Landscape With Gettysburg Address

Josh Corey
LANDSCAPE WITH GETTYSBURG ADDRESS

1

For my responsibilities concluded with the burnt contract, the signature salted in custody, the parchment collars of my judges turned up against shaved necks and weak chins. When a heel wedges in cobblestones we don’t yank up the street or unpeel the city— but a little blood is welcome in any field. The world will little note nor long remember what we say here.

2

Scored nature dusts more truly in California, where seasons resist old country heuristics. Which is to say winter means rain or sun or heat, and fall leaves leaves unscorched. I walked out of jail and selected my phenomena— tin sea, brick hill, rubber skidmark, chrome roadkill, far above our poor power to add or detract.

3

And the law is the weak will eat the strong, if the strong are weak. Yesterday I saw fat pigeons spearing together through the fog. I sat on the park bench contemplating freedom and the long legs of a woman standing staring at the water. A man swept up and enfolded her from behind. Did she cry? Are we rescued? Conceived in liberty, dedicated to the proposition.
Seven days now the air has been too palpable to move—
mornings our beds wet with night's fevers. Some days death 
comes marching through the grooming groves, 
goes flying out of schoolrooms on his endless 
milk holiday. How many times we've sold out music. 
How many desires we've 
surrendered to glass, pitchfork, 
and cloud, we can not hallow—
this ground.

Years suspended. The terms of my parole are: no spitting, 
no gouging, no begging. I am cowed, gratefully folded, 
concealed under the hood 
of a Daimler-Chrysler-Chrysler-Benz. 
Who looks for me in the ground, on the beach, in Hollywood? 
Here am I. Who steals from me steals trash. Who steals 
the proposition that all men are created equal 
shall not perish from the earth.

Ago it was we fought the good fight. 
Today's for laundry and ducking 
the cops. Let's kill all the lawyers, 
especially the melancholy one 
who visited my cell, who offered me a bagel, 
who sat there scratching with a steel nib 
while I spilled my guts. Let no dead speak 
for me hereafter. Let none arrest me 
in my dash for the sea-chalk words 
met on a great battle field of that war.

It is for us the living.