

Leah Thorn

excerpt from Watch

in memory of Manny Thorn

Be strong in the honour of your father and do not leave him all the days of your life. Even if he loses sense, let him do all that he wishes and do not shame him all the days of his life

- Ben Sira [3:12-13]

I am the keeper
of my father's memory
I have learnt him
by heart I steal
enduring power of attorney
of his words, gather fractures
as he forgets
what he has forgotten
once
he was my magician
now frantic
I perform tricks
to magic him
back
blue feelings
for a father who suits blue,
blue suit
flecks in tweeds and smooth
to touch, my father
with blue streaks in his grey eyes

I am the tailor's daughter who cannot find the thread
I am to bind my parents overlock them together but my
needles break threads break stitches skip stitches loop
material puckers I check upper tension is not too tight

my father jungle-hacks through jumbled thoughts
wills me in and at moments of connection,
eyes wet, he smiles
squeezes my hand
I imprint his jangles into my brain
magpie his phrases to savour him later

the flat stole your gold watch
snaps your threads
bruises you
doors fuse
flat is on the move
out to confuse you

WHO IS DOING THIS

to you you want to live

elsewhere

you tell me *we're lost here* *living so far from ourselves*

alzheimer's orlando transmutes gender and number them
to we he to she he she to I the Her your people never you you

memory-soaked skin
cries in the night
tongue untied
my father's scream
a razor blade of raw rage
awake
tattooed with nighttime
punishment, coiling snakes
of blood roughly etched
by those too tired,
too enraged
to notice

at the point of falling back into water
at the moment before breaking the surface
at the moment of off-balance and flying
at that moment arms flay like backwards backstroke
and I call out to god, god

I am scared of water closing over my head
my father is water, sweeping me away
imperfect water floods my father's brain my father is water
he spits in my face burns me with his spittle
fills my eyes with water
not all water has perfect memory

remember by recital by ritual
remember zakhar a sacred command
remember one hundred and sixty nine times
remember talmudic dictum
remember ache in commemoration
remember the secret of relief
is remembrance