

Angel

In my mind I travel
far out into the night, dotted
with bright stars, but it's too big,
cold and lonesome out there
and I bring myself back quickly
to this town, this warm kitchen,
this bright table where I sit.

I put on water for tea, it is
wonderful to be here
in this room, where I think,
from which I go out,
to which I come back.
The kettle boils, the cold
crouches outside.

The nights moves
on the spindly legs of time.
the steam from the tea
rises like forgiveness:
Drink, Elizabeth, be warm,
it says. The plants
on the table move swiftly, their leaves
like green butterflies.

Bits of conversation
about the people of the town
come back to me now. Do you
remember, said Sarah, the woman
who complained of her piles?
She is gone. And Angel, the artist,
who fell down on Main Street
when he was drunk?

He tried to teach me Spanish,
I told her. I remember *cara*
for face and *pelo* for hair. Angel
is gone. It was a hit-and-run
in the ghetto where he lived and where
there are not enough streetlights.

The conversation circled there,
I remember: How could you,
Someone said, drive on

knowing you had hit someone?
You could be more afraid, I said,
of the trouble, for that moment,
than of what you had done.

But now I think, it was darkness
that killed Angel, the absence of light,
that big, cold lonesome night.
And I sip tea and think of Angel.
Cara, I think, and *pelo*.

Mohegan Park Road

The wind speaks, a mad dictator —
cajoling, exhorting, screaming.
The multitude of brown leaf people
cheer dryly from the forest floor.
The trees, the old guard,
neither run nor cheer.
Boulders brood stubbornly
near the black ribbon of the road
laid down by town authorities,
a few inches deep.
Skin deep.

The Mystery of Doors

Doors close.
Different doors close different ways.
The door to the apartment
closes with a sound like this:
Well?
Car doors sound like this:
So!
then the sound of distance
your mind stretches to measure.

A young boy runs down the stairs
in sneakers, the door closes:
a police car door, an ambulance door,
the door of an institution,
the door of the apartment.
Well?

Well, people move on.
They move on, that's all.
They even die, but I only remember
the flash, the roar,
the rhetorical question of the door.
Well?

I too will die.
In a hospital room perhaps,
with all the machines humming—the nurse
will close the door, the triangle
of light will grow thin and disappear.
Well?

Just think every day you leave and come back,
the door closes, the door closes, the door closes.
One day it closes for the last time.
You do not live there any more.

Perspective

The woman who lived here before me
was Spanish, I have found her
attempts to battle the roaches
pasted under the heaters and the sink,
have broomed dried beans and rice
out of the corners.

They say her husband left her
for a woman across town
and she couldn't take it
she went to New Jersey to live with her sister.

She had two girls, they say, she left
her pots, pans, clothes, sheets, games and furniture,
torn, dented and patched,
exactly like mine.

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