

Five Poems

Eclipse (July 4, 2020)

resin elbows on the arm rest
the king of cowboy chords on the radio
we've just been out on 60 West with
two tuna sandwiches and three beers.

a concrete roadside table
painted turquoise, what
fifty years ago?

its chipped and brindled surface
a map of some place that is trying to exist
pine sap lesions
twisted cedars and a towering lament.

a thousand points of litter
scattered by previous pilgrims
we sit among them
wishing for large plastic bags.

monumental clouds
cumuli suggestions of hope
outlining a fleeting dignity.

a straining Garryowen shatters love of country
before hanging on Lincoln's lip
a footling stogey of disrespect.

no one sees it fall.

a granite façade runs with tears
in each a grain of salt suspended
as the head of state claims rain.

we open the third beer
love of country is back and pulls in
unloading a family setting up picnic.

in the twinkling of an eye

that phrase like a faded label
on the discarded soup can at my feet.

don't know if it's cream of mushroom
or potato.

the words are torn and partially obscured
as am I.

Birth

It was the year love broke everyone
we were there
dancing under that unmeasured arc
corrosive rain dripping round the edges
a perimeter we dared not expose
it was safety of a sort.

On all fours we dreamt dizzy fishtails
guzzled in mud
we zigged
zagging was next
but we did not know that.

We would later lay down
next to owners of toaster ovens
with enough gumption and schlock
to scorch a circle of dry land.

There was just room enough for shattering finery
finery from a world that made and made and made
itself in the image of some Darwinian malt shoppe
heavy crème
delight oozing from pale lips
thick white dollops

that dripped and dripped and dripped
defining the ninth illusion we were always hearing about.

Some clownish heel-clicking slug
with a grin we could have wiped the pasture with
introduced itself with handshakes and teeth.

Then, someone said, Hey
where'd you get that parasol you thieving
dumpster fire mailman.

We were surprised to find it was you
smiling like a butler fresh from some cliché.

While it is true you provided some kind of distraction
we could not help running for it
stripping off our static garments as we went
bumping into the world.

Dog Walk with Seventeen Cars

a friend calls to offer Spurs tickets
I decline
been waiting for this night of doing nothing
yesterday was a long road trip
preceded by days
and labors
Jackson Bailey tugs at the leash

little plastic San Antonio Water System flags line a driveway
some blue some green
as if for Lilliputian armies
in the distance an ice cream truck
plays *Frosty the Snowman*
followed by *Love Is Blue*
Jackson Bailey tugs at the leash

in an alley a baseball with a busted seam
is near a water meter
that three weeks ago was draped with a Mickey Mouse towel
it was there for two days
but when I went back to photograph it on the third
the opportunity had passed
Jackson Bailey tugs at the leash

the large cottonwood two streets over
or at least what's left of it
offers that leaf rattle that always brings me peace
in an hour we are home
while we were gone
seventeen cars were stolen in Albuquerque, New Mexico

Nightfall

the round and shiny knob you grip
getting to that other room
reflecting all behind you in miniature
as in a hand-size mirror

as you open the door
the knob and image swing away
you step in
to a world hung with drapes of heavy conjecture

quaint and threatening doilies
are strategically placed on every surface

a claw torn blanket
a flash of red obscured by your hand
a frayed edge

didn't your grandmother tend toward violence?

I don't know said the wolf
horizon from east of east to west of west
in the black curve of his eye

lashes radial like a child's drawing of the sun

Four Days After Christmas At The Golden Spur

a stranger says
it's cold as fuck out there

and then, another
*yeah, thought I'd better stop in for a warm up cold beer.
warm up the insides*

and the stranger
anti-freeze

John Wayne is cardboard thin
stapled to the paneling
the shadows of his legs like skis to nowhere

the stranger buys me a sacrificial bottle

next to the duke the prow of a bighorn sheep
emerges from the wall

a taxidermy specter
his right front hoof on pointe
the left a suspended counterpoise

he will dance his way round a low shelf
topping a plywood frieze burnt with cattle brands
border round an empty stage
rocking R, bar H

such is his frozen joy

or at least his furtive, golden glance
suggests this may be.

the stranger, now less so, supplies more sacrifice

glass clinks a momentary alignment

the front door of the bar swings open
spilling brazen white sky framing Santa

he is seated in a lamp laden jeep
at the gas station across the road
Christmas bulb definition, headlights, grill, the works

They won first prize!

a sudden blonde appears in the doorway
she wants a set up for four

the stranger glances her way as a third sacrifice
spills on the floor

Santa says, *who needs Ethan Edwards?*

the puddle gathers light