

The Farmhouse · *Jay Meek*

There's a landscape just outside of memory that keeps coming
back in dreams, and in it there are fields
beyond the migrant huts all the way to the cherry orchard,
but there's no farmhouse, only the black land
you always have to look down on, as though it were in a valley
you were just coming into, down a steep drop,
with the landscape unsteady as it appears and then disappears
through what must be snow, or those incomplete
recollections even dreams cannot fill, the commonplace days
of dread and ambivalence which only seem like snow.

And a man is crossing the yard, his grey face in the collar
of his mackinaw, and beyond him lies the barn
with an open door, toward which he has begun to run heavily
as though he were running through snow, and it is
here you remember something of the father in how he carried
what was in his arms, in the demand it made on you,
recalling for you the woman running through the air terminal
with her hair on fire, perhaps also in a dream,
when you believed that what you'd seen might at any moment
break into a narrative, and yet had not,

nor did the farmhouse ever appear, however hard you tried
to see it, to see what child was at the window.
And yet for you who discover comfort in such uncertainties,
in the ease of saying no, there is no answer,
still there is the remembrance of sparrows in the rafters
and the hinds of cattle at their stanchions
and how he looked at you. Say it: the farmhouse is gone,
you don't belong there, that is not your life,
it is snowing in the valley, it is snowing there, say it,
your own life, it is snowing in the valley.