

Peter Culley / THE BOOK OF HUGH

falls open
upon a bituminous and flaky
page of coal.

In turning
from it lit upon
a pink and stripey rock
found early in the walk,
a rejected tumbled pebble
that had through the air
appeared polished. Therefore
in a premature spring—the christmas
greens still up—the toads
took to the roads, driven
by unseasonal lust
through the marsh gas
and into our path.

The dim stir
of chemical atoms
toward an axis of crystal form:
thus bear spoor,
formerly loose
and fruity becomes
parchment, chimneysmoke appears
to hover, the distant shunting
gravel is through the
drizzle oddly amplified.

Likewise the trance-like
life of plants: as for
the fern summer
so, roughly
winter—a fructose haze

foreboding not ever
a tender reading
that does not waver.

Beside us on the lawn
a brown barette
flecked with gold,
the photo of a horse,
in my hand
a pebble of no note, that had
gleamed in the mind only,
as upon the tracks
a red cent flattened oval
spun against the cutbank
and away.

The ragged wall
of social habit
connecting boulders, half-
obliterated, etched over
aggregate a glyph-like
trace of hooves
out of the quarry
the gravel truck's
girlish sway
upon the little curve.

From spray to spray
flitting light
the speckled finch's
yellow note above
the tufted and ossianic ridge
sepia splash along a margin
interior foxed, off white

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endpaper snow
falling closing, scything
crow tinges blue
the green day's
republican starlings, sneering
ducks, fatuous
shitting geese...

Personality

an unseasonal squall, a "gesture"
(as in painting ca. 198-)
a runny mustard splat, a pig's
black tail, a little silver
hurricane, an omni-browed
Kali—

though
sleeve notes tell
a different story: puppyish
prospects considered
beneath sugary eastern elms,
exalted sleep, smeared mountains
beyond the desk, foreground's
heap of sulphur bestrides
the bridge's sexy parabola,
grainy against an edge
that is no edge
at all.

Would seek therefore
a motive for its use, would
attempt unbidden
a tunnel
through the thick mantle

between us,
 the branch's
shadow on the shade moves
 and is a bird
or isn't—
 too big
for a leaf certainly, though
similarly launched; inattention
fluid also, subject to
accumulation, massed
 hesitations, blanks,
aphasic interludes. . .

Thus brick by brick
the pyramid of stupidity
is erected, so
mortarless suburban
walls, the blue screen
 of a false spring.

Beaten back
incrementally, the
peeping snowdrops re-
gather, rime's
erect buzz
cut atop a
minor shelf of shale,
 omitted rain
yet fills
 the valley's
moist hollows, unseen
ripples athwart
the spongy ground.