

Two Poems · *Lynda Hull*

FORTUNATE TRAVELLER

Dazed and voluptuous, Monroe sways through
the casino towards Gable. The last film.
Her soft face, like her voice, breathless
above subtitles, the Spanish premiere

of *The Misfits*, thirty years late. The line had wound
the block beneath a sky, stagy
and ultramarine, swept with kleig lights,
sherried autumn air. Like a trapdoor opening

in time, ladders and tunnels, the metro's
black underground winds beneath the theater,
blue signal flash. Each platform's arched and tiled, columned
and inscribed, resplendent as memory palaces

monks once constructed, lavish scriptoriums
of the mind for arcane texts, scrolls and histories.
I'd wanted to hear American voices, the velvet
curtained hush framing spectacular faces.

Los Perdidos, the translation skews, the clement
darkness violined as the stars navigate
tawdry celluloid orbits through the bungled script
of drifters whose luck dissolves at desert's edge.

Tossed dollar bills crisp around her ankles,
Monroe shimmies, the barroom scene, hair musical, those
naked humid eyes. Houselights, dim, benevolent.
This morning, the Opera stop's electric

no-time, then the metro's plunge into the tunnel.

Swaying from the handgrip on the way from
the doctor, his ancient fluoroscope that verdigrised
everything it touched, my reflection rippled,

insubstantial in the coal-blackened pane, tangled in
layers of reflection, circus posters tumbling
half-naked spangled acrobats pentimentoed
across the glass. Everyone I talk to these days

is both here and not here, entranced by leaf-smoke,
coal-smoke. Anthracite, the blue enduring flame.
Bituminous, yellow flame, burning quickly,
volatile. Billowing tobacco clouds, the audience

fans programs and onscreen the chemistry fails to
ignite but for this love scene, tender and confused,
between Clift and Monroe. The alley outside the bar.
They'd kept forgetting their lines, passing between takes

a silver flask of vodka, washing down
barbiturates until finally the shooting stopped
and that's why the scene's so lost. *Los Perdidos*.
Crimson secondals, the tuinals and canary-yellow

nembutals, the stoked hues of leaves dervished in the parks'
dry fountains, sherried autumn air. Like trapdoors in time,
a yeasty breeze redolent as the breeze shaking
winged maples in the park by the railroad station,

the group of friends I had when I was young.
Another city. Of all that group, I alone
am left to glimpse beneath these actors' faces
other faces, behind Monroe's hand steadying

herself on the torn car seat this hand fluoroscoped
green and fleshless, all arthritic whorls and ratchets,
to see in those fanned bones the *transi's* hand, caught
between life and afterlife, carved above

the sandstone archway in the ruined monastery
garden near our flat, already part of memory's
cluttered gallery. Here is the urn that holds
the lover's ashes, the harp that plays

the friend's delirium, the coal brazier measuring
time: anthracite burning blue, enduring, bituminous
sulphur flames, the quick ones, black-bordered postscripts,
those mistakes smudging police blotters. Of all that group

I'd meet when I was young: a trapdoor opening in time—
this one of the russet curls blown across a pale forehead,
this one I loved, rich laughter from a black throat like
no other, the spark and groan of trains braking at

the little station. Translation fails. The metro rumbles
beneath the theater as *Los Perdidos* reels suffused by
harsh mineral desert glow. When the last
shot of the actress's gone lovely face furls away,

I alone will taste the foreign coffee, sweet
and thick. I alone shall watch these hands vanish
in bewildering autumnal smokes, an evening
at this century's end when wrought-iron streetlamps

print wands and serifs over everything
they suffer to touch.

Of all that group I'd meet when I was young . . .
I can't recall what we spoke of—it meant so much.