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Two Poems

Jan C. Minich

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BARN MICE

We mount them on the east wall
with a cow's skull from Nevada.
The sand, when they pass it around,
causes sleep, moving from eye to eye,
and the lights are only those
lights we've given them from the fat
palm leaves of an oasis, molded
to the inside like calcium
in building a city from the ruins
or ruins from the pieces of flesh,
a tail almost whole of the rotting
cat we found, calling it young
between the bales of hay,
last year's first cutting too late
for the horses, good only for beef
or this grave, the moldings of twine
cut through by an ancient tooth.

TIME'S THREE

Women fresh from the small bakeries
of Puerto Penasco come through here.
I follow them into the courtyards
where bougainvillea covers the walls,
and the fading sun of their flowers
slips off their branches like blood,
falling for any beautiful
presence known like their plain
dresses falling to the ground.
I know their homes are the miles
they cover at night filling
their glasses & imagining the sun
falling behind the wall again
just as it happened for the sake
their treasures ask of morning.

I hold them here with the lies
I've heard them tell the children
at the backdoor, curious as to why
their fathers come and go so quickly.
They listen & fall to the corners.
They spend the day at their bakeries
remembering roaches surrendering
their bodies to their heels, gathering
dirt around them in self burial
or protection from the light.

I wait for them at the edge of town
drunk because I'm sorry we're leaving,
but still able to walk, not any less
a man to be turning away from them
because they've forgotten their lines
and turned loose their eyes
on the townspeople who are gathering
stones for our deaths, or for their own
lying out back in the sun to dry,
blind to our movements, the sockets
emptied as usual & leaving a trail
for the weakest to pack in by mule,
one so light they'll lose it in time.