

A photograph of a sandy ground with a metal ring and some green plants. The ring is a thin, dark metal circle lying flat on the sand. In the upper center, there is a small cluster of green grass-like plants with some reddish-brown flowers. The sand is light-colored and textured with small pebbles and debris. The overall scene is outdoors, possibly on a beach or a sandy area.

No Omen

Joseph Massey

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otata's bookshelf

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No Omen

Samadhi

Even if there were a world
it wouldn't bother to be ours.
We know the mind is better left lost,
and each thing it feigns to anchor.
It's enough to just sit—
to breathe each other here,
awake in what language lacks,
while a jagged line of late gulls
vanishes into a low cloud
that says snow but doesn't.

Untitled, 1965

after Robert Ryman, in memory

You were already gone
in monochrome scaffolds
where time is texture
and vision apprehends vision
in the flash before form finds a name.
Here there's no room for a self to sift through.
These minute strips of white—
glacial in the right light and mind—
dislodge from the cling of language.
At the frame's edge thought stops
on a gray splotch: an imagined origin.

Other Surfaces

Snow plows vibrate the walls
and the water in a vase shakes:
flowers that fail
to fool my room away from winter
sit on a speaker blaring news:
panic sapped into fatigue.
I follow the day
through windows, shadows
barring the floor; I track the season
by what's stuck in sewer grates.
Today they're under half a foot of snow.
I'm walking in it, hungover, hovering
over a notebook to chisel a phrase.
Sky's gray grain gathering white.
White enclosing white.
A clean and marginless page.

Japa

Sunday is the ritual of Sunday
repeating its name
until it disintegrates.
What remains: half-dead
grocery store flowers
losing blue petals on the altar.
And this thoughtless sense of light
lengthening
despite the darkness in the room.

No Omen

Memory's a husk
hung to dry
in sunbeams
latticed over
a parking lot
snowbank.
Crushed Coke
can lodged
at the peak.
A shadow that
would claim me
rocks on its heels
by a pile of slush.
But the weather
is heavier
than superstition,
and I am unburdened.
I is a husk,
a witness,
mere consciousness
navigating the edge
of the cusp
of spring.

Rising

After death-deep sleep
I wait for the day's first omen.
Skinned black branches
wind lashes between clouds
that make the mountain small.
The mountain still snowed over
even after last night's rain. White
creased russet with traprock. This
is the counterpoint to the wind
and what it can't articulate, this
stone holding the horizon down.

Deconsecrated

At dusk starlings roost
in the belfry of a closed
Catholic church. Wood
warped by how many winters—
too soft to throw an echo.

Revised

Clouds stacked in Robert
Lax stanzas disperse behind
the mountain—a kind
of vapor now—a blue plume
the sun pulls further apart.

Opened

First few signs of spring
and mania animates
the dormant corners.
What my mind cannot contain
the field contains—the light shakes.

Company

Birch-spliced March light
lengthens over
old snow.

Darshan

Mountain made bald
by a microburst.

Ridge stubbled
with new growth

stilts the cloud veil.
I'll sit

until the last patch of snow
dissolves into stone.

To a New Friend

Daylight disassembles into sound—
the hum I hold in my head
is the hum you hold in your head, too.
The poem, written or unwritten,
is enough to see us through the thaw.

Soon the fields will fill with names.

Mud will rupture with indescribable color.

Satori in Easthampton

The sun crests over Family Dollar. I narrow my sight to see spring's debris drift across the parking lot. Dandelion seed heads sheathe wind. The shape of the wind; the grain of the light. Today there's joy in the blur. To seize time by saying what surrounds me, when words instantly slip from the surfaces they feign to reflect. As if language were an anchor and not a kind of scar tissue. Today there's joy in the voice that falters to locate me here.

Poem Against Cancellation

Vow to see
what isn't
immediately
seen, what
takes time
to sift
into view;
takes time
and keeps time
as the gift
of space
in which to
perceive the
inverse of
surface, and
to know the
world is
many—
many
worlds
within.
No voice
is single—

a tapestry
of history
and pitch—
and to hear it
is to receive it
without
surrendering
to an impulse
to destroy it.
Human
beyond human.
Say the un- kempt
shrub
is full of bees
and bees
weave sun through
a new season. Say
there's no account-
ing for the world
and how it
defies
a frame. Say within
the one— within
us— infinities
flourish.

April, Waiting

Cold rain claws dusk. I
close the window and listen.
The perfect poem
is without words, is the thing
itself thoughtlessly ringing.



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