

NIGHT GOES TO THE JEST

ASHLEY GORHAM

Winter wears on our hands,
fingers knotted to noble palms
and those of unfortunate descent alike,
stiffens the skin of a woman looking
to lose a little spirituality by dusk.
On a street stolen from the cars and buses by dense
groups of men gathered in prayer
to the concrete, heavy bags hang each life's
possessions on their backs. The night's
rotund lethargy calls for a common communion,
is bracket, lotus resin, and forms a resistance
among cloud & colored air. Could there be hounds
here, from a time of chain mail & joust,
and we parlay our voices
against an eerie volume of wind,
could then the final man on a corner
babble, child-like his daily sermon
and unhinging from our thoughts could we nod
to his moon rhythm, his lance of reason
when he rumors *do you know this trick*.

SILHOUETTEER

What contains the bend of wind
between season & flower is rumor
of bulb & bright sprout
rides feather-weight on to another latitude
the gravity left behind pulls at your face
and you weather, suffers each new stubborn soil
in the dialect of cave-carver, mineral
reformer. A complaining lick of sand
to softer surface, an awaited welling up
under the residual cousins of mirrors
in common light-play & triggered flashing.
To the creak of floorboards above our heads
the strange lamp-light figures spread
across the wall—somewhere a translation of this reads:
he holds a wall of sheet to her
he ties a fabric knot around
her curling shoulders.

SILHOUETTEER II

Held in the likeness
a brass-handled torch
withered gaze
suggesting the stunted
architecture's lack of rebellion,
parts of you fade
from sight soundless,
the portions considered most
open, also referred to as your light
boxes, while you endure
the possible lives of others—

THE CEREMONY OF NAUGHT

You arrive at the iron gate
the cemetery unquiet, your red

gloves press chilled metal bars
and stick slightly. The stone structures

inside are stilled, stunned
from the sudden break in weather,

Autumn's surprise. Enter
and say nothing of unresting souls

as if secret. Take your own ghosts
along with you by tying a yellow string

around each of their wrists
and yours: you are of the living

and your god is of yet unknown.
If there be battle among these stones,

let it be won over crust and curd,
and if there be song, sharp
let it sever the string that holds you here.

THE LAST GLADIATOR IN THE NEW ROME

for Evel Knievel

Hub caps and motorcycles
 just a juvenile among the Copper Kings
mining the soul out of Butte:
 your first jump landed in a box
of rattle snakes, never reaching
 the tethered lion, or the victorious brake
and wave—then the cars, trucks,
 Caesar's fountain was a brick
wall, your bones limp inside their skin,
 the shark tank in Chicago,
Snake river on a rocket
 when you skidded a slow slither,
your parachute too early, the money easy
 just deny death.
Business man above all
 no trick really, stack the double-deckers,
call the crowds.