

6 Pieces from Michael S. Begnal

Mountain

rises above shedding water, wash of early spring,
another ascent where our forerunners have tread,
original humans of here,
own shod feet treading rocks loose in the dirt of
“home”

the feeling of being out in silent wilderness

the summit,
the sky strangely shimmering,
the town revealed from it as misplaced with distance,
plan of streets indiscernible to the retina's rods and cones,
instead there are more mountains on the blue horizon,
seriate ridges stretching out in parallel
and we inhabit merely one of numerous valleys

somewhere underneath, 1' down, perhaps arrowheads

no mountain lions / *Puma concolor*

a clearing of

total change is always there waiting
and you take into you repercussions of
death hanging over like dead tree limb
of previous winter

the summit ground still brown with old leaves,
new buds on branches,

inevitable fall

Dithyramb

Marijuana through a Lime Coke can,
to put on a Philadelphia A's hat
& walk to a Uni-Mart via alleys,
with a silver shiny car following
suddenly delay & turn
up the alley ("evasive action")
past a porch *Every day is guy day...*
No way! Yes way!

breeze blowing slightly,
to wear a t-shirt in the night
—is it already early July?—
summers are fragile now,
TV light flickering blue from a back window

& in the store
I am on a small color TV
in blue hat & green t-shirt

—under the threats—
you have to affect a swagger in your walk
to transmit no meekness around the corner,
meet aggression with unconcern &
be ready to smash someone
in the face

because nothing matters now besides
the sensation of being alive
at this very moment, it really doesn't

(someone following me)
past a porch *They come here,*
they lead a minimal existence, & send
everything extra back home, & it sucks,
because that \$\$ should be going back
into our system!
concerned about power & hierarchical
trying to influence each other
& I cannot save them

crunch of gravel under Puma sneakers

Blood or Fire

And the people were all against you,
at least as much as when you were a foreigner,
the importance of experience
of suffering together in a dark basement

and the way they were set against each *other*,
what a sad thing to call home,
a thousand cuts
like broken beer bottles on a concrete floor/
fear stalks “the scene”

and then the double-o,
half-glimpsed faces encircled you,
projected back a history you could not recognize,
the shock of that,
how it was different from the expectation:
as a stylized “big lie” delivered
in a certain locality’s impenetrable dialect,
the distance to anyone next table,
a balkanization,
 almost political

the season turned deranged,

the animals, antagonized in their ditches,

tree leaves bright-reddened and fell—blood or fire,

the mountain ridges were *walls* of fire

but at night were dark as clouds

In the Stadium

In the stadium of white stone
 cracked blocks of sun

faces are brown and lined
of the men eating tacos in the stands,
some take pills when no one is looking

hard working in the taxi office 12 hours a day,
it's hard sitting in these faulty seats of wood
which date to Roman times, or before,
the peanut vendors never come around

the colossal stadium
 has gathered the people

announcer (drunk) crackles over the loudspeaker,
you peer through an arch on the mezzanine
and view its space

the stadium at night—
 floodlights shoot into the black sky,
 cathedral columns rising in circle
so when you look up, the whole crowd one mass,
 as in its womb,
 enwrapped in its warmth familial,
you see a passage, or a canal
 you rise through it,
 up,
 up,
 up,
 to birth

Snow

You weren't ready for the snow, were you?
how it distorts the nature of reality
so you realize "life is change"
like you were always told
—but not liking change sometimes—

or the symbol of snow as a malaise,
a misfortune that has befallen the town,
the whole state,
retribution for some collective wrong,
 this crap that has appeared,
 that covers everything,
 impoverishing everything
 (the old *Twilight Zone* episode,
 the darkness of the town's racism),

and not a new snow, it's been there for months

somehow there were voices through the air
as there might be in summer
(male early 20s drunk on a Tues. night)
(a dog's, a girl's scream also drunk, stock)
 (not threatened)

the wind blows up the shovelled sidewalks
and you freeze

you had earlier wanted to incorporate the image of
a lone flower on the steppe,
but it just wasn't happening

Fluffy

The powdered scent of hair,
 flesh to lip,
becomes tautened,
and inside swollen moist like after rain,

time wilts and willows,
residue builds sweet on the tongue

colors come
and the fireflies light up the night

in SWARMS

BIO:

Michael S. Begnal (b. 1966, U.S.A.)

poetry collection, *The Lakes of Coma* (www.sixgallerypress.com), 2003

poetry collection, *Ancestor Worship* (www.salmonpoetry.com), forthcoming Nov./2005

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journals *Poetry Ireland Review*, *Poetry Wales*, *nthposition*, *Shearsman*, *Vallum*, *Natural Bridge*, *Fire*, *ZYX*,
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lived in Ireland 9 years

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