

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

January 5, 2007

Friday Poem

Filed under: [poetry](#) — alecsothblog @ 2:40 am

Today some anonymous genius named Marissa emailed me the following: "When I read your first post about author/book jacket photos I immediately thought of the below poem by Dean Young, in which he mentions a photo of a translator on the back of a book. When I went back and reread it I realized that the poem wasn't nearly so much about that as I remembered, only a line or two really, but I still felt compelled to send it to you anyway."

Thanks so much for sending this poem Marissa. It made my day.

Centrifuge

by Dean Young

It might have been midnight when last we talked
and now I've got this poem that keeps flying
apart which accounts under these xenophobic stars
for all force: gravity, magnetism wind, the ling-

ering of a kiss, a judo throw although
there's yet to be a single formula for it.
Save us from single formulas. One room
smells like ash, another smells like fruitcake.

One cardinal sits on a branch, another under.
You've got to be a bird to understand any of this,
feathery and hollow-boned. You've got to be
a claims adjuster staring at a storm. You've

got to be entered by a shower of gold coins.
On the back of a Brazilian book of poems,
the translator looks haggard as if she's chased
a mule cart into another century, the twentieth,

and suddenly she's feeble in Pittsburgh in her
bunny furs. Imagine, suddenly Pittsburgh,
the handful of dust thrown up for the sun's
haughty inspection, laughing its molecular

laugh, hungry again, dazzling again it its
stained satin pajamas like the memory of lost
love. I think we were walking though some woods
towards more to drink, up ahead the future

gesticulating wildly like a beggar who'd
scare us out of money, the future threatening
to isolate us like glum geniuses prowling
record stores, not getting a lot done,

mistaken for clerks with gum on our shoes. I'm
trying not to panic. I'm trying to find the center,
drive a nail through it like a mercy killing. I'm
letting myself be thrown around while Come at me

says the day to the night. Come at me says
the cloud to the moon dragging its terrible noose.
Come at me says L so she can show me what she's learned
in martial arts and now some part of me can't or

won't get up, the ground husky with thaw, fall's
idiot nomenclature garbled in the bramble. I'm
letting my back get soaked. I'm turning into wine.
I'm a broken kore, lips barely parted saying

what? I know suffering does not make us beautiful,
it makes us disappear like wearing black shirts
at midnight, like lying on the spinning earth
crying, Momma, Momma.

4 Comments

1. Marissa made my day too. What a great poem.

Comment by [Jen Bekman](#) — January 5, 2007 @ [12:03 pm](#)

2. make that three days made...

Comment by [Ian Brown](#) — January 5, 2007 @ [1:05 pm](#)

3. It can be found in Dean Young's third book, "Strike Anywhere".

Comment by [MDM](#) — January 5, 2007 @ [11:32 pm](#)

4. . . . prowling
record stores, not getting a lot done. . .

These are good days.

Comment by [JOhn](#) — January 6, 2007 @ [2:32 pm](#)