

Vespers

Beverly Station: on a Wednesday night
momentous rumblings up the line annoy
the florid fluteman, mute the drummer-boy.
The New York Post sports page is taking flight,

and crimson Five arrives, one loud headlight,
and chimes divide the doors, and hoi polloi
abruptly glut their needs to redeploy.
Ding, then it's gone, a gust of Geist and Zeit.

The shrill one still recycling his theme
sounds lonesome, so the boy revives, mid-bar,
the pulse he pushes through the space they share.

Since no one's there to hear these strays redeem
what else was void, their noise conveys, like prayer,
love for the Ear Receiving Everywhere.

The Changeling

On days when debt, rent, bus or dying car
so rack our self-worth that we feel we are
nobility a neonatal switch
has shunted into Hell,
we would do well
to think on Stanislav Romanovich,
unsung successor to a gutted Tsar:

though armed with fobs and clippings that could prove
his ticker pumped the richest Romanov,
he kept it real, drove taxi in Bayonne,
ate Spam and poured more Folgers
while bolshie soldiers
tipped delights that might have been his own.
Nah, nah, for Stan, strong coffee was enough—

enough when Yosip's crimson mass had grown
restless and glommed an Occupation Zone,
enough when Nikki played pan-global chess
with mobile missile launchers.
Stan picked the Dodgers
over nostalgia for a dead noblesse
and outrage pure as fission, pure as bone.

Blizzard Bird

This turbulence that blew in overnight,
the seagull of the city under snow,
is not his own fowl, but the town's, the weather's.
He wears our streets as streaks along his feathers
and, when we say *goddamn nor'easters* blow,
we mean the motion of his wings in flight.

The subway rumbling underneath the white
is dimly rumbling through his hollow bones,
but up here only squints can blunt the glare:
when his Siberian circlings scourge the air,
flags flagrantly convulse, and traffic cones
stand for him when his saffron legs alight.

Doomed, though, like everything, this fiercely bright
gull of all seagulls soon must furl his gusts
and die the same slow way the drifts accrued,
like mad ambition, like a winter mood,
when sunshine cuts his glory down to crusts
and colors settle gentler on the sight.

The Child of Fortune

Daily since waking, you had galloped nearer
the goal you simply knew was yours out there:
Snowflower, Riddle's Answer, Talking Mirror
or, say, Rapunzel letting down her hair.

Yes, you and Mule, hilarious alliance,
wangled directions from clairvoyant crones,
threaded the pendulums of endless giants,
checked patrolling trolls with chicken bones,

and now, just past a last ramshackle bridge,
whatever's waiting in the witch's tower
climactic there beyond the final ridge
has lost, with nearness, all seductive power.

Mule has hunkered down and won't press on.
Wings pass overhead; they pass and pass.
The guiding spirit of your days has gone
and left you empty in a mess of grass.

There will be peace, there will be panic now
that freedom means the will to choose *Who knows?*
A mill beside a stream, a sturdy Frau,
brood chickens, philosophical repose.

Him Again

Damn, where the wind is ruffling
trash bags, and moonlight snags
on brick facades: the shuffling
nebulous humanoid
who glooms through shreds and drags
a shadow like a void.

(The beards of the Unemployed
dissolve in rags
and the shag of night.)

Mott Street, each time I walk it,
feeds me this charity case.
One time he dredged his pocket,
coughed up a watch—no band,
just a smashed and timeless face.
The gist: *Please understand.*

(I saw a ripcord strand,
a mental space
that came unwound.)

Wacko gives me this funny
feeling, a pity akin
to rage: should I waste money
on some irreparable bum?
My nightmare? My nagging twin?
The gulf I could become?

(My cautionary chum
was left a grin
when his mind went boom.)