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The Twice-Born

Jay Meek

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Why are these young men braced against the wall
with riot guns cold on their necks?
In Porlock, the poppy crop is trebled, and the wires
run ten-to-one for off-shore drilling.
Why is there dried vomit on the red telephone?

The Khan is in the black Mercedes. He has sold
his mineral rights to the *Reader's Digest*.
Tomorrow, in the Pleasure Dome,
he will throw out the first ball.

The Twice-Born / Jay Meek

Once, I said, a right gazelle and a left gazelle
dreamed they went waltzing
on the king's wall,
and a child lay in bed under their shadows

until the room was dark and they became my hands
and separated clumsily. And then it was
the events of that night ended, like childhood,
and I remembered only the memory of it,

seeing my own child cast down in my shadow,
but years ago—

the baled hay banked against an old farmhouse
in winter, and under the yardlight
a wagon of cabbages
with something vague and memorable beside it
like a yellow gazelle in the snow.

And the hamadryad's sermon came from it,
the Sermon of the Wall:
I remember, but I do not remember exactly.

Come hamadryad and macaw,
and the deer my great-grandfather the circuit-rider
poached in 1886, you come too.

To the sparrows of 1911, 1931, and 1937,
to the nanny-goats washed away
in the abattoir,
to the antelopes left unpainted on the cave wall,

I give you my shape, you give my shadow yours.

The divided soul is prematurely old,
and if it lives, grows younger.
Zebra, lie down
in the sweet grass under the lion's paw.

Fieldmouse lie down, civet lie down,
lie down in the shadow of my hand, as even now
it opens to let you go . . .

Only the pathological move the world
to tears, only the twice-born
can save you:

I make my walls so marvelous and strange
roofs don't stop here at all.

Building a River / Paul Hoover

I wanted a river that would move
through its banks like a saw.
On this river, my voice would be
a blueprint wadded in a bottle.
At night, fish would rise through the water
like needles through cloth.