

## LIZ HOWARD / “prosody of the citizen”

For Mat Laporte

At the height of land the antigen  
that walked no property— I go to it  
I bid you welcome, for I don't know  
how else to enter a city except by  
riding its trains, these rails an antecessor  
a hospitable bog of *civitas* to *civitas*  
we experienced a gulf

*eight strings of wampum*

Rhythm is a subject  
disposition in which I want the tandem spectral  
analysis of all the wild creatures  
evening redeems you as we approach  
causation: Indo-European  
wrapped in antithesis  
all I want is in some way to be  
like Mallarme when he wrote  
“the pages will be badly shut”

*gentlemen of property in the province*

It is necessary to learn to refuse  
while I, too, exit the temporary thing  
we have no power to convey  
land to anyone across the hemisphere  
who can say if our time will be  
original, *hostis hospes* < *hosti-pet*  
all over the township let my own self  
displace the original hour of our  
mutual birth

*three strings of white wampum*

I found myself in the tell-all  
the thigh-high the crinoline  
scripture within antiquity  
but bordered by a sumptuous  
unrest I read as modern  
in my twenty-ninth year  
in as much as I'm able  
to recall in a lurid stance  
my hip flicked out encumber  
the derision, sweet hell  
my soft pocket, my credit limit  
all faux-fur-lined decadence  
to what I call a poem, Ontario  
don't upend me just yet

*a belt of ten rows*

oh my fathers, how I sleep  
indiscreetly behind the desk  
of futurity, all hands on deck  
a shape of language  
I sit like a bird on a bough  
a shape of life  
I look about and do not know  
where I may be driven into  
the interior of now with sequins  
and rawhide along the ceiling  
of this basement apartment

exhibiting a fissure  
sauntering archipelagos  
gone to hunt for our suffrage  
in a cradle of alien nickel

*a string of seven rows*

of the real this is  
the foundation of the institution  
of hospitality genocidal recurrent  
coddle my knees against  
the stolen furniture  
the pulse carries you off  
tomorrow is never an issue  
once it's night

*three strings*

so-called moon fusion school  
I'm up before dawn with Nietzsche  
and infected wisdom teeth  
there is no original, begs the palimpsest  
I am my own name  
I let loose the perspectival stimulant  
I desire therefore to know the true reason  
Just say to me, woman, I like your clothes  
in the meantime you may use the land  
in common in the dream I tie a knot  
around the throat of all knowledge  
insist I knew where my own body was  
when the whole earth retired  
from intimacy

*the principle citizens*

after the potlatch take me by my small hand  
out into the long grass, a parallel university  
as a cumulonimbus marks its head above us  
a blackened gas of bad cotton batten gone  
to mold back there in some poorly insulated  
home I have raised my voice you desire me  
to hollow loud, and give notice  
let me therefore come down upon the ground  
into an open mouth and make that my own  
by a deed, and I shall have a home forever

*a string of one thousand grains of wampum*

## Note

This recombinative poem was composed using text from my journals, Mat Laporte's chapbook *Bad Infinity*, Emile Benveniste's essay "Hospitality," Henri Meschonnic's "Rhythm Party: A Manifesto," and text from the *Minutes of the Treaty of Easton, Pennsylvania 1758*, in which the Lenape (Delaware First Nation) are said to have ceded the land currently known as New Jersey. The title phrase is from Lisa Robertson's "Untitled Essay" in *Nilling* (BookThug 2012).