

Gothic

Kingfishers in a cage, in the princess' boudoir,
bemoan their state with the ardor of the condemned,
wail and sing awful dirges,
while silent black trees drink spring light,
surge beneath the campanile
toward piqued clouds heavy with rain.
Suitors in feathered hats knock at the scullery door.
unheard, boots slathered with mud.
The princess rouges her cheeks, hums, drifts
into rapture: fairy butterflies, dust, stars
white, unceasing, massifs of sugar,
conjured from the sea, and a prince
paler than a ghost, holding a bloody rose,
risen from the deepest bowels of the dead.

Instruction

Delineate panthers from swans, erect a barricade.
Time will have its way, erase, portend,
guarding death from its instigators,
protecting innocent and damned alike.
Erstwhile aggressors, panthers become prey
of swans' illimitable sorcery. Therefore, any structure
must be constructed of finest wood or stone.
God-like swans ascend in luminous swaths,
though mere mortals clumsily ambulate,
depend on spells. Dismembered beasts'
skeletal remains blacken in rain, disintegrate.
Poor panthers—mercurial, well-meaning, now extinct—
vanish in air, balloons lifted from hands of distracted children,
so much dust, clouding the eyes of the redeemed.

Revelation

Even devils reviled the excrescences of the beast
tempered by a flare for autonomy,
mitigated in part by lack of communication.
The warts multiplied as so many cherries on a tree,
the beast commissioning doctors, surgeons, counselors,
exhausting its daughter's dowry, wandering
into a pool of mutating goo, stuck
beneath a black cloud. Stunned, it writhed,
bared yellow teeth, as birds pecked its glaucous eyes.
Raptured observers, ghosts, spoke in tongues,
condemning its profligacy, for its family
would be eternally widowed. Locusts bloomed, fires raged.
A rider on a white horse speared a winged demon in a fen,
clouds parting, an unknown voice calling from heaven.

Nightmare Walk-Through

A congregation of mice lie scalded,
drowned in a pool of coffee.
The bedroom used for trade and production
betrays a scent of smoke, patchouli.
Cracked portraits of pharaohs,
charcoal etchings hang in imperious faux-gold.
A monk kneels at the window chanting *Hare Krishna*.
Toothbrushes hang from string from the tin recessed ceiling—
an exhibit of the artist who cowers
beneath the dining room table
clutching a bottle of Xanax. The fire alarm wails.
On television: a screening of *Battleship Potemkin*,
while *Mein Kampf* rests on the sill
beside a pair of dirty tennis shoes, air-drying in the night.

Minneapolis

In a cynical age only the dead write,
while bodies of slaves and underlings
are swept beneath the table—
Lazarus having died a thousand times,
choking on bones—buried in mass graves,
beside statuettes, feeding the voracious blaze
of man's innocence. What's never said
teems from mouths, flowery, poisoned by unceasing rain,
erupts intermittently, frail but lethal.
An age of discontent, the price of admission no less
than one's head—so signs convey,
the green light of the dream flickering,
extinguished, as the sun rises,
forgetting the souls lost forever to night.