

Two Poems

Casey Fuller

Meeting

after Wisława Szymborska

It happened. Of course it happened. It didn't have to.
It could have happened. An inch. A yard. An altered verb.
A change in tense. It didn't have to. But it happened.

No one knew how to properly place a hand behind
the ear of your neck the way you like and look you
in the eye. No one saw random three-hour car rides

as a source of great power. By yourself. With friends.
Drinking wine. Eating lamb gyro at midnight for dinner.
Sending stupendously witty texts from wherever you are.

I was in luck: the boy who loved you always needed
new shoes and talked about his coworker a little too much.
You were in luck: the kid Seth froze with fear. We were in luck:

the pizza delivery guy wouldn't risk it and fucked his life
with sadness. As a result, therefore, because, despite, a boy,
a girl, a car, a bar. A bus within a hairsbreadth. The accident

with the gun. So you're here? Dizzy from a stolen smoke,
showing me strange places where people still push bottle caps
into tree bark by the river, the bin in your back yard overflowing

with recycling because they just throw it away at your work.
A hole in a thrifted shirt and we could have slipped through.
I couldn't be more surprised. I couldn't be more dismayed.

Listen, how your heart beats inside me.

Abstraction

Worse than invisible, it gathers around the objects. In people it accrues oddly, in vain delights, in sudden penchants, in unbreakable sentimentality for the wrong thing. It adheres in numbers, but not directly, obtusely, behind the blackboards, invisible almost, unattached to the digits they say it refers to. Each word, each of the words you're reading right now, are in fact lucky to find a way to say anything about it at all. In less than one second, each letter could disappear back into its formidable array, into its rows and rows of unspeakable splendor. You yourself have probably seen it puff an immediate mist around ideas like wonder, will, imagination—the easy, unstudied understanding suddenly surrounded by its green-gray vapor of non-particularity. Leaves fall through it during autumn, however; winter wind has zero problem, and summer can't hold it up in the sapphire sky forever, because, of course, it doesn't even seem to be there. Percy Shelley, back behind it wrestling with its structure, bloodied his fingers trying to peel it away. Then he thought he saw it in the taut thrum of a ship's white sail. Then he died. Kant only saw it after walking the same path at the same time for fifty years and only in the trees. And after two thousand pages in the worst German ever written, he reasoned the best one could do to orient a life in accordance with its infinite, intricate, structures was, yes, indeed, The Golden Rule. Keats coughed its mystery into his sleeve and wrote on. Most writers simply give in and rely on clunky metaphors trying to hint at a world where it belongs. And that's where the Americans walk right in.

Mending walls, convex mirrors, purple haze, women warriors,
blue suede shoes—laugh if you want to, but behind all our
feeble attempts, behind the pale blue sky thinning into
forever, the oxygen gives, space emerges, and each star
is so far away, so far, so far, the words can't say.

Casey Fuller is a PhD student at the University of North Dakota. He somehow finished his course work last fall!