direct quotation from the third line of "Howl," by Allen Ginsberg.

The Surface

I fell—tripping,
If you must know.
Hit my head
On a poem.
The wound
Got a stanza
Of stitches. I
Came home,
Lay a biscuit
& a book
Of French
Cathedrals
On the face
Of the poem.
Then I tried
Dictionaries,
Old vinyls,
New bibles.
(Eventually,
The scarring
Smoothed, as
If of its own.)
But all that
Custom grew
Revolting—
Or boring—
So I sold the
Wooden poem
On Craigslist
For a gift card
& I was glad,
For a while,
With the worth.

Yusef

After "Ode to the Maggot"
by Yusef Komunkayaa

A cloud keeps a possum, dead in the peat -
Cradles it like a very good thing.

Yusef, I too wish to praise the maggot.
I am helpless against it.

They mapped the spot in the human mind
Set aside, selected to revere
And to worship
What white,
Straightforward thing
Comes after
The living

On little feet.