

## An Epitaph For The Last Great Jawbone

the last great jawbone is scarred with the cruel cuts of the savage knives  
of barbaric men-or were they Englishmen?-it doesn't matter.

the last great jaw bone cannot speak, its tongue has fallen away  
its flesh  
is dissipated as so much flesh before  
and so much after.

the last great jawbone is mostly toothless, mainly biting  
mainly saying-carry me, as once was carried curtain rods and chocolate bars  
haul me, and bring me home, away from here,  
where the ships will sink and the guns will rust and the boards will rot  
and the emerald sky will close and open overhead  
and where Englishmen die sick and broken on the ice, and are consumed.

the last great jawbone is museumed like so many specimens before-  
aspects of the Empire, jarred and pickled and categorized in so many doctors' hands and it is  
cold  
and it has been cold for one hundred and seventy-seven years  
and the ice has been a friend.  
and the ice has been a companion.  
mostly shifting, mainly sighing, sometimes crying out in the night  
as a boy to his mother, as a ship to the sea as a mind to a skull as a bone to  
the earth.

## The Final Frontier

voyager, what do you dream of  
when you drift among the stars?  
voyager, what do you see?  
look, jupiter, passing by  
and saturn's rings, just there.  
pushing onward  
as you bear our voices,  
pushing onward  
as you bear our songs  
the sounds of '77 carried  
into the cold darkness.  
greetings in every tongue:  
"friends from space, how are you all?  
have you eaten yet?  
come visit if you have time."  
a child's laughter and a whale's song  
and Jane Goodall, and Jimmy Carter, and a mariachi band  
and all it is to be from Earth.  
outer space, interstellar, ever onward.  
voyager, we will not make you bear our burdens  
we will not include the sound of a machine gun rattling  
and we will not send out the cry of the last lonely bird  
and we will put our best foot forward.  
we will send out our music and our stories  
and make the best of what we are.  
onward, always onward, until you are too far gone to reach  
and onward, after that.  
onward, until you have touched the sky and graced it with our presence.  
to know and be known is the greatest gift the universe can bestow  
and to be rocked to sleep by the stars is the best we can offer  
and to play the golden record is to see the blue marble  
and to play the golden record is to know us.

## For One Night Only

the dress is quiet in the closet, where she belongs.  
silent and still  
entombed.

forever lavender, forever 17.

at night, she rises from the charnel house in a rustle of taffeta, ribbons, lace  
half remembered and half known.

i fear her phantom as it whispers distant songs.

she is waiting for a woman who will never wear her again,  
and she is heavy with the guilt of girlhood.

she is waiting to be thrown away by version of me who winces to think of her,  
and she is a devourer, she is a spectral anchor.

she is locked in a way a mausoleum of femininity  
and she is being replaced by a heavy layer of denim and angles.

she belonged to a version of me who has succumbed to rigor mortis

she belonged to a version of me who is being eaten by flies.

she is macerating in the decaying fluids of a dead woman, and she reeks of an ill-fitting fitting  
room.

the closet is a grave, a hiding place for skeletons.

a garment bag is a shroud. a wire hanger is a tombstone.

she is heavy, and i carry her with me as i go.

she is purple with prose, stained with tears and foul juices.

and she is going, going

gone.

the closet is quiet, but the bones are still there.

and at night, i dream of sequins.