

Landscape without Rest

I step aside as a boy pedals
fast downhill, our path blazed
by cedar chips, his father

ambling at the crest, and fret
against the grip of my own
vectors, the straight lines, strict

dimensions, days that race by
too easily for the neighbors,
too scrutinized for me; but don't

we make a fine match, strike
a spry exchange, don't we
light a fused flame, how they

keep the tires of their bicycles
inflated, and how no one ever
showed me how to ride, and

the way these widening lanes
make way for flashes of rubber,
flares of cottonwood leaves.

Singing Stone

--After César Vallejo

My cigarette proves suitable
since I, too, am burning to a stub. How dizzying,
how carcinogenic to wield the world between
my own fingers, my own star going down in smoke
for a few moments
until the ember begins to flicker, and the world
takes its last drag,
stooping down to put me out in an empty furrow.

Lying in an open grave,
through the abiding veins of light I can see
my back story, my body
carried away in a trade wind racing across
blotted out mountains
made of stars
that Paris keeps turning towards itself,
stars that turn over thousands of times more
of their own accord
in the Andes, Trujillo, Santiago de Chuco,
caves collapsing
and my villagers' bones asleep in their red hats.

Downpour descends on me
as forecasted, my voice dry from trying to greet
the raw and forgotten
in music not precisely music, only the ashy
expectorations of panpipes and corequenques.

Hunting Season

Out in the clearing, the cold
season's coming on, a walled fog
of lights and my bones

courting evasion, coerced
into stealing away
from a public suddenly

steadfast on staking me out.
I'm sticking close
inside the high embankment

of the river, but they will
find me, and take aim.
The facility with which

I shift through the seeming
boundlessness of the forest
appears to play in my favor

but in effect forms
the groundwork of the game, of my
bulls-eye. I sense their scopes

sighting in on me when I bend
down to drink from
the smallest streams.

The sky letting go of its
last warmth, limbs their leaves,
storm clouds leaning into

trees—the terrain
betrays me in the same
distention that my instincts,

being so sought after,
forget how to seek escape.

Wingbeat

Not the procedure of inverted perch;
not the flitting at the feeder

brimming with sugar water
dyed bright red. Not the reverence

of echoes buried deep, lasering
stillness to a shrill point B

embedded in point A
by line alone, and only then

after the flight is over; not the discipline
to lift a mouth and eyes

from food, from coloring,
or the fundamental music

wingbeat speed produces.
What figures is the wanderlust

for flight, the worry
the one that flies inside inspires: how

to chase it out? The shooting
of the bat that matters

most; or all too fast, the blur
of the hummingbird whirring by.

Stream Water, Stream Light

Stream water, stream light in the easy creek
that snaked and hissed at the bottom of the hill
all summer long, while houseflies at the crest
assembled to swing in signatures across

garbage bags ripped open by raccoons,
regalia of the driveway. We ignored
this festival of feastful decay whenever
we came indoors or left—the stores of moisture,

pools of light prismatic in our eyes
transfigured those peripheral scenes and stenches.
How we held on to an unswerving comfort,

reclining in our shared stretch of the bank,
groping among the termites in the wicker,
staying naked, since our clothes weren't clean.