

Tony Lopez / TWO STANZAS AFTER HORACE

(*Odes* III iv)

Descending wooded slopes, I seem
To pick up the call of the oriole
Repeated at the far edge of hearing.
Yet I may be deluded. When I stop
The whine of mosquitoes homes in.
A sudden breeze stirs the canopy
And warm air streams through below.
I seem to hear the call far away.

Untouched by prowling bears or snakes,
In bay litter like a sleeping boy, I find
The perfect form of *Boletus badius*.
Upstanding, smooth, and honey brown
With creamy yellow pores and one strand
Of moss adhering. The cut flesh turns blue.
Scared wood pigeons crash through foliage
In their haste. Wings seize my thoughts of you.

from ASSEMBLY POINT D

Every so often the day builds around a menu
Say taking stock from the freezer for a *risotto*
Or calling early at the fish stall: oysters on ice.
Let's eat again real soon. I would be happy to go
With that old authentic abstract expressionist work
If we could print it on plastic. We're looking at
A futures market in concept art. You could hedge
Against primitives or streetnics or property as such,
Get in at zero and the only way is up.
White image of a plane on a blue ground
Then pull back to route on map of North America.
Eventually the loss of loss, fear of experience
(Tanks in European forests) writing *The Georgics*
When civil war had destroyed the culture itself.

This turning seems to go only to a business park.
You're on the bus tonight, headphones, synthetic waves,
Daryl Hall sings we've reached the borderline
By a terrace of little cottages made over *bijou*.
A large selection of other vehicles always available
Leaving Taunton on the M5. "Love will last forever."
In a thousand cities our offices are getting ready
To see that every transaction goes smoothly.
When the alarm sounds we go to assembly point D.
Agoraphobia, chronic anxiety, social phobia,
The narrator is bound up in some unspecified crisis.
When did the blue skies start to gather clouds?
How long have we poor shepherds lived and dreamed
Within these shady incremental pay-scales?

SMOTHERED OR SKEWED

Prominent dentists lit by lightning
Crossing the battlements late at night.
Flashes of desire made into landscape
A bat in close-up crawling head down.

A jewelled hand peeps from an ermine sleeve
And writes on a white board "quite alone
But not unhappy thinking about
These lacustrine cities on a hot day."

I seem to have erased the word "loafing"
Whilst making a continuous strand of peel.
Something to see through, expensively
Removing dead skin and mites from the surface.

A broken tower, a Hoover, loathing
To drill and pull out your teeth and finally
To reconstruct a winning smile or grin
With a special pen, blade or spatula.

It's a rip-off and you're paying for it
In graded, easy-plan instalments,
A machine that sucks up gothic:
That eats any kind of little dream.