

Robert Lietz

OLD LINE BARBECUE

Here's context then, and, here, these eight degrees
across Ohio, a weekend of snow ahead,

and these poems I'm looking for, these photographs
I mean to find along the route,

however the market's acting up, a sell-off's tempering
corrections, as if a course, I think,

on a prodigious instrument, with recoveries forecast,
a predicate light, let's say, let pique,

as prayerfulness and preparation, in changes already
evident, on the Rorschach ponds

still sound enough to glide on, in an administration,
charged, promoting a civility

a party on the outs can find no mind for, salaried
by constituents

to work about as little as they're able, and
slathering the slabs,

passing the wipes, or stoking
an old line
barbecue.

WHAT SUMMER MEANT

I

A kitchen scented with chops, chopped greens,
becomes a reference for seasons,
for the events revealed, subject still to influence,
which you'll declare, if asked, to say
where this might light, or to announce the time
of their returning, so
we could wait there comfortably, assuming an ease
with the fizzed drinks, the instructions
meant to check or temper the least impulse, such
as the dreams had been,
of catapults, of the views from the high rails, down
to the Pollacked drive below
and back to her expressions at the screen door,
to hear all the words you knew
as that brush pin-wheeled toward impact, whatever
the summer meant, with
every adventure sabotaged, walking the railings
painting eaves,
transformed by her amusement, with no regard for
time, for the spoiled jokes, or
the jokes we missed in unrepeatabe successions,
even as stars joined in,
drawn -- "in cahoots," we might have said -- from
some under-populated
and unpropitious galaxies, not even the least,
I think, moved by her inviting,
turning, as no hostess would, from her screen door,
having caught your eye
and confused what you should feel, traipsing
the whole way down,
while she, not even the least bit curious,
returned to her programs,
recipes, and to her own fears then,
for her children,
government.

Here's what this comes to, what it looks like
now, whatever the impact
might have been, the pleasures under-done
if nonetheless surprising, that
this storyline endures, some *once* compelled
by stakes or by upheavals,
some *once* reprised, since we'll be getting back
to that, when
the purchased revelry, or the dessert, in silence
shared, and since revalued,
sets the tone and steps and angles of behavior,
the disburdened light
we followed into niches, where the oldest snow
survived, no matter what the season
or the modes of light, packed light for traveling.
Who needs this anyway,
the shoulder or sling bag, stuffed with favors
you've included,
bringing yourself so far, from the first checked
square, to the reviews, sequels,
and the need for explanation, into the nights
around, secured and set and scaled,
attending the works installed, intended
to float, like some
kid's skiff, swallowed by surviving,
prescience, by
the whispering, ahead, of
seasons,
or of deluge.

KNOWING THE COSTS

What's there to tell, or to sense from photographs,
except for the hues

and humors breaking through, the performance nuns
had always been expecting,

beheld and recognized, preserved in the documents
of our undoing, as they saw it,

and arranged just so, to concur with preparations. So
difficult, I think, to calculate the speed,

torque, the positions we were to occupy forever, this
obliging say, and viable discipline,

establishing traction, if you will, re-framing the formulae
we thought would make more sense

to partners, even less inclined, and keeping ourselves
on task by prompts

or acts of our composing, by this little stillness, without
a name or need for it, as

the afternoon gets on, when you are yourself alone
and swearing off the property,

pleased by the day's bright regimen, and it's Syracuse
maybe, or, more likely, Cincinnati,

persuading by perspective, your great-grandfather's
sprawling dead, and your parents,

unmarried yet, are not yet out of high school,
not conscripted yet

to family shops or temperament, knowing
the costs for two

and two in love, with that to
work through.

ONLY THE SEEDS

Only the seeds, you think,
and enter them all
on that charged tablet, a man
your age
stopped dead, the work
of a summer day
proposed as explanation, all
you had thought
discredited, even the change
of clothes
and the beverage poured
where he's discovered,
as the hours advance, and
the moon, on
other errands even then, ducks
in and out of vision,
over a smeared topography,
over these two,
adapting themselves to serve
the many ends
of schooling, perfecting
themselves,
in the months and years
ahead,
to leave you
orphaned.