

Ramona Weeks / FOUR POEMS

STREETS OF LAREDO REVISITED

Stranger, someone has to play orator
on these Laredo streets
and pause for a statutory moment
by the whorehouse to wrap it up
before the luminous and stampeding drum
logs this cowboy home.

We've chosen you to say the iron
words. To invent the saddle
and his innocence, to colour lilacs
for his grave. We need six pallbearers,
one fifer, one drummer, and a poet.

Say that he did wrong and knew it.
He was overfond of cards and liquor.
He will sink easily into a world
of strangers, a pure form wrapped
in tablecloth linen, shroud pinned tightly
with a silver dove.

Pretend you have walked past
your own cold body on these golden streets,
shot in the breast but holding on
to tell your story.
We will take care of the emplacement
of mothers and their tears.

ECLIPSE

Canned dark scooped up in a field,
in cylinders filled this languid substance,
dotty as a sleeve, pulled as tropes of paisley.
What surge created us dark mannequins?
Into the light we ripple and roosters,
relieved, begin to crow. With eyes,
I celebrate the bottled light. It pours.
It holds the world.

NAHUATL POEM

Who will know my voice?
at least my name?
my black-and-red flowers?

Why is the sun hot?
Is the rain to fall on nothing?
At least on the ashes,
at least on the rain.

REBIRTH AND BELONGING

"This morning I thought I was created to be given away."

— ROBERT LOWELL

I can't escape the way it arrives,
like fog rising from cypress knees too crotchety
to house anything glimmering save snakes.

The dogwood catches its breath in swollen
white. I could suffocate before it becomes an orphanage
and opens its gates so driftwood arms
would receive me, welcoming me like a stepchild
impossible to drop overboard for fear of the splash,
dark-elbowed, bellowing, would be overheard.

I am stubborn. I do not dissipate, although the only thing
I share words with — "reunion," "shelter," "cove" —
is a worn dictionary with shiny thumbprints making identification
easy; even going backwards like a bum is simpler
than looking up "foundling" and acknowledging that it became
the thing I am. How do things become?

By "things," I mean fire, bees, photographs:
objects swaddled in receiving stone.