

*Hoard*¹

Jaime Robles



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SHEARSMAN BOOKS

2013

To LLB, with many thanks

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White Swan

Out into the river Exe children sail in kayaks
their singular voices easy in shouts and laughter—
words zigzag into words

and gather into cloth.

It is easier for you to unravel them, speaking, as you do,
their language.

•

At the iron bridge white swans cluster, and the thin walkway
suggests a passage from here to an imagined and fatal land.

“Why is it now
impossible for us to meet—
we who were bound together
like the strands of a close woven basket
impermeable to water”

•

Outside, the sky roils in gray:

a glint within tumuli becomes a mirror or key and, below,
hanging from the bright trees, each leaf a stray declaration

lifted by wind

until the stem breaks loose from its lean connection—
spinning down to water, sidewalks, grass.

•

It was your paleness that struck me the other evening

like a match lit—
above us the ceiling catching fire.

•

The city's fringe of lights wraps the edge of the hills, the woods night-dyed:

its vivid trees of red and yellow dropped into black.

A slurry of nouns tumbles across the page.

The window resists opening, allows only a quick wintery chill.

•

Scraps of paper, swanlike, float up
collecting color on their surfaces, the water shearing off,
shuddering.

Like Persephone I have left my mother behind.
You, with your precision, would claim that she has left me,

but her death was neither her choice nor mine.

Still, she lives on, breathless, and I am caught between two lands,
her kindness pursuing,

the immediate air darkening into night.

•

I enter the silence around me: its space grown large and doorless,
denser than fur
or feathers thick at the breast—
paths lead elsewhere.

Not all silence is retraction,
its intentionality allied with small cruelties;

the coat you knit me was incomplete—
I stand before you, head tucked beneath my one white wing.

•

And the planet veers through space, resembles an afternoon in Los Angeles,
when we fashioned marbled paper on the patio:
black, gray, red and gold tangled
on the face of the pan's water, oily and unmixable,
baffled until combed into pattern.

Our fingertips stained, disappearing into the swirl-patterned surface.

Decorative paper, good for nothing but wrapping the pages of a book.

Swans glide by, their paddling feet invisible.

•

How many iterations must be written
—the curvatures of letters tracing a lip, fingers, the porch of the eye—
turning thought and sense into glass, clear and divisive?

I had forgotten the strength of silence—its mutability.

I was busy with the details of a bracelet lost many years ago
on a street filled with people walking north and south.

•

And you?

Love, too, is distant and fatal, requiring coins for the ferryman.
A viaticum of words carefully saved—

placed on the tongue