

Mark DuCharme

Bricks

after Kenneth Koch

A start always has to have a middle
Stuck to it. Then we go back
To the way things were before.
How are they now? We still don't know. The tune
Is sweet, but no one calls. The bricks lie redolent
In the mud. The security forces twist & turn in sorrow.

Wouldn't you be sorrowful too
If you were lying in the mud?
You sure would! though you can offer no
'Security' nor 'force'
Entirely your own. It's never too late
To go back to the middle

Though many do, who, still, like you
Are an upstart & a charlatan,
Albeit a fine golfer. Go then
To the anteroom to meet your followers,
All wired. "The middle isn't
Here," one declares, but you've gone sailing

In the meantime, nestled by sea's
Violent plumes. If you go back
To the source, nothing will be rebuilt.
Wander out the door, then, in poor apparel, please
With lots of passionate footnotes & several
Cameras filled with mud— as if to proclaim,

“Earth will never look the same
Again. With grace comes mud, or at least bricks;
With birth, delight & sorrow; to end,
A poem must already have begun
But deliberately, in breath, when all
But earthen cameras fade.”

A Poem for Believers

The sketchy connivance won't stop skimming
Leafmeal as peace dungarees
Where winter struts, though tunes go missing
In a past we're all too ready to ignore

Like tons of petty gravure, reproduced as scrim
Fate only graces the saints in real-time
Shadows of distressed birds
Thrust at haberdashers' windows

Or brood of others lost at sea
Invent stressed cloud formations
The clarion call isn't up to speed
Circle back to reason's dumbed-down saints

Become no one, whether cyclist or stooge
Exempt like raucous cloud formations
Often are where you won't quite be
By rotten palms, when winter's almost through

In the Garden of Lost Tongues

Departure ruins your woozy entrenchment
Time runs backwards
Accept loss as a garden you must tend
That the somnolent might envy your misdirected gaze

A formal renunciation of pyrography
In the skein of each other's nerve
Where words grow stale as calyxes or harbingers
Of doom whose trumpets blare

Above your calendar of missing days
Where the mirror holds no face
& Words desiccate the tongue
With love a moldy flag— a parlor game of mumblers

Who often muffle screamers' faces as they drown—
Never was once like once before
With crushed doves frayed
At the linear defacement of my own name

My lost shadow
My tongue of burnt night indigo
My tune of animal grief
That neither sea nor wind can ever heal

Address to the Streets

To stay nowhere, get it clear
Some other Sunday

After the streets don't rain
With mediocre proposals

Hang on to your shopping boots
At noon young sparrows cough

Who only then begin
To address the material

When they wake up, furtive regents also snort
Do you have the youth to forgive them?

Heart like a prayer set aside
In a bucket of gift cards

That ashen children don't have the heart to
Forge. Truth comes later

On headsets of summer evenings
When you've already left town

If you go back, grow up
The streets don't need you

In fact, they often fly off, trying
To wake the dead in null surprise

Things You Still Aren't Sure of

for JD Nelson

Be revealed
Be corporeal blossoms
At a corner of the shadow you once were

With or without tickertape
While others stare, then sing along
Like thieves. We don't know where we belong

Just like you, who fled
With your front foot in the left drawer
Where tomorrow never rains, although

You reinstate loud calm
Rustic, like a folk-humanist imperialist
If only I'd said the right loanword

Like carbon forget-me-nots
Or appointments with hot-air-balloon specialists
You might as well tell the sun not to stay

Usually, in any reflection
Until films cram our eyes with structure
Though we, who wake in altered

Structure
Disregard horizons
Sometimes, when December is a jumble

Or you fumble with the
Keys
Toward any replacement of botched jamborees

When the truth of life is through
You'll still never know what to do