

Whitewashed

“White is transcendent and timeless, with unrivaled versatility.”

—Benjamin Moore

Light sheering off white stone,
White walls and ceilings, flowing white curtains,
Bleached trees. Bleached grass. Bleached flowers.
Even the sun a pallid glare.
Icy wind breathed in like splintered mirrors.
Sanitized.
Absolved.

At least, that’s how it often feels.

Everything here
Uncolored, arranged, deranged,
Transparent yet obstructing—
white lies
whited sepulcher
white man’s burden
white noise
men in white coats
tabula rasa
terra nullius
White House
white out
Pristined origin, the whole history
Pentimentoed in timelessness,
Ripe for the pl(f)ucking.

Surreptitiously, I unsheathe a tiny shiv
Smuggled in under my tongue,

Blade dwarfed and rusted by the misty immensity,
Handle beaded and quilled,
And begin—chipping.

I sense others around me, restive, ghostly, hooded.
Some furtive, some bold, many flailing, weak from lack of
Substance.

Faded Ahabs.

And others outside the invisible walls,
Clamoring,
Ground littered with promises, policy papers and the
Shriveled carcasses of charitable donations.

Chip

Scrape

Sliver

Trifling flakes sink into the void.
So little has changed.

CHIP

My pocked knife, your crooked crowbar, that gilded shovel.
Paring off layers of nacreous pearl
Seeking the provoking grain of sand at its core,
Scarred and tender, unwritten flesh
So little