

Fall 1978

Three Poems

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THE DOLOROSA DROWNS IN NORMAL BRILLIANCE

Lying on this bench in the airport at Madrid,
I see the opening of Easter, thinking,
supine daybreaks are what the dead have. These
are dark glasses bought last night at Orly
to hide eyes that won't close, and a lack of baggage.
A cavernous Spanish liner inches slowly past,
slow as the tiny man in earphones walking backwards
who waves and waves, his pinlight writing
some new interpretation of safety.
They waver together in the rose mirage.

Over me lean *Guardia Civil* in vast hats,
their lead-lined capes draped unnaturally.
One bends down and lifts my glasses.
Oh I know, my eyes by now are puffed
like adders, gorged royal on this holy day.
There is staring, conferring, uncertainty.
Passport? Ticket? I'm sliding backwards
over Goya's plain to Meknes, there being no god
but the one, pulled like the horizontal bronze Hermaphrodite
whose shock lies flat against the Prado wall.

It didn't happen on Spanish soil: relieved,
they walk away like history, asking only that I
try to rise up whole. This is no morning
for rejoicing. Raises a day like any other,
light again in that same relentless hierarchy,
coronation of the usual in right order.
I lie quiet as a bird shot over sanctuary,
who won't be dying, thinking, *it is enough*.
Dancing outside in red jet exhaust,
the little man waves and waves.

STEALING THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Our hero had moved to the basement. He
turns now, three thousand miles from this drawer,
knowing I violate naturally, by malice and need.
I pull it open and smell old uniforms,
damp bronze, trespass.

Fishline hides Rappela hooks which guard the policies.
Here are half-squeezed Ben-Gay tubes for the
stiff seasonal killer, obscure tools for freeing things
from their endless tendency to fuse. Peking money,
shadow puppets, wings.

The faces are half-obliterated, sunny, unsure.
Captain in the cockpit with his blurred smile,
Mother at the base in saddle-shoes, carrying me
as he floated bombs over China—hounding Mao
while others fought The Fuehrer.

These purple hearts will make good sinkers
as you cast me out to find others. I am
not in your eyes but in your weapons:
I am the bullet, the hook, your
daughter of metal, burning.

PILING UP ROCKS

Consider this map: the alluvial fan
of the Midwest's rivers. I can put my
whole hand over them, draw them into my
body, vein for vein. It's Egyptian,
living here, loving water, testaments,
and the dead (our good radicals, they
line the rivers' shoulders as crows).
We're safe, meaning somehow moral. Not
empty, exactly, but conduits for the
harvest to run through

*This goes to the Museum of Natural
History—we'll be clay figures down to
our bottom-fish. They'll leave out
all that other, which is the truth:*

It flattened us like frescoes, our
herds piled one above the other.
Weather, weather: a slap on the prairie,
the dust rolling out for miles—black twisters
nicking the pebble-beds, or state-wide blizzards
out of the mouths of canyons. If the rivers
stood straight up, brittle, you laid down not
thinking at all. Weather could enter you,
the way spiked rods pulled down lightning,
the planet unravelling.

We'll have to dig root-cellars.
When the weather rises, or the times do,
you want to press hard against what's left:
stone in a hole, or other bodies.