

Diorama with Fleeing Figures

Also by Merle Bachman

The Opposite of Vanishing (EtherDome Press chapbook)

Recovering “Yiddishland”:

Threshold Moments in American Literature (Syracuse University Press)

MERLE LYN BACHMAN

**Diorama
with Fleeing Figures**

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This one's for Evan

UNDER THE FALLS

Every step beneath my feet splinters, threatens to cave.
Winds lash a throttled ship

—bald mountains saturated with rain
distant fringe of remnant pine
white pulse of waterfall beneath its veil we once sheltered
a century ago—

etched inside this wrist, scrimshaw

thorns stuck in the
basket of ribs —cooled geode

Elected to this life, we ruled our minutes like petty
tyrants, not knowing
how they would rise against us.

—skull unearthed by the Sierra pine
the same
as that one scraped out of the mass grave
half a world away.

(THE BODY TELLS ITS STORY)

forgetting where, a lake,

—on the dock where the wood felt warm at night
even though the air was cool. a function deep inside
the body, its branches sheared

hard to be quiet enough, to hear: *shtil, sha, shtil*—

the warmth of enclosed regions. that primitive
animalism, emptying its spoon against the side of a dish
(calm as wires crossed.) an amusing puzzle,

like ice in the upper peninsula—

a small dress of bone and pounded skin

the full range of motion

she keeps bleeding a clear sexual fluid
where is the location of desire?

untouched, it hangs steep gradient cut loose this ridge

to drift this many cloud unborn seam

a supple call/caw

fields' blight the belly stalk

Peculiar gray-green day. the mind, a smoke
characteristics of a frontal system

—startled awake

2 a.m. by dry lightning

thunder again and again not a drop of rain

—entered the village, noted scars of recent graves

—category 5 storm, approaching the lowlands

All that the eye can see, directly or via satellite.
days packed with tears, a woman's body its delicate
accord, the sensor picks up heat, alarms go off, he
"went off" & they fell like kindling, one by one

inside the most confused part of the forest.
we live in, live off an architecture of the dead—
tools, songs, instructions, palpable material designed, handed
on, pulling the house around us its shell of concrete
dust, yes, the cherrywood furnishings the brick
ornament the stubborn
soiled pot

we enter the built world, roll into place
we carry on

when the girl walked
naked out of the field, they
photographed her

specificity of how my hands
hurt

tipped far back in the cup

making sense of what's "reported"
to consider knowledge enough, just "knowing"

like clustered fruit
clinging to the ship's sides
smashed by the waves, tyrannical

waves begin as thoughts inside the mind
lightning exited her left foot
its sole

tell her Get out of the rain
say, The engines are all broken
Learn to live with history
—life jackets bobbing cherry-bright in the blue water
—children fixed at points, the lee shore another
woman's body

“movement of the subject
and of history” — what one presence added
briefly to the pine-tinged air

implanted with
experience, a kind of shrapnel

being female, being under
their watching

one more mind alert and not attached to anything
in a dark room surrounded by darkness

truant mountains running

I have this feeling of
no feeling

sometimes an engine falls off
or a wing