



Mark DuCharme

Six Poems from *Complicated Grief*

## After Sorrentino

The man who sold his image  
Is waiting for the world at large  
What humanizes his distraction  
This structure, this thing unsolved

An orange is an orange is  
Perhaps you are who were already  
I care about postage stamps like I  
Care for Nobel burnout literacy

Assertive wallflowers look the same  
You know the trouble  
Acquaint yourself with orange rustles  
The end could always bristle

In faint economies of style  
The end is all right here  
Await syncretic rage  
Paper like crumpled bone

# The Man Who Knew Too Little

We moved independently  
In unique meningitis  
After the security forces dangled  
Your foot in my gazebo

This is my birthday note  
My complicated blending  
Hidden arias of Zoom fatigue  
& All the panic by which winter is transfixed

If you are fixed for lightshows  
& Contingent strictures crimp your gloom  
Waiting for a sideshow to arrive  
Evade revival terms & mitigations

The slump isn't always slantwise  
Irregular in trauma stanzas leafing  
Through motes as if they were boats  
Intent to leave you out at sea

# A Life of Concomitant Ruin

Are you now one of the ancients?  
Is it you who still remains?  
In what bitten irony  
Are we still not blooming?

Come on & tell me your petty romance  
I work my ass off to bleed in shadows  
What do you do?  
I had to be alone, & alone give answer

To a bare night flicker, when what went wrong  
Went wrong  
In impacted July, in an instilled night language  
Where I barely embody this form

Written, as the past is an unwritten diamond  
A conflation of books, something larger than we  
As if contagion were our facts  
A quick link to our low demands

## Poem with Found Footage, Almost Paused

Think like a senator  
A role not answered  
I didn't say I ever was  
Near you once before

Think not like peons in redundant mourning  
Sometimes, all we are is almost paused  
We've got the questions; you've got the space heater  
Whatever it is you think life means

Like a profit on the gloom  
Until you become profligate in winter's damage  
Premeditated, when no one hides  
Like a child full of bugs

With evenings laid down  
In bare ghost-damage  
Like a child of medicated stenographers  
You still aren't all you've won, in summer's pre-imagined ruin

# I Know What the Ticket Taker Means

“A metonym for aquatic fate,”  
She said, but all too darkly  
For the recording to be transcribed  
In a language of polyglottal animals

Reimagine your dead future  
As a language of processed trees  
Emit discarded notebooks others have transcribed  
Like a prayer or myth of the discrepancies of summer rain

At pale misreadings, some do backflips  
In time’s placid violence  
As if the chair herself were a know-it-all background vocalist  
I know what the ticket taker means

When he calls me by my shadow name,  
My fate  
Who refused once to look at you in haunted vestibules  
Until vagrant dealers laughed & quaked

# The Fates

Give me a break, Rodefer  
We live or die on equal terms  
Faded, like the outside  
I love to love your love that burns

Trying to put the blame on  
Your faint, grandmotherly reflection  
Attrition as social distancing  
Had I not become nobody else

Before you were an active verb  
With faint Hollywood eyes  
Have you read any good poems lately  
As a class of skies

Moot, when nobody's altered  
Or answered in tomorrow's goodbyes  
Disordered before lost  
In whatever nascent selves the fates conceal