

Text by Jasmine Wynn after Jenny Holzer's "Green Table"

The Voice of A Green Table

*(after Jenny Holzer)*

It's a Monday morning. I step off of the bus and immediately I feel the cold air pushing itself against my face, uninhibited. I am flushed with the rush of icy ventilation, mixed with my own internal anticipation, expectation.

*IT TAKES A WHILE BEFORE YOU CAN STEP OVER INERT BODIES*

*AND GO AHEAD WITH WHAT YOU WERE TRYING TO DO*

Here I am, 8am, my heart sunken deep into the crevice between my shoe and my left foot.

Making my way through campus feels like walking on another planet. So many faces, so many signs, one unknowing me. The feeling is new, fickle, fragile, almost like the cry of a newborn child.

*THE RICH KNIFING VICTIM CAN FLIP AND FEEL LIKE THE*

*AGGRESSOR IF HE THINKS ABOUT PRIVILEGE*

*HE ALSO CAN FIND THE CUT SYMBOLIC OR PROPHETIC.*

I feel the way I did on my first day of preschool; I know that people are expecting things from me but I can't figure out why my mom went back home. I pass by each building slowly in the arena of my mind. Each block, figure, stone, rapidly connects with me and then loses me. These buildings forget that students were once on campus, that human beings live around them, that I

have a face, that I am a student, what their purpose is. Am I really here? My legs are moving a millisecond a minute. *Don't be late, just don't be late, I tell myself.*

*THE SMALLEST THING CAN MAKE SOMEBODY SEXUALLY UNAPPEALING*

*A MISPLACED MOLE OR A PARTICULAR HAIR PATTERN CAN DO IT.*

*THERE'S NO REASON FOR THIS BUT IT'S JUST AS WELL.*

I start glimpsing closer at the cement around me while it's closing in. It is lively. Each color and creation is like a motion picture, competing to make the frame. Every angle is born into my vision, though I am but an onlooker inside of the whirlwind. 8:15am and I pass the recreational center, afterwards the gym, then accompanied by a glass house with a swimming pool in the center. It is surrounded by bathed bodies, they are translucent. Color, light, rainbow beams. It felt as if the morning sky was meant for this exact moment. If I hadn't slowed down my walking pace I would have thought this iridescent building was alive. It was staring at me while I was staring at it. Each dot of light is another being to make out, I can't tell where one ends and the next begins.

*I WANT TO BE MORE THAN A CUSTODIAN AND A FRIEND*

I feel the camaraderie oozing from this space, and in that second I wish I was them. Not so new, not so fragile, awkward. A moment later I end up on plush green grass and an air of salty ocean reminiscence wafts over my body. Broken, but existent somewhere in my senses. As I pass by the soccer field a path opens up. Long, long, unreachable buildings stretch away from me and into every corner of campus. I look up to see birds. I am at the end of the tunnel, and I think to myself, it begins here. If I follow the light I will eventually find my way to the other end. I wonder where that end is, and I wonder how far I am away from it.

*I EXPERIMENT TO SEE IF I CAN STAND HER PAIN*

*I CANNOT.*

I wonder if my end will take years or lifetimes. I wonder if I will belong here, on this campus, where my feet stand. In this grass, taking in the breeze of the ocean and the endless eucalyptus trees. Will I become the teacher I imagined myself to be? Will I have to picture myself laying in the middle of a rose garden, and manufacture my dream? I wonder if I made the right choice coming here.

*I AM SLY AND DISHONEST*

*TALKING ABOUT WHY I SHOULD BE LEFT ALIVE BUT*

*IT IS NOT THIS WAY WITH HER*

*SHE MUST STAY WELL BECAUSE HER MIND WILL OFFER NO HIDING PLACE*

*IF ILLNESS OR VIOLENCE FINDS HER*

I wonder if birds ever feel their lives open up in this way, that maybe there is a destination they are in connection to which holds their purpose. Do they create meaning for people and places the way we do? I'm going into Muir college and beyond. Winding sidewalks lead me through the never ending pathway. Shooting across campus, I am suddenly taken aback by a large, heavy, solid object on the edge of the commons. It's a table. So many words, I thought, as I got closer.

*YOU ARE GUILELESS IN YOUR DREAMS*

It stood: individual. It stood: powerful. It stood, also, subtle. It was a force of its own, no definition could make it up, although each statement attempted to. It was just tall and wide enough to sparkle in my right eye. It was just short enough to represent the mundane nature of life. What does it mean? Green, or blue, dark in hue. Solid, tough, smoothed into perfection. Each corner created a new world of resurrection.

*ARTIFICIAL DESIRES ARE DESPOILING THE EARTH*

*DYING AND COMING BACK GIVES YOU CONSIDERABLE PERSPECTIVE*

*ENJOY YOURSELF BECAUSE YOU CAN'T CHANGE ANYTHING ANYWAY*

*GRASS ROOTS AGITATION IS THE ONLY HOPE*

*PEOPLE WHO DON'T WORK WITH THEIR HANDS ARE PARASITES*

*RELIGION CAUSES AS MANY PROBLEMS AS IT SOLVES*

*THERE'S NOTHING EXCEPT WHAT YOU SENSE*

It was crafted with compelling granite, molded patiently. It was ceaseless, and then it was golden. It took on the environment around it, and if you stare at it long enough you can see small, crystalized, shiny specks peeking from within. Hidden from me, it was a million pieces of art inside one stone body. It was unearthly, divine, almost like royalty that dared to meet the depths and trials of college life. It wanted to be crowned.

*MUCH WAS DECIDED BEFORE YOU WERE BORN*

It made a statement. I wanted to bask in its form; I wanted to stare into the abyss. I thought about the creator, and what thought had jumpstarted the beauty that this table is. It was too perfect, too collected, look closer. Swirly lines move through the making of its insides, showing moving life.

*MORE PEOPLE WILL BE BUILDING HIDING PLACES*

*IN THEIR HOMES, SMALL REFUGES THAT ARE*

*UNDETECTABLE EXCEPT BY SOPHISTICATED DEVICES.*

Eucalyptus trees were shadowing and shattering my vision of every break in the marble, sparkling, and illuminating the table. A breath of fresh air fills my lungs and crisps the fog that meets my face. I am present, gliding my fingers along its marble body. It was not just any table, letters were ingrained at every meeting of stone, all over. Static in each letter, lines made in all directions, creating meaning. Long, cold, bold, stoic. Gold, fine, bright, heroic. When the

sunlight hits it you can see a world inside of it, but one made just out of words. Was it there to have lunch at, or to ponder? What did it stand for?

*RAISE BOYS AND GIRLS THE SAME WAY*

This is what it said. The sunlight hits the green stone and it transforms into a captivating shiny metal. It is preparing its own path. It is showing itself to the students, and it wants to be fully seen. It is not afraid of its body or its meaning. It is not afraid of its lines, its curves, its aggression. It isn't afraid of its taboo statements, its unconventionality, and it isn't afraid of oppression.

*EXPIRING FOR LOVE IS BEAUTIFUL BUT STUPID*

It hisses at closed minds, and it spits on the patriarchy. It stands still, through the winds, the weather, the noise, and even the glares. It knows you are judging it, and it doesn't care if you stare. It was an exclamation point, and one with patience. It waits until the next day where the sunlight will meet it, and it can shine again. Falling down upon it, it becomes the light. It is here. Although I did not know what the table was truly saying, I could feel my attention peaking. This green table was speaking. In these moments, I forget where I am going. I start to walk again and I feel the impact of this table's presence rise in me; I am having an epiphany.

*IN A DREAM YOU SAW A WAY TO SURVIVE*

The words are coming back to me, forming a new reality. Jenny Holzer had a vision for this piece that it would be like a woman with a tattooed body; it would say all that there is to say and embrace its beauty. I am formed and created just like granite marble. Patient, intentional, energetic, chemical. These lines and words cannot make up who I am, but they can attempt to. I am stained, I am painted on, and I forever will have things to say.

*THE BEGINNING OF THE WAR WILL BE SECRET*

The table is just a table, and yet I needed this table to remind me of my meaning. The table was always waiting, waiting. The table was waiting for us to catch up, to see ourselves as we saw each speck of gold inside of it and let ourselves light up in the morning sunlight. The table was there waiting for us to give up on the ideas we hold against ourselves, and then hold against others. What we hold against our brothers, sisters, elders, mothers.

*CHANGE IS VALUABLE WHEN THE OPPRESSED BECOME TYRANTS*

I am but a speck of light on this campus, anxious, pulled apart, wrecked, diminished. But I am also steady, I am also strong, I am not afraid of my body. I can be fickle, I am long, and I am ambiguity. I am a concrete me, waiting to be judged, but be judged for my honesty. I am not always put together, and I am not always fond of the weather. Sometimes I am brown, and sometimes I am golden. I am forever beholden.

*A STRONG SENSE OF DUTY IMPRISONS YOU*

I am standing here, at the beginning of one of many journeys. There is freedom in the tree branches. In my nikes, in my yoga pants that are a little too tight, with my bag that is a little too light. With my eyes straight ahead, and with my heart away from me. Even if my heart stays inside of my shoe sole I can choose to keep learning. I will stand in front of my fear, I will stand in front of the class, I will stand in front of my oppressors.

*ABSOLUTE SUBMISSION CAN BE A FORM OF FREEDOM*

I will speak, and I will speak louder. I am a green table; I am the green table. Maybe if I stand here long enough the light will show my golden specks. It will fall down upon me and make me feel beautiful, it will watch me glow, and show my many insides. It will show all of the thoughts that I have had, and all of the things that I never let out. I will be untouchable.

*YOU ARE A VICTIM OF THE RULES YOU LIVE BY*

The table sits still, and it means whatever you think it does. It is telling us everything at once. If you are too quick, you might miss it. Don't let the moment pass you when the sunlight illuminates it. 8:35am, History of Writing, here I come! My body is my vessel, tied up, written on, formed from the earth beneath me and the one sky above.

*NOW MY BEST SENSES ARE BACK AND WHAT I FEEL*

*AFTER LOVE IS*

*FEAR.*

There is a lingering feeling.

The table spoke, and quietly, I was listening.