

Field Events

The sun with its invisible burin etches lines in our skin
while the trees rise, green spears, then collapse into scarlet.

I believed that language could save us from the temporal.

—Times of grief or joy when our faces opened entirely to one another.

What lies lost in the gutter between pages in every
book, the light and shadow cast from inside words.

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—The calf and its mother slopping through creek and sopping grass.

The flesh of mountains is made of trees,
the flesh of words is carved from emotion.

—Now the accumulation of voices like a river. “You
were a stranger once...” “Yes, and so were you.”

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As one grows older it's of more and more importance to make the present larger,
but the past seems to grow much faster. It's as though you are painting a scene
while something rapidly occurs in the background to which everyone points.

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The trout I caught, photographed, and ate, swims on my screensaver now.

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At night the city generates heat and the beaches shine like radium.

As it grew colder, torn pieces of paper began falling from the sky. We touched one another but had nothing to say. Eternity's not a game on some board we play, but a slow selling off of the body.

Mark Irwin

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Zoo

In her old age, mother enjoys going to the zoo
as the trees let loose their yellow leaves
and stand like furniture among the grazing animals
who stare from a long distance. Often I think
this could be a story she's telling me as we walk
through doorways catching fire, or sit on a stone bench
growing larger and more cold, watching the little clouds
our words make, and in the distance—buffalo, built
of the earth, with their horns made of rock, their coats
of dried grass. “Only drama without movement
is beautiful,” said Simone Weil, speaking of Lear, and soon
everything's ablaze and we're running toward youth,
and the skyline of a city, its fossil, while animals, shrieking,
stampede past us, and mother calls out their names,
zebra, buffalo, gazelle, ever so clearly, then enters
into shadow with them, that diorama we call memory.

Mark Irwin

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The words,

their small emotions
grating on sound, their vowels siphoning
history. —Or tomorrow reaching
its dusk sleeve. “Hello, Wait, Please,”
I once said, trying to open flesh with ghost-sounds
threading themselves through
infinity, the knot of past
voices choiring while I try to gobble
its babble in memory. One July we drank a glass
of water then set it down
in the god-heat of grass. Ants, gnats, and a stunned moth
remind the dumb math
of years, the tacit
hours and how the pronoun *I* keeps
fraying, digging like a mole through smells: sweat
on a watch band, a scarf, or sock
scouting a drawer. Some old cards the cat
pulls down. On a shirt the wrong
button you sewed now casually
chatting with some ashes I keep postponing to loose
in the wind of your fled
laughter, clear, jetting forth, syllabic, unrehearsed and taller
than any grief.

Mark Irwin

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