

pressing their luck, in a light
photographers call open shadow.

Far below I see myself as so many scabs
on so many rocks, each breathless attitude
fixed, inexhaustibly posthumous.

Near one the splayed crust is still
putting a slow freeze on bright red clots.
A foot juts, wearing its bootheel torn loose
from all but a single bent nail
where it oscillates a moment, then quits.
In a fallen pocket lightly crumpled, but dry,
intact, perfectly readable still,
I keep the map of this place.

Clarissima Lumina Mundi:
Visiting New York / Reg Saner

From a great way off through roar and doze,
waking to twilight by jet, all dinosaurs gone,
the kerosene storm on our tail
straining us down
into these landscapes of the made, down
to be the man in waders, vacuuming green concrete
under the corporate building's lagoon,
the man with the dollar bill in his mouth,
the man who rams his fantasy .38
into the throat of each dog, and pulls.

At the Whitney's exhibit, 2 pickup trucks—
a white one blued by felt-tip with hatchure marks
taking weeks, whereas the black truck
is pencilled all over in scrollwork fine
as Da Vinci's silverpoint grotesques
or that queer vegetation
on money and stocks. A mini-career right there.

As to say: "We take such pains," and
"The Sistine is equally blank."

An F-train oils the platform's subway atmosphere,
shooting carloads of jobs across my face
by express. Through their blur I stare
into somewhere else, the way, at a certain speed
passing cracks in a backyard fence,
cedar slabs become a transparency.
Then out again, into the dusk air, glimpsing
through light rain in the Village
an Indian, hurrying, sheltering his guitar.

Let's Say You Are This Page / Reg Saner

Listen, only the real is intolerable.
Last evening I sat holding a book of poems
in this fixed stampede of talus
at the beyond of a mountain so remote
we'll have to imagine. Ragged boulder field,
saying all the buffalo have come here to die.
From a surround of peaks, June snow works
invisibly loose beneath the surface
in low, irregular halts, gargles, sobs
leaking away like an underground sunset.
The west reddens, sinks past the edge
of invention, where it warms each hide.
No, that's imagined. But not these hidden
wrist-thick streams I could follow
till they flash like snowfields
against another man's seamless sky.
Let's say you are this page
by Gunnar Ekelöf, looking up into eyes
going dark beside a blue tent. Let's say
you're now seeing alpenglow on a face
dimming, becoming part of a vast magnificent
loneliness so real that being here
doesn't matter. Is there a single bird?
Surely there must be, somewhere.