

PRISTINE

i dreamt last night about the latest
political struggle.
waking up it condensed from dream to thought
and the very next thing in my head, in my body, is
what's it going to take today
to make me feel all right?
i've got this
knot of restless discontent in my belly
and caffeine will only make it louder.
alcohol! i think alcohol makes everything better except
there's all these funny rules attached
like you can't just sit on your porch
first thing in the morning
with a mug of wine, you can't really drink wine out of a mug ever
i don't guess.
it has to be in the evening,
out of a certain shaped glass,
preferably in front of
a nice plate of spaghetti, and (god should hope) not by yourself.
so i get up anyway
and do the dishes and
cry right then and there
about the whole goddamn state of things,
the page full of letters to the editor salivating over jobs
and ever increasing highways, the
page one article on the loss of pristine forest.
that's the word they always use, i think,
pristine,
and i wonder
if it's because no one ever uses it for anything else so
no one has to think about what it really means.
untouched:
like the way you feel when
you're walking through the forest and
the sunlight filters down through the branches and
everything seems so startlingly clear and connected it's like
your heart projected an old memory
straight from your chest onto
the blank wall of the world surrounding you.
the way you'll never feel driving over a bigger highway,
the way you'll never feel at the factory
turning levers in your flameproof jumpsuit.
i like that word, pristine.
i think i'm going to use it more often.
i think that's what i'll tell people when they ask me how i feel today,
i'll say pristine,
and they'll be too confused to notice
the stale smell of wine and cigarettes on my breath
at 10:30 in the morning.

~TERESA BARNES

TO THE REPUBLIC

I dreamt I saw a caravan of the dead
start out again from Gettysburg.

Close-packed upright in rows on railroad flat-
beds in the sun, they soon will stink.

Victor and vanquished shoved together, dirt
had bleached the blue and gray one color.

Risen again from Gettysburg, as if
the state were shelter crawled to through

blood, risen disconsolate that we
now ruin the great work of time,

they roll in outrage across America.

You betray us is blazoned across each chest.
To each eye as they pass: *You betray us*.

Assaulted by the impotent dead, I say it's
their misfortune and none of my own.

I dreamt I saw a caravan of the dead
move on wheels touching rails without sound.

To each eye as they pass: *You betray us*.

~FRANK BIDART

MATERIALISM

If things aren't things
So much as happenings,
Or a confluence even
More complex,
Then there's no such thing
As sky, though sky
Is real, and we
Have not imagined it.
The everlasting
Never began.
Everything, then
Is the direction everything
Moves in, seeming
Not to move.
I am waiting
For something very
Nice to happen,
And then it happens:
Your long dark
Hair sweeps
Across my chest
Like sweeps of prairie
Rain. Loveliest
Of motion's possessions,
Hold me still.

~JAMES GALVIN



TOM WESSELMANN,
"THE GREAT AMERICAN NUDE VI"

POETRY

FORECAST

Betrayal, all along, will have been the least of it.
Some fall like empire — slowly, from the wild, more
unmappable borders inward, until reduced to history,
to the nothing from which, in the end,

and others, they fall with the dizzying swiftness of
one of those seized-in-the-night

kingdoms — chambers
awash with the blood of princelings, their spattered
crowns toys now in the conqueror's

fine hands...As for
the common choice, the rote of exile that most call a life,
days on end spent muttering about loyalty, tattooing
the word *Who?* over one nipple, *Why?* just below the other,
foraging

shirtless among the animals or, worse, only
watching them pass — blind, but for instinct — beneath
the stooped cathedrals that the trees make in a storm
that — forever, it seems — looks permanent: No. Even
slaughter will have been better, I think,

than that.

~CARL PHILLIPS

I dreamt I had gone to the park
at midnight to moonbathe
and was busted
for picking the plastic flowers.

I thought the crowd
would hide me.

~WALT LIVELY

#48

These are days of muffled silence, shrouded
in gray skies, silent whirling birds,
non-descript walkers, seeking coffee, leaving
lovers, leaving homes, leaving.

The morning is the quietest time, river
rivulets of silver silence, thoughtful
jumbled repose, awaiting the 1st logical
nonsense uttered from others.

In the car the radio voice yells
and pretends humor when what
is there is filler, jumbled words seemingly
logical, but grammatically lost.

Nouns lose adjectives,
verbs yet disconnect from nouns,
nouns duty-bound trail their prepositions.
Conjunctions join disparate ideas.
The pronoun searches for its antecedent.

Interjections abound!
The adverb is lonely,
modifying nothing.

~L. R. BUELT

A CALL TO ALMS

Stop working. You've worked hard enough under brutal capitalists who call themselves politicians.
Stop paying your rent, your mortgage.
Stop putting money into banks.
Stop paying off your credit card bills. Give the money away or pull it together, build a commune. Start a collective. Live off the land.
Stop putting it back into a system that only works to harm you.
Stop talking. Stand in silence, arms raised, cry in need through quiet eyes.
Leave your home. Take friends and family with you. Drive your car into affluent neighborhoods. Set up homeless camps, soup kitchens, refugee relocation centers. And, when asked to move simply say...no.
Success kills. Money kills. Lies kill. Power kills.
Sick. Born. Sick.
Death.
Death.
Death.
Nobody told you life would be easy.
Nobody told you it wasn't your fault.
Nobody expects you to ask why.
Nobody expects you to care
Stop caring.
Get up every morning, go to work, ask for a raise. If not given, take.
Wear buttons that proudly proclaim that you are of the working poor.
Shame them.
Stop referring to people by name, only by number.
The machine works best when the mechanisms are well-oiled and polished to perfection.
Be unpolished.
Let the world know hard work has nothing to do with it.
Take a stand.
Do nothing.

~JOSEPH DELAHANTY

JUDITH NILAND

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