

ERIC PANKEY

*As of Yet*

After my parents died, we boxed up their clothes, coats, and  
shoes, scrubbed the walls,  
Swept up the dust that had grown thick between the gold shag  
carpet and the hallway baseboards.  
Shutting the door to their room firmly, I heard the empty hangers  
rattle and jangle in the open closets  
Like a gamelan for a shadow-play, a shadow-play in which the won  
kingdom, long after the siege,  
Seems hardly worth the hardships, the years of lack, the treacher-  
ies, the endless soliloquies and asides.

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I love best the next-to-last bite, not the flesh above the green and  
the rind, but the stall, the suspension,  
The as-of-yet-not-coming-to-an-end, the hunger not sated, the  
musk melon not yet consumed,  
The penultimate's flirtation with finale, one foot on the brake and  
one down hard on the gas.  
Once, as I looked at an elaborate *tromp l'oeil*—  
feast, flowers and  
fruits of four seasons, dew drops—  
A house fly lifted off the crooked claw of a cooked pheasant and  
revealed the fly's painted double beneath.

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The names of things—Halftide Rock, Long Sand Shoals, Salt  
Works Bay, Sodom Rock—  
Are as true as the degrees between North and True North.  
The jellyfish, a thousand lamps, flare and dim, flare adrift:  
A depth of dream not seen, but looked into, through, a reflection  
translated as transparency.

A thousand lamps among the zones of darkness. The riddle, of course, is do they rise or fall?

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The gifts one brings—wild flower bouquets, wines, fruits, nuts, wheat—add to the overload.

In the cave of the oracle, a sweet air vents from a fissure in the rock—

A surfeit of sulphur and gardenia, the turn of pears from ripe to rot—

And held in the lung, taken in deep and held,

induces one to see

how the oracle sees:

The tesserae of ivory, glass, and gold as the face of God, the mind's random firing as prescience.