

TURNING



MARK LAMOUREUX

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WINTER

This winter that comes
as an ancestral curse from

those mollified ancients
who open their mouths

to moan & only the bones
of Indians emerge:

They who even in the twilight
began unmaking you,

who are the murmur of
blood on withered leaves.

This winter that dies
In a column of cold rain,

drops that pound even
the crystals of the Alpine

snow to the dust of ice—
which is water, to which

nothing shall return. Is
not born again, that which

feints toward oblivion,
the jewels of the skyline

seen from the halted train with
bitter coffee that is the blood

of children.

WINTER

As sure as my song will fall
dead upon the dumb ears
of this people, as sure as
the moon is the whore
of light, tucked away into
a lead-lined box, the last
emitter; such as that shed
grace across the land like a hot
storm, bending the wheat in two—
the wheat made of metal, the
wheat made of glass. As
sure as each flower will fall
on my knife, such as what
is etched upon the hilt, as
sure as what wakes in the orange
morning & perceives: this polis,
this people, this unmooring
of such a ship as will carry us
to where we are going,

where others have gone
to know, at least, that
the flashes in the sky
were over so quickly:
uniforms, dust, agency—
the center of an amoeba
slipping through blood,
coins heaped & heaped
upon soil molecules; we
are always a displacement
in the water, a beginning
& an ending to those that record
with number or word—
upon stone upon glass upon
ice that splits into sand &

motion. Where will we go?
Where does the weather
place us? Who gave
this drifting feather
to the wind?

This is the word
that will shed its skin,
like a city that twists &
recasts its streets—
the insect of a graffiti-
glyph shadow twisting
through a frame of light
upon the corrugated subway floor.
Runnels of refuse, the stricken
shards of the usual
cast-offs: manifold names,
shifting & blinking:
Athens Berlin Manhattan—
photons on the water,
a sphere that rolls upon
the dipping floor of a cloud.

WINTER

Rain constellations
on the windshield are
the wrong stars.

Wherever I point my prow
recedes
from me.

Comfort in
maritime imagery
landlocked life
locked in place like
frozen ports, distant
green
shores, alien
beaches: the life I did not lead

gives me some kind of cold comfort.

WINTER

Even in
winter

the tree bleeds,
cracking

knuckles like geodes—
where I would live

as a child,
at the bottom
of the world,

with lizards &
bones, slick

limestone a monolith's
kiss. A shape

in a nebula huge
In the gateway, a door

that opens out
into another room:

it is a hushed
acre, long on
time,

where the grey
earth redoubles.

A stream
of bitter ichor, where
the animals

are sick.

An instance
tilled, a rain
of ink & salt
& orchids droop,
dripping black slip

from the corners
of their mouths.

WINTER

Disaster teaches
humility, arrogance

a fleshy fruit;
its converse,

a balloon filled
with dust that gets

in my teeth,
under my finger-

nails; what god
smiles on this?

Weaned on water,
why must we?

Numberless, like
tiny fish, all

the letters in
all our words

once etched, now
smoke though a sieve.

Black ink on
a black stone,

smooth & cold &
wet like a mouth

or a tear.

SPRING

The leaving trains
a body too much in motion

looking for some grass
when there is no grass

to be had. The agony
of a mockingbird &

truck honks. Iron escape
wind-struck like

a tuning fork— the drum of
an empty trashcan in

traffic spun clock
then counter-clock-

wise—a plastic head
shaking: no no no no.

SPRING

A pinwheel of sparks
 cast into the false silence—
sinister in its insincerity,
 into the city night—
feral in its incompleteness:

Never a gram
of emptiness, never
a glimpse of static,

plastic assaults even the
EKG of forsythia,
pentacles of daffodils, the petal-
suckered octopus arms of wan
cherry limbs.

They chatter
on trains like
gulls yet
the song means nothing,

the song is the marred heart of the silence,
the bent lines of the inept
maul of oblivion—living

as though alive, as though day follows night,
clattering, disintegrating, not
even
these buildings can still.

SPRING

Potentiality-petaled,
the hub of a moment &

the spoked halo of
its destination, what could

might will have been—
a morass of such

blooms, wallpaper or dress
pattern, morning glories

on a chain-link fence, hammered
by rain or pierced

by a hound's tooth,
garlands fall from the departing

spirit, tendril-braided
wicks of ectoplasm—it loops

a corner & then there was nothing
there at all, nor will there be,

not for all of the dagger-
mouthed roses in all the garden.

SPRING

Think of Hopkins' shook foil
wrapping pastrami on rye,

the sign on the door says:
"LUNCH."

Steinway Street, 6AM—
No grandeur:

wind-swollen plastic bags skitter
pavement in arcs, as though alive.

I do likewise.

SPRING

Pigeons writhing behind
the metal Columbus hawk,

as with all animals hard to tell
if fighting or fucking, their

wings scraping stone with the
sound of firing stove

gas or an umbrella bursting
for rain. Like the statue

& surrounding square they
are cast in veins of grey—

their patina like lowly marble—
it is ubiquity & the city

that makes them ugly,
likewise with us, the city

what makes grey base, that
equanimous shade, pigeon-

holed—us also, clucking
under the grey sky

but without wings.

SUMMER

White portents in the sky,
a vision of a hand without fingers,

the future hot upon the concrete
shroud, gum-stains the after-

death birthmarks of the corpse of
the street. Hey buddy,

can you spare a dollar?
The telegraph of the clicking

claws of the prancing animals,
ground down & dulled. We are walking

into the wet envelope of whatever comes,
a city doubled onto its own gone past

like the husk of a pillbug under
garden wall stones. No crop from

this rock garden: arbor of steam,
Crown Gall on the fruit of

inertia. Quivering towards the door
spinning like a pulsar, each pause means

someone in front of you has fallen.

SUMMER

Sleep like the thunder
clap that won't come.

Thunderless lightning
like the people on the avenue,

bodies & faces without
history, sentences without

words—beads on a
string of beads or a tendril

of rain, like these, heavy,
that give everything

a sheen, every thing
imposing its form upon

the otherwise indifferent
vectors of the curtain

of the rain. I have not thought
of beads for a very long time,

have not thought of the sound
of a body breaching a bead-

curtain for an even longer
span—how it sounds

something like rain, but nothing
like thunder. Certainly not

the thunder that shook the house
as a child. I think of my books

often. They are dead, having been
written; in some ways dead

before having lived, not unlike
the storm that did not happen;

this heat is the shape of its
absence, the evidence

of the thing that wasn't, that
world that remains, regardless,

that is & would still have been,
in the same way it is

& would still have been if you
or I had not been born, either.

SUMMER

Grease & ice cream
melt on pavement as
inkpens bake

in kiosks. Mirages
off flagstones lift like
skirts, no breeze to jiggle

trees. The people suffer,
yet leaves
seem to flutter like banks

& their notes, reverse
glissando, things
that threaten; yes,

our time is over, pay
it no mind—skies clot, grey
& spit UFOs

& ball-lighting at us, ball lightning
to chase us down the stairs &
into the bunker or the Post Office,

jaggedly down
the street like a breastbone
sweat-bead. Our dynamos all

fail—crest curls back
into trough, the lip of the shore
recedes, sucks

at sandy feet & static
shells that appear
as though moving.

SUMMER

As rare as summer ice that
 sets off all the car alarms
along the block,
 a million heartsick
Catherines rapping at
 the windows. Would that
the hail could really
 steal away
all the cars. This keeping inside
 the people; the storm
is my one friend & as such
 expires so quickly,
shakes the blossoms off of
 stems & blasts the shit from
off the curb.

SUMMER

Summer's great blue sky-eye, the
other one green of the skyline trees
& its third cracked athletic track red one
await the city's glaucoma, weeping
the screaming sapphires & rubies
of the cop cars that skirt
the Columbus statue, where said
never walked, could not imagine summer
a \$20 tuna sandwich above a Botero
penis gone gold from touching, pregnant
with its own demise, cannot surpass
the autumn-crone, cannot succor
spring, naughty child, who goes on
shrieking in winter gardens.
Summer in the center of Time-
Warner Center, garlanded by chlorine
toruses, sees manhole covers
pop skywards, acne bursting
in the hot darkness of blackout.

The amusement park crashes
down into a pile of pink dust,
dusk my father's white hair
striking the empty coaster car
like the drum of a ship. Rocket
at half-mast, plaster & chicken-wire,
never even really got off
the ground.

FALL

Avert your eyes from
the fruitage of summer's
cold upended breasts
in a Waterhouse pool
of blooms, palms vadara
mudra, fecund
to be erased as root-
vegetables shriek
from their soil, the bower
fills with apples. Do not
reach for them. This
is the large sleep: the bare
branches of the trees, the trees'
lack of mind. The river will stumble
toward the swathe of blue
sleep 'till at last the sun
ices forever, corpse-
creased & everything you thought
you knew turned out
true, now go to bed,
tomorrow will be
the same as today &
yesterday was.

FALL

Searchlight-spot huge white
moon in the blue morning,
September balm withered—trees
sanguine, give up
in the thick haze. Through
factory windows beside the train see
inverted glowing buttercup
lamps light who knows what.
Woman in the seat opposite
metronomes, syllables spurt
from her lips like the rail shrieks
as light-flowers are prized
open by the dawning day,

September, never any rest
for the dead, 6AM the moon
steals away, guilty. Summer
drops down to the curb
with the illegals waiting
for some work.

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