

Ryan Knighton / SEVEN POEMS

SPECIES

To this class of students
English is the job.

It travels heavily about
the room sleepy with latin suffixes.

Today is Dinosaurs, Unit 9,
& past tense comes impossibly,

lumbering across the millenia
to be reconstructed

with all that precision
of Friday labour.

& who would give a shit
if it's only to petrify?

& who can finally answer
why they were all dying

to speak.

POEM FROM A PUMPKIN

Waiting in a closet café marking essays
about Dickinson & how much she seems to love
Death, or at least his civility. There should be so much more
than what's said. My squiggles & notes
are hiccups when they should be perverse
tattoos & Dickinson should moan through fonts
offensive to an eye's gluttony.
Across the street is a pumpkin stand
erected in honour of the season & I've never noticed orange
so much, so fat & charged. My father carved one every year
& we watched the blade hungrily
running slow & smooth, willing it to go otherwise
off the Magic Marker lines. There should be so much more
than the eyes, nose & mouth; there should be something other
than a lonely head decaying on the front porch for a week,
a euphemism lit once for witches & one-eyed pirates
not yet itchy to undress the other. At night, under sheets,
the ghosts feel their costumes changing & wonder
what they are to be next year.
& there is nothing satisfying or solid
about this red pen or its careful trail
& there should simply be so much more to reveal with a colour
so blatant. If I had more than this table setting, something
larger & sharper than a butter-knife,
I would put Dickinson back in Death's magic carriage
& with the first stroke of midnight carve a nation of pumpkins,
manna spilling floods, secrets coursing through stilted streets,
& the rushing girth of Fall, embered leaves & pumpkin guts
would open every gaping hole to say awe.

REDEEMING THE PORTUGUESE CLUB

An empty pint glass
tipped by dull light
remembers its edges in white.

Thursday rain runs
Commercial Drive & down
come thirsty regulars

like me. & a jukebox turns
Marvin, Aretha, Ray & Otis.
Names are all I know

shuffling in the door
one jostles another in a chorus
line as if that was history

comin 'round. As if we own
the tokens we are about
to receive & for plugging songs

are to be thanked. What's in hand
is all this turning
to find an image in the light

to hold our light-hearted mugs
together. & meanwhile
keeps calling for one more

round of Motown
to fix the faces
it finds for now.

Sometimes it works, the jukebox
the light, these glasses
& names

tips me over the page
to pour a version of rain
from the halo of my porkpie hat.

MOVING SONNET

for Jack Spicer

But little of the year's remains are fit
for a box. Shuffling feet,
yellowing carpet, & this old space jumps
with static electricity. It bounds
from slipper to finger to light switch,
anywhere it can reach — a collector's eye at Sotheby's,

like amateur video. We move
& it moves us.

Casing your time & the floor is Chinese tea.
Leaves, lint, bits of stuff & tape — each
an orphan diary entry
packed in particulars.

Elsewhere someone settles tomorrow
among the impossibilities of furniture.

METHOD

under glass
table
sunshine
the cat
sleeps
toppled-down tired
Ellie-still

then

the sphinx

purrs

hieroglyphics

yawns away

3000 years

maybe

stirs Cairo

to shed

a coat

of museum dust

with her bedlam

tongue

HENRI BERGSON GONE DONE

This white noise of
milk spreads freely
through the coffee
bar.

(11:23, Napoli Café.)

Considers where
happens to be. Once read
“white becomes you”
in a fortune cookie. Frank.

(11:23, still.)

Bitter tasting duration.
Breath disperses a fog
of west coast cold shoulder
airs. Sighs
get lost.

(11:24, finally.)

Don't start with me
he threatens her first.
The waitress arrived later.

'11:25, closing in five.'

Standing drops open
cane. White plastic lengths
extend snap snap snapping.
Presto senses direction.

(11:27.)

Outside listens
inside behind. Considers
when all at once.
If only.

A MECHANICS OF VANTAGE

A doctor measures this
symptom. The brain paralyzed by thoughts
of nothing. Astronomy understands a hole
burned through the universe,
the vacancy of one retina.
& so this unworldly eye, only witness
to its devastations, wanders
like all pets
& prophets, recedes in confusion
as would a frightened dog. It is left
to lick the air
like nuclear fallout. Nothing
is exactly that kind
of murder. & the good eye
is right, diagnoses
its twin, that other brilliance
locked in a science of unlight,
the odd revelation.

1. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 2. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 3. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 4. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 5. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 6. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 7. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 8. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 9. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature 10. The History of the Behavioral Sciences: A Review of the Literature
