

November, the Realist

Scrapped leaves, the orange the gold the crimson,
scratch along, clump, stop. Crumble. Rot.
Blow off where it all blows. Aaannd are gone.
Goes, too, the wide green tight green ends in,
frou-frou for debleaking (Ablur? Ablur)
stark stonescapes that never otherhow were.
Boughs, stripped (check); ground, scraped (check); skies, lowdowned
and spilt-milk scrimmed (check, check). Sight skimmed.
On view, brushstroked in rust/bone/ash/coal
and signed “November, the Realist”: Behold
your merest is, minus your not.

(Baits?) Yeah. (Taken?) Yup: nothing-worse winter,
spring ah-worth-it-all, why-worry summer.
Worst, last week a hue staggered you: “Use—
you there, sarcasto!—for once *le juste*, ‘glorious’.”
Then this. Gray air, sheer, non-swag. Brutal.
Concrete and brick. (Phones down!) Asphalt and metal.
Trust such to stand when plant-plush dismantles.
Sure, it’s just until. But until until,
be sombered. Attend, figure, to your ground—
once back-, now fore-; more lack, less more—
where with withs nothing, without without.

Disquiet

Moments like this the surround shifts.
Your inboxes banked with urgent matters
flutter like drapes, then fade to disclose
some rubble aftermath where wailing mothers
slump on blood-splotted hospital floors.

Or if, that day, the surround consists
of boulevards down which you amble,
your shadow dimming shoes and watches
asplay in plate-glass boutique windows,
with one deep blink it all peels away
and you sprawl, too filthy not to ignore,
camped under roaring off-ramp arches.

The surround can flicker out even at home:
sharing the sofa, feet on the table,
and the lived-in colors click to grays
just like that, every humble thing
now hateful, hated, bluntly reminding
that you who were partnered now lounge alone.

“Still Possessed of Those Effects”

Memory, that staid impresario,
prosceniums your past;
repertoried stagings,
a familiar cast.

On quaintness of sets and costumes
you smile from your box,
then wince suddenly, like a Claudius
when *The Mousetrap* locks.

Spotlit: *the very worst thing*
you've ever done—
a backstory you haven't told
anyone—

you never got caught—
nobody saw—
no one even talks about it
anymore—

(Setting aside that character
who may yet, of course,
uncage a long-starved revenge
on your bleating remorse.)

So here you sit, unpunished
to this very day,
hardly the sticky end scripted
for the villain you play.

Now what *would* be tragic, is dreading
some fifth-act brawl,
as if justice were poetic *after*
the curtains fall.

Tuesdays Are the Worst

11/15/16

Late afternoon. You've given up on sun.
Leaf-plastered pavements show the ill winds won.
Witness through streaked glass what this storm has done.

Next-door noises turn distant under the rain.
Brick walls darken downwards, and gutters drain
bitter storm-waters that do not cleanse but stain.

All day, your apartment has let you hide
and curse the morning forecasts for having lied,
but now you too must make your way outside

to find fresh cause of grieving such a fall.
Boulevards will open vistas that must appall
in their gray finality, while over all

cloudbanks underlit by city glare will bar
night's limpid rhythms, of planet, moon, and star,
from proving how inconsequent we are.

The Stargazers

Late one night in Yucatán,
wandering through the banyan trees,
we soon found our pathway ran
far too dark for the eye that sees
by Sirius and Pleiades.

Starshine: a phenomenon
exotic to the urbanite,
for whom a sun is hardly gone
before phalanxed streetlamps light
the shorewash of encroaching night,

leaving us as brightly blind
as does daytime's blue-white scrim
to the engulfing black behind.
Earth's cocoon, now lit, now dim,
hides all voids but those within.

We knew ourselves far from home
as, with every nightlight out,
brilliants in the obsidian dome
blazed too heatlessly to doubt
voids on voids recede without.

Yet the absence filling that sky
taught how blink-like lifetimes are
all in vain, while you and I
basked in beams flung parsecs far
from each long-constellated star.