

Benjamin Quigley

They Navigate by Constellation

What tempestuous destiny rushes at them
Who captain their lives, with honor flying as standards,
But with minds as holds, full of millions of worms?
Their houses are full of boxes never unpacked from the move,
That nation of plagiarists,
And the gray glow of computers as they read in bed
Is finally painting their own blue and brown eyes gray.
The indifference of the trees to their ennui,
The swagger of their overfed cats,
The thoughtlessness of what is rotting on the road...
It can swallow a generation; we just know this.
That is its breath they smell when they are microwaving dinner.
Later over the speakers the iPod shuffle-stumbles
To a Segovia waltz or an old song
Their mothers used to sing, as they twist
In the bed sheets together – recalling
The Polaroid memories of their childhoods, but reflecting
How the film for a Polaroid just isn't made anymore.

Ember Nocturne

The sky becomes a hand and tosses
all street walkers, trophy husbands and concubines
to the same burning wet place
as the other expunged criminals,
those who now cower
under the parapets of a dream god's palace.

Can any verse be found out in the dunes?
Depends what bulldog wind
Is gnawing on us now,
what wind is blowing the statue girl's stone gown.

She carries her hundred years well,
her only sign of age the moss
growing in the crevices
of her face and cape
as a shiny dark fly
hikes our leftovers.

Embers of old grudges,
will you fall away as easily
as the blue from our eyelashes?
My toes are cold, cold
in the horny weight of rubber treads.

It is these memories that endure
under our skin like splinters,
of her sleeping in the shotgun seat,
of her crying at your door,
of another in her place,
of an ugly question that defines,
of a falling fork, of an empty doorway.

Collie Elegy

To remember the last days with Sandy
blows leaves over the tidy,
brick walkways of my teenage memories.
I could barely breathe when my collie's blind
and bloodshot eyes finally closed.

How do people write about the past with such patiently observed calmness?
I don't remember one moment of real calm in my entire life, just a spinning nickel that sometimes lands tails for
horrible sorrow, and sometimes lands heads for friendship and drunk glee.

When I tell stories they fall too fast, like those plastic paratroopers,
or I accidentally let go and they fly off like birthday balloons.
If only I could tie the stories together, create buoyancy...
but:
how can I write that my brother and I are trading puns and howling laughing,
because yesterday we were weeping?