

poemwrittenafterseptember11/2001



There are these things:

cells, the movement of cells and the division of cells

and then the general beating of circulation

and hands, and body, and feet

and skin that surrounds hands, body, feet.

This is a shape,

a shape of blood beating and cells dividing.

But outside of this shape is space.

There is space between the hands.

There is space between the hands and space around the hands.

There is space around the hands and space in the room.

There is space in the room that surrounds the shapes of everyone's hands and body and feet and cells and the beating contained within.

There is space, an uneven space, made by this pattern of bodies.

This space goes in and out of everyone's bodies.

Everyone with lungs breathes the space in and out as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and  
the space around the hands in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and  
the space around the hands and the space of the room in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and  
the space around the hands and the space of the room and the  
space of the building that surrounds the room in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and  
the space around the hands and the space of the room and the  
space of the building that surrounds the room and the space of  
the neighborhoods nearby in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands and  
the space around the hands and the space of the room and the  
space of the building that surrounds the room and the space of  
the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and  
the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and  
the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions and the space of the nations in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and  
the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions and the space of the nations and the space of  
the continents and islands in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and

the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions and the space of the nations and the space  
of the continents and islands and the space of the oceans in and  
out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and  
the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions and the space of the nations and the space  
of the continents and islands and the space of the oceans and the  
space of the troposphere in and out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and  
the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions and the space of the nations and the space  
of the continents and islands and the space of the oceans and the  
space of the troposphere and the space of the stratosphere in and  
out

as everyone with lungs breathes the space between the hands  
and the space around the hands and the space of the room and  
the space of the building that surrounds the room and the space  
of the neighborhoods nearby and the space of the cities and the  
space of the regions and the space of the nations and the space  
of the continents and islands and the space of the oceans and  
the space of the troposphere and the space of the stratosphere  
and the space of the mesosphere in and out.

In this everything turning and small being breathed in and out  
by everyone with lungs during all the moments.

Then all of it entering in and out.

The entering in and out of the space of the mesosphere in the entering in and out of the space of the stratosphere in the entering in and out of the space of the troposphere in the entering in and out of the space of the oceans in the entering in and out of the space of the continents and islands in the entering in and out of the space of the nations in the entering in and out of the space of the regions in the entering in and out of the space of the cities in the entering in and out of the space of the neighborhoods nearby in the entering in and out of the space of the building in the entering in and out of the space of the room in the entering in and out of the space around the hands in the entering in and out of the space between the hands.

How connected we are with everyone.

The space of everyone that has just been inside of everyone mixing inside of everyone with nitrogen and oxygen and water vapor and argon and carbon dioxide and suspended dust spores and bacteria mixing inside of everyone with sulfur and sulfuric acid and

titanium and nickel and minute silicon particles from pulverized glass and concrete.

How lovely and how doomed this connection of everyone with lungs.

*Brooklyn, New York*

poemwrittenfromnovember30/2002  
tomarch27/2003



*Note . . .*

*After September 11, I kept thinking that the United States wouldn't invade Afghanistan. I was so wrong about that.*

*So on November 30, 2002, when I realized that it was most likely that the United States would invade Iraq again, I began to sort through the news in the hope of understanding how this would happen. I thought that by watching the news more seriously I could be a little less naive. But I gained no sophisticated understanding as I wrote these poems.*

*September 11 shifted my thinking in this way. The constant attention to difference that so defines the politics of Hawai'i, the disconnection that Hawai'i claims at moments with the continental United States, felt suddenly unhelpful. I felt I had to think about what I was connected with, and what I was complicit with, as I lived off the fat of the military-industrial complex on a small island. I had to think about my intimacy with things I would rather not be intimate with even as (because?) I was very far away from all those things geographically. This feeling made lyric—with its attention to connection, with its dwelling on the beloved and on the afar—suddenly somewhat poignant, somewhat apt, even somewhat more useful than I usually find it.*



*November 30, 2002*

Beloveds, we wake up in the morning to darkness and watch it turn into lightness with hope.

Each morning we wait in our bed listening for the parrots and their chattering.

Beloveds, the trees branch over our roof, over our bed, and so realize that when I speak about the parrots I speak about love and their green colors, love and their squawks, love and the discord they bring to the calmness of morning, which is the discord of waking.

When I speak of the parrots I speak of all that we wake to this morning, the Dow slipping yet still ending in a positive mood yesterday, Mission Control, the stalled railcar in space, George Harrison's extra-large will, Hare Krishnas, the city of Man, the city of Danane and the Movement for Justice and Peace and the Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West, homelessness and failed coups, few leads in the bombing in Kenya.