

BROC ROSSELL / Four Poems

The animal opens, its scourge the fountain's plume. Heartache, the translucent bell. Tomorrow, tomorrow: bone will speak to bone, in the arm. Held closely, held and mollified. The canker livid and wandering. A holiday for criminals, a boot and a plough. *The stars be hid*, the stars like snow—placid and redolent as bedrock. There's an enemy. I am a plover, a missive, a white shutter, a stone wall. All the children bleed. Their mouths are juicy wolves. A fragrant and enveloping mist, a paucity of daylight. Crimes and grapes on the table. The open book smokes. The windows smoke and thin, air astringent as orange rinds. That's what my brother finds by the woodpile, he throws the fish back, too late, it falls to the ocean floor like a villanelle, like calligraphy written in lemon juice. The fine delicate chin of a young woman appears briefly in the deep. An oarfish, an awe, a second look at the apple tree. She has a throat. Ripples of fear, softly electric, a lamp about to crumple. Built-in obsolescence: is compliant, and generous, a grass in the mouth of a cave, thrush

A clip of leaf clips of light
Rot on clouds
The mirror of horizon
Trees the era of late decay, mold
Barely breathes a bit of green this field
This rising water the cyclist skirts that couples lave and stitch
Lights below light, public art
Between the decks
Of fading tankers and brown leaves you leaves fall
At the implacable condo crown's yellow lights brown lights
A pile of rocks not quite jetty but sufficient
To the moment to the blinking

Seam ripper if figural then rips
Open the sky's belly of soot
The cyclist smells
With her mouth her questions like students like yellow lights
On a band of water, frisson
Between thrill and grief
And curiosity and fear that these words
Will not speak and close
In the sun and moon and no animal
Will enter the mind
Eat its fruit and scatter

In this version they shoot the white kid first. I am taken to a small but comfortable house on the verge of two landscapes, perhaps a forest and shore, where citizens wear a symbol of the void stitched to their chests and long black gloves invisible at night. An old man whose losses were total instructs me in the disciplines of a classical education. The crowd gathering at the window breaks apart, an emotional grenade, the more dumbfounded dropped into themselves, sinking on the forest floor like canvas tents. Untouched by abuse, unfettered by common friendships, I deploy squadrons of language to various cities to establish fealties, taxations, awards, and grants. In these far reaches townspeople wonder at the identity of the figure who has accorded them uncertain emotional territories, asking in return only modest remunerations: books, whiskey, pizza. Yet their mouths widen and grow into black silhouettes of their heads and disappear, eaten by their sunless throats; now they hover, pirouetting slowly as if on pikes, carousels swelling or perhaps only deepening in color, blooming canisters of gas not unspent. In costume rags and rich with easy grief, I am nothing, nothing but a thought

Pacing in open air