

Provisional · *Reginald Shepherd*

The prospect seen as false: the listening
breeze a fountain echoes, the puckered lips
of poppies planted in rows three deep
to set a boundary. And then this calm.
(I leaned against worked granite
of philanthropy, watched passersby flicker
as on a screen. I was a momentary flaw
in one Monday's flow to another
office Monday, a lapse in the week's
work.) This thrush says surrender
sorrow, his song a small aggression
taken for joy. Soon I will repent
one early regret, not to have heard
his first cry take the day. (The male bird
claims the branch he clutches in his claws,
and thinks he owns the scene.) Today
what can be asked for can be had,
late sleep in a fall of sunlight
through closed blinds, and then the sound
of water arching with no consequence,
the leisure of an aimless walk.
(The men who own this afternoon
make sense of Sunday cities, their parks
strung like a noose around the margin,
crabtrees with their inedible burdens
stationed along the paths. Money
like late spring forces everything
into flower.) Here I am falling
asleep with just this life, my spendthrift
days given away willingly, the bruised
and fallen apples only fruit.