

Michael Kelleher

FASHION STATEMENT
for Bob Kaufman

The thread-worn voice quavers the ghosted edge
of the film, in violation of its oath
from a decade ago to keep silent,
remember the death of America.

Not the place the proposition that explodes
from the end of a gun, a bullet fired
in a public space goes spattering brains
that widows chase on trunks of limousines.

A poet needs to be cool, needs to wear
a cool hat, better yet a cape. The drama
at the throat of a brightly-colored scarf
is too coarse for a poet with a vow.

The heart murmurs louder than the voice.
It says nothing. It has nothing to say.

CLEARANCE

Thus, the children kiss the liquidation man goodbye,
Au revoir, Monsiuer le liquidateur,
and just like that are bankrupt and free

of money's downward drag
whose gravity pulled their cell phone-juggling dad
into the grave. Falling with a pistol shot

the camera hardly registers at all he drops
to the ground dead and the narrative threads
by which he was bound are loosed,

everyone finally released, but from what we must ask
did he suffer, what wound, what weapon
could penetrate the sanctum of the happy

bourgeois family man? He knew his history,
his place in it, could tick on his fingers the names
of saints tiled in gold or the artist

made the hand of God reaching down,
extending aid or perhaps to snatch him back
to heaven. The roofless family chapel stands

alone, a ladder propped against a wall.
The saints with their blank white eyes look down.
Everything is for sale, everything must go.

AN ATTEMPT AT READING A POEM BY LAURA RIDING JACKSON

An animal that wasn't animal,
whose destiny was to have none,
without material reality,
undamaged by perversions to its body,
traversed a continuous expanse
of nonexistent land,
nonexistent because already known,
already known because already mapped.
It could be seen one instant, the next
it would evanesce in angular cuts of sun.
The stars forever wink inscrutable signs.
They never die, but open, close,
open, close, in binary code. The final stage
of thinking happens only once.