

Peter Richards

DAWN

Continuing, we came upon the third prospect of shelves
carved like cradles into the side of the cliff.

The fear in us wonders if the infants were removed,

or rather tapered off, neglecting cribs of their own.

Dhorsen, the first to step up and begin blowing dust,
and as the dust rose in twin fitful, lascivious clouds,

it seemed as though Dhorsen was no longer with us,
Dhorsen was no longer with us, but with a head
depicted as Wind, his lips grew old, bulbous

and from here on pushing fair-weather and now
disaster up past our somnolent map-maker's
sea-faring corner . . .

This far low the next day returns to a face,
and with lineaments hooded with powder,
scars labeled "sleek and approaching,"

the next day came and with the same blended facets on a man's.
No, with only his profile, storm-drained and caked with tomorrows,
Dhorsen turned, still tending his circuit of cribs—

"We must learn to limit our choices," and as one
whose voice rises from the radius of Nil, one
whose throat welters at no other circle, Dhorsen turned

and made the motion for us to blow in his manner . . .
When done was done, when each felt they'd disturbed
more dust than his fellow, instead of citing Abduction,

or the spurious rumors of cradles foregone, we saw how
the missing infants, before growing old, first prattled
“layers of sepulcher” for us to pond.

And though our mothers are no longer with us
(though I know her plangent sounds kept records for Nil),
we each held a mother, sleepy in pages and pages

of no other place . . .

Continuing, we came upon the third prospect of shelves
carved like cradles into the side of the cliff.

Orso began weeping, confessing, and splashing his paints
on the cribs we had taken. Orso always begins
weeping and referring to verities hidden inside.

I remember how in the first rank precincts of Ellipsis,
Orso begged us to study his braid. Poor Orso, with his
side-winding frown and penchant for kissing,

longs for us all to settle our loves. I remember how
in the first rank precincts of Ellipsis,
Orso begged us to churn like a rose.

Poor Orso, with his sidereal gown and fist full of love-nots,
prefers moonlight and Deference dragged by the hair . . .
Continuing, we came upon the third prospect of shelves

carved like cradles into the side of the cliff.

While the hailed pretext of Wheel still hung above our heads,
the impostor pursuing us seemed no longer fatal.

At the Crib’s behest, we each grew no longer monstrous,
no longer bad, and the day absolves in tones of hesitation.
None of us tremble as only the guilty will tremble,

but revolve in hues and our three tints braid together.
Behold, the banners advance—
how easily black banners change into wings . . .

But I'm sad for a lantern that keeps dawn at bay.
I'm Dawn, moving up on a list of fallen things.
I don't want to be dark, the dark that concedes,

and I beg to differ the sly part of gentle.
I beg for the day I rise in the morning.
I beg in the morning—Orso,

Dhorsen, grant me your leave.
Mine is a poor light
and glad to be

continuing

ELEGY FOR MUSIC

Her mouth was also a sledge to carry me twice
up pastures of flatness to hills where I lay
now dead to the world and some clouds that I miss
are more infinitely apt to cling to the crags,
to think when they sag—ours is a pale activity
compared to the wanderings that pass for a man,
to his ink washed pages all pining to be,
now less than a wetness, now less than a glare,
in light of this pass no timber can breach,
in light of this woman who happened too fast,
and while she sleeps with a green hand under the earth
how can we lean out from our sacks?
and why should we silver our failed versions of sound?
when the softest among us is wintering down.