

# 20190508\_theslowdown\_20190508\_128

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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

migraine, poem, aura, room, feeling, restored, claudia, emerson, remember, suddenly, suffer, knew, absence, physical sensations, aftermath, eye, contradict, nosebleed, reality, pain

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I'm us Poet Laureate, Tracy k Smith. And this is the slow down.

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I know people who suffer from migraines with their tales of agonizing pain and whole days sometimes more surrendered to a dark room. They form a strange Association. And it may be strange, but I'm fascinated by the way they stand their hands up before them, pushing the word and the very concept of migraine away. Just as there is a tragic heroism to the terrible hunted quality they were knowing this thing this awful state will return to them at some point. talking to people for whom migraines are a reality. I tend to forget the season from my own life. When I suffered them on a regular basis. I was a kid, my eyesight had just suddenly worsened. But I still wasn't wearing glasses. I remember learning to squint at the chalkboard to bring the teachers writing into focus. I'd spend all day doing that. And by the time I got home on the school bus, a woozy nausea would grip me at home, I'd eat a few crackers, waiting for the nosebleed and the piercing sensation behind one of my eyes. Once that hit, well, that was it. I'd go lie down in my room, curtains drawn shot, and wake up hours later feeling like a shipwrecked stranger who's finally been washed ashore. If all that counts, then yes, I once knew what a migraine feels like, though pain from so long ago, is difficult to remember. more vivid is the sense of relief, of gratitude, of finding myself restored of reveling in the absence of pain, which, after intense pain is itself an exquisite pleasure. Today's poem is migraine aura and Aftermath by late Pulitzer Prize winning poet, Claudia Emerson. It slowly tracks the feeling of the headaches onset, and the distortions it triggers. In some ways, the poem shows me these effects as a fascinating perceptual phenomenon. Things that were just there that surely still are there suddenly disappear. The physical sensations set in, and then perhaps Worst of all, the fear arrives, as though the altered physical state might be an actual place. There's no coming back from. I love the way this poem

alerts me to the mysteries of body and mind

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and how even in disturbance, Emerson finds a source of Revelation,

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migraine aura and Aftermath

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by Claudia

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Emerson,

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first part of the world disappears, something is missing from everything, the cat's eye, ear, the left side of its face, two fingers from my right hand, the words from the end of a sentence, the absence is at first more absolute, than whatever darkness I imagine the blind perceive, perfect. Without color or motion, nothing replaces what is gone. The senses do not contradict my arm goes numb my leg, though I have felt the cold air of this disappearance before each time the aura deceives me to believe reality itself has failed. I fear this more than what it warns because I cannot remember I will survive it. The other half of me will shine all night defined by the eclipse. Then, in the relieved wake of the day that follows it. I will find my hand, count my fingers and beginning to see again will recognize myself restored to the evening of a righted room. The slow down is a production of American public media in partnership with

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