

The Gothic Poems

Somewhere in Verona

I stand here amid the arc
that's time, breathing deeply winds
of loneliness colored blue; a historicity
patented but gone astray as the water
trickles and curls.

Painting existential lozenges across
the changing sky, her medieval half
long ago slipped veil aside to anticipate
sculpture later named and worked,
with a voice fair as the crystal air
that Shakespeare hardened into
Cinquecento clay and earth.

And so with heartbeat up I walk
these streets amplified in mind not body;
metaphysical rain overflowing
gutters present more as sound than water,
for somewhere in Verona, early 1980s,
I in fever dazed see her circling by
with feathered hair and scooter;
Julietta on haughty approach
and resurrected, long past Lethe
on this her second try.

With electric phantom face
moving forward to bristle against my
laminated eye, she shifts gear,
striking chord (read: road accident),
that even as we fall
—we fly.

For Emily Dickinson

Before or after I died
your face already arrived
—it was either there forever
or perhaps not long ago;
a face from a distance or much
too close to see, now presenting itself
—more peculiarly.

And I no longer write clichés,
tired out words, symbols
—sketches outlining discrepancies
between real and ideal;
not invoking questions of choice,
cultivation, device, lost hopes, delusions,
an Amherst perpetuity
—on ice.

Every time the daydreaming
happens, deeper I go, taking
—you with me, hoping to know
no more; no less than what is left
after the dreams are over and
reality has tackled
—breath.

Emily, you're now exhibit proclaimed,
residing on literary canvases
—rhythmically caressed in past
participles; not requiring Baroque
adjectives of art critics
passé, now in triviality
—subdued.

Just oxygenate at dash and read
between already porous lines
—those white bands a halogen fire
masking our shared fossil
—of desire.

Venice by Twilight

I walk among the bones so lonely,
asking where Cinderella is,
glass slippers too finely dissolved,
never to be found in this
charnel house thesis.

Whisked away to other times, an
antiquarian virtue grotesquely applied;
recomposing dainty phantoms, bits of skin
here, muscle there, to pastiche the fibers
—you *Biedermann*.

Electric arcs of inspiration raising
spirits with shriveled feet, and I
drink deep to agglomeration, proportion
too Classical for what is here,
an elongation running on distortion,
insulating ideas from history.

Do give back the woman to her repose,
from moss to dust to wings of bat;
at the base of things are old beginnings
but fresher still are newer tricks, where
every taste brings different thrills and
nastier realities.

It is all a kaleidoscope of *exeunts*
in this Venice by twilight
where moon is dim,
and I go off
—to nothing.