

TEN POEMS by Neil Ellman

Fall of an Angel

(Max Ernst, painting)

Exalted once
now expelled
expunged
excluded
extruded
exiled and expulsed
excommunicated
for excessive pride
and expedient lust
but existing still
an ex-angel falls
through space
from grace
on a wing
and a prayer.

The Dakota

1 West 72nd Street
New York, New York
watching passing men
pushing baby carriages
and pulling dogs
that mark their place
in the crowd
on bicycles
and in-line skates
the passing years
moving at a tourist's pace
look, gawk
gables and dormers
spandrels and balustrades
out of time

Germanic countenance
breathing oxygen
and fumes
no place for you and I
to live
where Lennon died
and Rosemary's Baby
was born.

Middle Blue

(Sam Francis, painting)

Having only the past
which is gone and forgotten
and no future with any certainty
the trouble with the middle
even blue
Is that it's neither here nor there
always at the center, not the edge,
not the beginning of anything
worth thinking about
or the end with its endless doubts.

The trouble with the middle of blue
is that it's not the end of anything
not of space or time
not of this dimension or the next
not even the spectrum's inevitable end
not of a circle that circles
endlessly around its color wheel.

The trouble with the middle
is its middling mediocrity
its mezzo-medium voice
neither soprano nor basso profundo
between violet and red
median, middle of the road,
neither masculine nor feminine

but not quite anything
just half of everything
it could have been
if it had just another chance to try.

Fluffer

I understand
my understudy role
not prime-time ready
but ready enough
to excite the stars
fill them with a reason
to twinkle
in the night
before the lights
before the lens
just as the director
shouts "shoot"
they come
on cue
as I stand by
and wait to serve.

Afterthoughts on Aftertime and Then

Suppose
just for a moment
in this our time
just suppose
that light could bend
around your mind
the way it curves
around the sun
that you can see
the other side of time
where nothing happened
or ever will

where clocks show inference
conjecture and probability
the impossible possible
the possible a dream
moving backwards
to an impenetrable sleep
just suppose
we were awake to see
flickering candles
dark omens
spreading wings
then vanishing in the fog
of yesterday
or tomorrow's mist—
now, for the sake of argument,
suppose
just for a moment
suppose
we never were
nor will .

Agony

(after the painting by Arshile Gorky)

In the throes of willing death
never pretending
or could or should
the agony of inevitability
not soon enough or worth
the impediments of fame
I hanged myself
on a wooden frame.

Transition of a Virgin into a Bride

(Marcel Duchamp, painting)

“Slow” at first she said,
the longings of an innocence

denied
by proprieties
of corset and counsel
knowing this moment would come
she said "soon"
the worth of it
is more than she could bare
her honor in his hands
his honor firm.

"Can I hold you?"

"No"

"Please!"

"Perhaps

but not quite now"

and then with sudden violence
the blood-let ritual begins
and ends too soon.

"Oh, my."

Radiant Sun

(after the painting by Arthur Dove)

At eventide
the sun descends
hovers, touches
with quivering hands
blue-ice auroras
spectral flames
has silent intercourse
between heaven
and earth.

Mirror Carousel

(Garsten Höller, installation)

And then and around
 (and around)
the merry-go-round
around it goes

so many mirrors
so many reflections
of the passing years
 (again and again)
around they go

reflected images
refracted dreams
 (you and I)
repeated again
 (and again)
around we go

Calliope whistles
her mourning song

we go around
the cheval glass
(day by day enigmatic
year by year
until it stops

The She-Wolf

(Jackson Pollock, painting)

Bite me bitch!
 hang on
teeth in my neck
extract the who of me
the which
and the ever-which
claw
chew on my bones
as you were meant to feed
in perpetuity
on my flesh
as i was meant
to let you live
another life not even
when my own.