

ERIC PANKEY

Spiritual Exercise

1.

The day set down hour by hour
Like a mortarless stone wall
Ends here: a nocturne of half-tones.

Some nights the interior lights
Butcher the shadows.
Some nights the light itself is flayed.

If each word bears a blessing,
Then I am blessed
On this hand-wrought world,

This austere stage without spectacle
Where the spirit exists in the ritual object
Only for the span of the ritual.

2.

The pines pitch toward evening,
Swaybacked. The compost pile is cold:
Sogged, unturned, a sloth of rot.

Doubt shadows belief, even doubt
Of doubt by which I situate myself.
A fog of broken forms haunts

The woods' edge, or so it seems
Through the smudge of memory
I recast in the present tense.

I can survive in a dwindled space,
Wait patiently for the rendezvous
At *nothing-left-to-subtract*.

3.
Later, one reading these words
Might recognize them for what
They were: fugitive remnants.

One might imagine as I
Imagined, the project's grandeur.
What I envisioned seems now

Evasion: vagrant moods
In a demythologized world:
Distilled, abstracted, spare.

Today, the mockingbird cribs
Freely from the blue jay and wren.
Their calls absent, yet lucid.