

Blood Party

ALSO BY MERLE LYN BACHMAN

The Opposite of Vanishing (EtherDome Press)

Recovering "Yiddishland":

Threshold Moments in American Literature (Syracuse University Press)

Diorama with Fleeing Figures (Shearsman Books)

Wrecker's Ball (Finishing Line Press)

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Blood Party

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Dedicated to “the Blood”
and their shining, injurious love

and for poet and dear friend Colleen Lookingbill
whose memory is a blessing

Objects & Space (an Introduction)

In this room, says the Dharma teacher, there are objects – bodies, flowers, chairs, light.
But there is also space.

In reality, space is all that is present. And it's no big deal.

If you look into the night sky you will see space, and you will see objects – the stars and planets.

Space is just the externalization of what you really are.

[Here is my photograph of
SPACE:]

How much space do you occupy?

The other night I needed a flashlight and I called it: *fleshlight*.

That sounded right.

The Dharma teacher says:
do you really think you can *explain the universe* in five vowels & 21 consonants?

Laughter arises from the body-objects in the room.

Consider:

How much of your body is made of
words?

The home language I never speak is thick with guttural sounds.

Inside this body, spaces. Inside the spaces, memories.

Inside the memories, bodies.

And consonants. And vowels.

*

A bird pecks the earth over a grave – comes up with seeds of memory –
consumes them and its wings and claw-feet bear them silently into the
tops of swaying trees

(and later, memory – shat out – crumbles back into dirt).

That's just one possibility.

I'm stuck with letters.

I – am a letter.

Everything made of space, including notes squeezed out of an accordion
or a bassoon. Tempting; pleasing; the husks of words in voices digitally
present on my cell phone, for as long as I remember to hit “re-save.”

But really, I –
am a woman.

A precisely gendered being with uterus intact, nulliparous and breasts
rippled where
small pieces have recently been taken.

This body: one longs to smear it
with memory – a rotted fabric dank perfume – stick fingers in the
dirt mound on
the last, fresh grave – taste

Questions for My Russian Grandmother:

What beliefs are there about a person's soul before it enters the body?

How does the soul's entry into the body take place?

If a pregnant woman touches part of her body during a fire, will the child be born with a red mark on the same body part?

Should a pregnant woman not enter the house of a non-Jew or walk alone on a bridge over a river?

If someone strikes a blow with an axe on the threshold over which the pregnant woman has stepped, will the child have a harelip?

What charms, amulets, stones are there to give a woman power over the Evil Eye?

AlbanyNewYork

How did snow

smell?

faint lavender
to match dusk's blending of firs in the *far-back*
the children's yard

Hour of the shadowcast

Our Home in Space:

[a lattice we called
the *snowball tree*]

Mother

Father

The great *Blackout*:

It's 1965:

Record needle bumps the disc's
far shore: drags, digs to a halt.

Reports of sorry office workers
packed in elevators
leave a permanent scratch in my mind

: to this day I take the stairs.

Matches flare: it's hours till the power grids fire-up again
& he sits on my little bed's edge drawing circles
with the tip of his cigarette

father

daddy

How did it taste inside the cockpit, face
grazing the glass?
–breathing inside the mask

The days of bombing raids inside Germany
long done, your world
swagger & astonishment big band blare Glen Miller
lost over a violet sea

The Lemon-Scented Pine Cabinets of Childhood

Stuffed pheasant perched on top
child's face reflected in door-glass
the world my parents made together and made meaning

whatever it meant to them
a child living there could only sniff or peer at
their solid presence

still in that room — doubling as *dining* and *family* because the house
was that small

– with the television on.

– with full ashtrays.

THAT'S LIFE (trumpet blare) *you can't deny it*

the way a dress felt on my mother's
body, lowered over her strapped-in
breasts, over the girdle (faint indent between
lower ribs, jutting out, kind of boxy

the portion of her body I saw often because
it was close to a young girl's height.

The way my mother adjusted his tie:

Fullness of that life: complete with garden peonies spitting ants and neighbors at the back door bearing fresh-baked hermits and iced drinks:

[inside the spaces, memories; inside the memories
bodies
and the world that was theirs.

*

Writing: the girl, and the girl writing
fills notebooks, skins that lift words now
shriveling and the blue
ink beginning
its vanishing act:
at least two books per year (plus miscellaneous) since
age 13 and what to do with all this commentary, this
registration:

Perhaps this is where you'll find your mother,
sighing over the sink looking vacantly out the window or

dad, back from work with soiled hands, such a cliché, he wants to be left
alone in his chair to smoke, knock back a drink, the rooms of ordinary

complaint, veal chops, homework and downstairs in the basement office
the plans, midnight blue as your patent leather shoes, on the tilted desk

for a house that won't be built because the money's dried up, and empty
of politics (despite the thing called *Vietnam*, the thing called *Blacks* and
Rights)

except for Don't bow your head when they make you pray and
Don't kneel down and We're Jews and that's the way it is (says crumpled