

A DARK PLACE IS NOT A DARK PLACE

The blue strip of fabric
diaphanous,
hung on two nails,
the curtain that hovers
next to the bed.

It's threadbare countenance
washes the room
in oceanic glow.
There are
many nights facing
this same colour, coming in floods
repeated in each stanza,
stood there, burrowing into the neck
of the poem and quietly soaking or
outside the house
the low stone wall is gasping for air.

Peggy Phelan in *Mourning Sex* has a writing ‘in loss’. I wonder then, if this is a writing in fleeting, a writing in dull, in night sky?
A dark place is not a dark place,
grey planes are the past where I see the poem’s colour,
the blue strip of fabric.
Grey is the present, blue, for a moment;
interrupts.

To dwell on the grey-parts,
as if nostalgia has turned memories
into black and white photographs
badly exposed and contrasted.
Always concrete, pavement,
streetlamps, shells.
The sky is permanently grey here, even on a bright day
the cloud a hulking blanket glooms with many hues
and shades.

The light it casts is so strange, it’s like
a blanket too, no shadows, fills every corner
each side of buildings
no way of telling its direction or derivation.
I keep trying to describe the movement of the light
but, of course,
I can’t see the streams it moulds,
nor notice any change at all.

Everything looks heavy, *feels* heavy,
like a liquid dropped
a million gallons at once
without a splash or drip off-piste
seals in each crevice and
reflects the rooftops back to us

Until darkness skulks in.

In the darkness I can see the
flash of a split lip
the white break
between pink slips
between the living and the dead.
Subjectivity rushes up to meet
cliché vs *sensed abstraction*
The cliché here the idea of a scar
wrought across someone's lip.
A scar is a line, like a writing.
I could write about the person you expect
me to name, perhaps, or nod to.
Except *don't we already know what we think?*
Don't we have a formula for this?
Strip the poetess, delve into biography as lips
cleft, notice the crowds of people clamouring,
like carving into rubble pits, around her paper grave.
Reduction is more attractive than response.

The silence of words,
ink tapped onto paper in front of you,
Sentences, *that stop themselves*.
The light comes, restruct. Reduct. This part a name
or a half word. If we go inside the words,
disembody them,
inspect their broken limbs like
floating drafts of shadow meeting on a wall,
since *metaphysical silence happens inside words themselves*,
is reduction the same as a destruction? Does rhyme
really disturb the monotony of prose with something
which is *the same and yet differs from itself*?

Dusty houses like a smattering of paint border
taller buildings surrounded still by
corrugated metal fences, patches of open
ground laid half full with cars (sleeping.)

The lift and bow of construction work is unhurried
it beguiles the fronts of uninspired flats,
tired trees, ivy soaked banks of muted
green.

What's beyond the cast iron stems

all italics this page
Anne Carson, Float

of these fences
except a sea of ivy feet deep and full
of dark serpentines.

Anne Carson

To convey the sensation not the sensational,
the river slides down-valley
between the banks
thick, slow, smarting.

At the edge is an unknowing.
A surface of rhythm, stop
start, the speed of the mind. The
words say *I cannot write "my body"*
anymore than you can read yours"
Bleakness, the light that reflects off
the houses
when the sun shines
but the sky is turning dark
is a poem,
where "poem" is understood as referring
to a failure of language to be
equal to the possibilities it figures.

Peggy Phelan

Ben Lerner

Tendrils of cloud separated from the rest
and silhouetted like cigarette smoke
curling off into the
big deep.

Peggy Phelan

Philosophy must risk "poetry"
The strength or application
of words may
cause effacement.
I hear Nelson say to the cloud
there are many speakers whom I'd like to see
do more trembling, more unknowing
and in the catastrophe of the academic
language we have vocalised

Maggie Nelson

Peggy Phelan

Trauma makes a tear in the symbolic network itself
These fight words have
with the demands of academic speech
evulse new slashes, downreaching,
far below wrenching the insides of ribs
hollowed out.
Intercostal scratch and jag
dragged down where the fleshy dark
is rubbed out.

The nights of my city are quiet
black sparkling tarmac
blue light.

To focus,
sharpen the tops of the mountains,
blurred as if a lens

soaked with vaseline or smoke machine,
wrapping monolith enshroud.

Smoothing over or pressing down
like the palm of the wind does.

Indentations
depressions
caressing the surface,
the flat grey.

Here, amidst brown tower blocks
sad scummy trees
crowds of black birds soaring above roofs
out in the west.

A fear *that the thing itself (art)*
will disappear

before we produce it,
shaves away the white
mist and the wet.

Peggy Phelan

Sylvia Plath
I write with *the light of the mind*
A pale blue sheet, quite indistinct.