

Myopia and the Sick Child

Out the window's unground lens clouds flee
my son's fever across a breadth
of Bronx, where sough and whimper

drive heat on. This El Greco sky can't be escaping
a whole borough that fast, such mad ploughing.
How can I be anyone's father?

All I would need to halt the day
in its tracks, its element, its fit: a little vision.
These are my glasses at hand,

and here is the world to weather.
I should put them together
to catch this white scuttle and revelation,

the science of one last chance.
But I don't want to recognize anything anymore,
rather pray (if this be prayer) without mark, spot,

puncture, like bristles of an astigmatic painter
caressing the flames of his own seraphim.

Square One

I would like to let everything
of love alone. Morning's dog

keeps up its bark, and I can't remember
when I lost track of you.

My physics stops at petal's end
of a flower I can't reach—I have no

need there—only not to choke
on every word: mass, force, attraction.

What keeps me going—somewhere
a nun touches herself to god.

The Greeks had no different word
for yellow and green, a spectrum to believe in

where nobody knows any longer
the burning sun from anyone else's moon.

Matins

If I say *love* it will crack
my teeth and I am already bone

in need of graft. Mornings fall
from opened doors and small birds

persist like a torn corner of moon
restored in the last scrap of night, the page

I couldn't read through
the razz of migraine,

an acre of dictation I shiver to take
from the car, the shower, the footstep

that starts the lists no one can finish.
In an orbit of larks I am sparrow pretender

in the chorus, the silent mouth moving,
makeshift hymn of shutting up and down.

Profit

Basquiat, 1982

In the tic tac toe of this space, what year will it be
When time arrows itself into your late rally?
One blue hole in the punctured ozone of downtown
Is all the sky you get in this economy.
Eenie meenie miney moe, catch a market by the toe
Out goes you and your bloody trellis of halo.
Tomorrow avoids your blackboard, mad matrix
Of debt figured in the subway's antipodes.
This scream through the drain of teeth
We've heard before in a major, northern key.
Chase it, get it, spend it, because you know
Something's running you down, something's coming;
Even if you don't know what it is, you've seen
Its panicked fingers bony in their bright ecstasy
Erected into all the light left. You know
The position; now turn it to your own ends.

Queer Street

Boxer, Basquiat

*what stories
he told with his hands
in the right he had romances
in the left soldier's memories
—Zbigniew Herbert*

Out of the zoo
of white fears are these
raised hands a *no mas* of surrender
or kong roar of victory

raging bull horns that have swallowed
the four-elbowed tenements of the Bronx
all torso and neckless
as a cartoon heavyweight

or black savior painted into a corner
stretched in the squared ring
against our sins
nails in the gloves
(the fix is in)
for hooks to lead us on
and crosses doubled and nailed—

are we flat on our backs
on the white canvas
blood pooling as the count
goes on above
arms and hairy fists pinned and fallen
or on our feet
in the trance of queer street

our permanent address
in these late rounds
where the legs are gone
and we're out on our feet,
the heart alive and dead at once.