

1977

The Feast

Robert Hass

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as I fumble saying this:
it is the same in the dream
where I touch you. Notice
in these poems the thinning out
of particulars. The gate
with the three snakes is burning
symbolically which doesn't mean
the flames can't hurt you.
Now it is the pubic arch instead
and smells of oils and driftwood,
of our bodies working very hard
at pleasure but they are not
thinking about us. Bless them,
it is not a small thing to be
happily occupied, go by them
on tiptoe. Now the gate is marble
and the snakes are graces.
You are the figure in the center.
On the left you are going away
from yourself. On the right
you are coming back. Meanwhile
we are passing through the gate
with everything we know. We go
as fire, as flesh, as marble.
Sometimes it is good and sometimes
it is dangerous like the ignorance
of particulars but our words are clear
and our movements give off light.

The Feast / Robert Hass

The lovers loitered on the deck talking,
the men who were with men and the men who were with new women,
a little shrill & electric, and the wifely women
who had repose & beautifully lined faces
and coppery skin. She had taken the turkey from the oven
and her friends were talking on the deck
in the steady sunshine. She imagined them
drifting toward the food, in small groups, finishing

sentences, lifting a pickle or a sliver of turkey,
nibbling a little with unconscious pleasure. And
she imagined setting it out artfully, the white meat,
the brioche, antipasto, the mushrooms and salad
arranged down the oak counter cleanly
and how they all came as in a dance
when she called them. She carved meat
and then she was crying. Then she was in darkness
crying. She didn't know what she wanted.

Winter Windows / Milton Kessler

1

By that playful red trim
on the farmhouse gleaming
as you drive at dusk

you know that happiness
was possible then
and even once again.

2

Grandfather, it was not for us
to be a hunter or drunkard.
Proud of the pain of the waterpails
I walked beside you from the well.

3

A little ice
above the living room lamp
steam and hiss of the kitchen iron
practicing buttonholes all day
we've come to value
this emptiness.