

August 2022

After "The Auroras of Autumn"

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Recommended Citation

Schwartz, Daniel. "After "The Auroras of Autumn"." *The Quiet Corner Interdisciplinary Journal*, Vol. 3, Iss. 1, 2022.

Available at: <https://opencommons.uconn.edu/tqc/vol3/iss1/4>

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After "The Auroras of Autumn"

Cover Page Footnote

After three years, the much-anticipated LANGSA (Language Graduate Student Association) annual conference returned in-person on March 25, 2022 with speakers from the University of Connecticut, Wesleyan University and Brandeis University who presented on a diverse array of topics. The conference was titled "Into the New World" and examined how the immediate and long-term consequences of the pandemic have impacted different aspects of our lives and how to grapple with those changes by applying a multidisciplinary approach. Daniel Schwartz' poem "After 'The Auroras of Autumn'" was one of the many fascinating presentations that were part of this conference. - Anna Reynders, LANGSA Vice-President, 2021-2022

After “The Auroras of Autumn”

Is there an imagination that sits enthroned
As grim as it is benevolent, the just
And the unjust, which in the midst of summer stops

To imagine winter? [...] (Stevens, canto 7, lines 1-4)

*To be with her is to be deprived
of mystery. Amber eyes
(preserved fragrance)
do not implore, mindful
as though I were sunlight
inflicted on her reverie.*

I.

Black snowfall of dawn, as though
in stomped-out blue fires

night has gone missing. One hears darkness
dismissed like sound from a trumpet. The birds’

military insistence of warbling, not song
but a configuration of dominoes needed to cripple

the pattern of darkness. Evangelists of infancy
warding off dead sound

of daylight. Till it mutely emanates,
lavender remains of wind

caught in the many arms of the calmly
thrashing trees.

*Her mind is the body
of the sleeper. Imperfect
stillnesses, untellable, twist themselves: clefs
through the score of our being
together.*

II.

Light shows nothing, as nakedness does not reveal
but destroys what clothing hid. Have you seen

menorah down whose frozen branches
moonlight drips? White algae motioning

beneath the frozen expanse. Held hands do not annihilate
loneliness, but carve the silent excess,

and we seem to fall away from the ideal
form, our loneliest selves. Snaking tremor

of looping leaves, wake of the passing
object.

*When I see her, her violet eyes
golden: rumored envelopes.
Her face is the forgotten
sound of cicadas. My voice
uncontrollably remembers.*

III.

God is blind, a listener
extraordinaire, moving through us: the nullified

leap. Mutely alert, the water
is footsteps, so unlike the oblivious,

prosecuting air. The whale has no face, only a tightrope
walked on by sight. Our childhood storms

decimate wildness. Too unpretending to enter purple
veins of clouds without stopping the sky's heart.

Chaste indifference of the hawk
hunting, but it is different in the sea.

Things are suspended with lustful assertion.
God demands no deeds, to be his instrument

pleasuring him with the incurably lonely
sound of the image. The vacant

shelter of green
of foliage in the dark.

*Love is not what I thought. Knuckles of winter
gloom break themselves on spring's
forever-shut door. Her voice
grows in a locked room, were I within
I would not understand.*

IV.

City is purified forest, the everlasting
masquerade made finite. Alleys use light

like ravaged arms, it waltzes cleanly
down metal trees, is held like breath

in lungs of buildings, and the tensely
awakening color is a stimulus

puncturing the morning dream. I see flowers fear
neglect, they are more peaceful

than those far from filth, where light falls through canopies
like entrails. There is an awfulness

missing there, without it
what do I care for illumination?

Raw resplendence? But here, light gracefully
kills, separating the visible

from the alive.

*Daylight is still: eerie light
written in water like cave paintings.
Things begin to mishear it. Deaf trees
read lips of the wind, till daybreak is a face
torn from the sky.*

V.

Poetry is like childhood, childhood is deafness
scraped from God's heart: emerald moss

concealing stone, muting things too delicate
to be printed in flesh. Our vision is fingers

sharpened by alarm, trees illumined by wind
like vocal cords unsheathed. I think God

created himself to house them,
to see transcribed an order of meaning

in which he does not exist. So the hunter
cleans his gaze of portent, seeing in the deer's eyes

bare formation of future. Private intent
diminished to the shiver of surface

unraveling disturbance.

*Evening clouds handcuffed, sky is the ghost
of buried butterflies. The mother
who smiles at something very distant
from the tune she plays, modeling the unknowing
of pleasure.*

VI.

Wildness suffers no need
of dispassion, no unlearned fugue

of self. Death is a chandelier of insult
polishing the empty ballroom of face

divine. Wildness is without
reality, no music tracelessly

defacing shape. I find the carcass
unknotting itself like a clothed

nothing. Infinitesimal pieces
of winter's mind violently

remembered by summer, by trees
full of hands unable to find skin, by city

flowers: as though
we are photographed by God

in an auroral reef of lightning.