

Descent & Other Poems



Timothy Ogene

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For Clare

The first apple is beginning its descent.

*All I know is that years from now, when its glistening torso rolls
across these cobblestones, no children will come out to greet it.*

—John Yau, “The Pleasures of Exile”

December

An empty bench in the open, frosted over,
A naked tree pregnant with time stuffed
In its widening trunk, boughs bent by icicles
Bunched like chandeliers on winter's x-axis;

A river exiled from its state,
Currents curtailed at both terminals,
Rendered dry after much hammering
In winter's metal works.

In the view ahead,
Gothic structures argue with skylines
Bored by the absence of be-goggled oglers.

There's beauty here, I say to myself,
In this isolated patch stripped of the stench
Of gutters after a downpour.

There is a type of beauty here,
In this absence of motion,
This giddy absence of flirtatious fruits on trees,

In this glorious absence of paraded Polaroid
Swung as crumbs are hauled at native ducks,

In this relieving absence of poachers
Making passes at passengers on the same tour.

There is beauty in absence,
When trees,
Holding time in absent leaves,
Await winter's worst
And the delayed return of summer.

Erratic Notes Left on a Trail

1

A bridge emerges from the remains of fog,
Imposing itself on my sight.

Its arch beautifully humped,
And I'm reminded of lumps on cow back,

The meaty spot a murderous blade
Must be thrilled to hack.

Underneath the bridge the river ebbs
And murmurs

As it journeys with a terminus in mind,
An infinite end

Albeit sure to empty
And rethread the loop.

A clearer view.
A carpet of algae wraps the bridge,

Draining its prehistoric strength,
Probing its intestines with roots we wish we had.

2

For those we love
We refrain from easy paths

And restrain the
Urge to run.

3

A note written in fog, on clear glass
Is memory erased at noon;

Falling and dipping in love
Left to fade in the face of light.

4

Home is where the umbilical chord lies
Buried between gnarled shrubs half-dead,

Overgrown and coated in shame,
A lie too crass to smear.

5

A dog follows its owner over the river,
Across the algae-covered bridge,
To the stare of sailing ducks.

May we return as geese and sailing ducks:
Humble, instinctual, without the tact
To shell schools elsewhere,
To click the tongue at the remains of others.

The landscape is an apparition of a master's piece
Discarded, rediscovered to great acclaim:
Fields of gold-colored leaves in fourteen stations of death
Lie to give depth, individually crisp,
The sky defaced with V-shaped strokes
Left for critics to name as birds.

There's a swoosh of blue turning green,
An illusion of a nearby sea,
And ducks paddling between surfaces,
Sailing towards the sun in salutation,
Sailing towards a perennial ritual,
To a ritual that tethers us against our will.

7

I see a girl running up the bridge.
Her polyester coat makes a sideways sweep
Against the wind.
A guardian in fur follows from behind,
Her eyes on the young.

Our girl has crossed the bridge,
And calls the fur to make real haste.
The fur has stopped to stare,
Holding the journey to a halt,
Holding the future to an ambivalent past.

8

A tear is heavier than a severed leaf,
A sigh lighter than the crash of cymbals.

When asked my home address,
I respond with a sigh,
And watch severed leaves land on dormant grounds.

9

I left without a lover's smell in my hair,
Without memories of my mother's hug.
The passage home is burnt and that I regret.