

ROGER REEVES

Let Us Each Put Out Our Good Eyes

Beware of pity, warned the saint, so in the middle of the pilgrimage,
Shortly after we turned away from the public execution
Of all the men who could not quit their singing and darkness
And therefore were hanged in darkness
From whatever would bear their weight, we watched the bull snake
Feast upon the falcon though some argued that witnessing this
annihilation,
Was pity, and therefore we should continue our journey;
But others said that this witnessing, a devotion
To the saint's warning, that bearing this obliteration was, in fact,
shunning pity
Because we were not offering relief,
Rather we allowed nature its increase: its destruction
And improvement as the lake welcomes the yellow breast of the
moon
Or the village below the falling mountain it's crushing; so we sat
As if beneath a weighing stone meant to keep our bodies from
rising out of some river
And into the mind of some green day that has already turned
From the disaster of our red and rancid mouths, the legs of our
famous murder; holy
The pilgrim who can find fame in disappearance, Crow Jane
Cried above the falcon's head disappearing into the mouth of the
bull snake.
It is a useless war.
Let us each put out our good eyes.
But none did wondering if willful blindness, not also an act of pity,
And so we wandered as pilgrims promiscuous into the debt and
flaw of the day,
Awaited the change that so many had promised;
It was as if we were travelling into some belly of something that

hungered for us
And because of its hunger, we, too, hungered to be hungered.
We were sleepless though we slept.
We were dry mountains though we were wet.
Many times, our tongues broke against our prayers.
What was it that we began this journey for?
What light had we not glimpsed playing against a wooden floor?
And then we saw a woman lying in her own blood, and four
finches dancing about
Her head as if a crown,
And we wondered if we had truly been aware of pity.

Nostalgia

I would not take it from the poor,
The leaf-boats racing into the throat of a storm drain,
The bed, darkness and the children made upon it,
The small, open-air bar in Ponce, Puerto Rico
Where a deaf man dances to a tune his mother sang to him
Before some drunk god pinched the lit match
And flame of this man's hearing. If I must explain
To you how a deaf man can dance to music,
Then I must also explain to you darkness
And how deer *move among the winter trees, so much*
The color of the trees, they hardly seem to move. So darkness,
The woman next me in a black dress touching what moves
Inside her womb for the first time. So darkness,
The drunken man stumbling over the stump of a tree
As I once stumbled over several savage magnolias
And the bodies swaying in them at no particular angle
As is the case of winter fruit in spring—so darkness,
Under sorrow, lugging itself up to me, with its winter
Coats piled atop its unwashed shoulders, its breath
The odor of dead geese rotting beneath the thinning ice,
Spring bouncing about us in the unmeasured grass
Unaware of the ice storm flailing and stumbling down the coast,
The oranges on the trees in Florida flinching
On their branches as if they, too, understand their own death
Is upon them and so move in anticipation of it
As I move now, toward the woman in the black dress,
Toward her hands covering a darkness some may call light,
A child, Persephone-d, her eyes sealed shut
Until the appointed hour where the skin breaks
And she spends the first of her life drowning. I ask:
What god would begin his love for a body like this?
And why would you give this bounty to the dead, I hear a voice ask.
Because the living have always belonged to the dead first.