

What Form after Death

What form after death will we take,
a gizmo birdie like William Butler Yeats?
I doubt it. How about a doorstep bunny
like the one we saw in Charleston, wanted
but didn't have the money? Heavy enough
to be made of lead, paint rubbed off its head
by petting, no gust strong enough to slam
what it kept open. Nope, the rain comes
in mirages shredded, I don't know where
any of us are headed, a furnace
of ectoplasmic metallurgy or compost pit
of worms working between hermaphroditic
orgies? Dear mustachioed Aunt Gloria who
gave me 20 bucks to blow on rubber snakes
and pinball, what became of you? Small stone
rubbed smaller by the wave's surge? Birthday song
becomes a dirge, the soldier's poem quaint words
on crumbling paper. Is that what you were
telling me when you didn't know who?
I'd be the last to insist my mother
didn't have conversations with my father
on the TV set after he was dead. Sometimes
I too hope to return, make some mischief
at our favorite restaurant, snuff some candles
and whisper how much I love you
if you're still around. And Stan Rice, now just
7 or 8 books no one talks about but
when I reread still frighten me
into delight. Maybe all that we become
is rhyme of our limited time alive,
an echo loosening almost no snow,
no avalanche, just some puffs of white
like clouds that seem like nothing
until the pilot hits one.

Disappearing Ink

is only as good as the secret of its reappearance.
It may take some time to sink in
unless it never does, just pools on the surface,
I love you you'll never know.
But none of that matters now,
like kissing someone asleep,
we're all in too big a hurry, you
with your blitzkrieg party-planner,
me with my puppy who has to go.
Surely an explanation of all this botheration
is forthcoming, why the web-footed girl
hates water and the president is a moron.
Will smoke make it appear? Noxious gas?
Another detonation? It seems the whole plot
hinges on a letter either never written or received,
some singer insisting on hopelessness cross-
purposes to her five-octave range. May one day
soon someone pull us out into the rain
where all that vanished becomes legible again
and all we've struggled to decipher fades away at last.

Washing in Cold Water

I don't think I'm close enough
to start giving everything away yet.
Maybe I'll spend one more day in the madhouse
reading them Hopkins and Breton for corroboration.
Until you come back inside with a bunch of loonies,
each of them carrying a leaf,
I don't think you're ready
and I'm not ready.
Achilles was ready.
Wordsworth was ready but when he asked directions,
a man pointed behind him at the mist
and said he'd already crossed the peak.
It's probably not the peak or the valley
where you put down your day-pack
and order the thick local beer.
It's probably not some sort of sexual mania
brought on by ogling the floor show.
Or dissections.
Glaciers dragged most of the landscape here
then the wind wore faces in it.
On the plains, who kills who
is impossible to keep straight
then Achilles' son marries Helen's daughter
and a flock of lambs covers the hills
and a sapling's roots slowly crush
a skeleton of a cat buried under it.
The parents can't decide when to tell their child
she was found in a dumpster so never do.
Of course that's not the end of it.
Her whole life, teachers praise her,
but something in the mirror drifts.
The wondrous is the truth because it's simpler.
My mother tried to be nice to me
but she had to lock me in my room.
That's not an excuse.
I heard doves.