

Kevin Sheehan

WINTER TRIPTYCH

I. CHRYSANTHEMUMS

i.

After a storm
the walls of that room
were a deep trembling green.
The mound of curling grass
between the dark legs of the path
was clotted with crystal
and everywhere, there were lost
yellow leaves.

ii.

The leaning world
in oblique light,
a pilgrim leaf
in windborne flight,
boys in a court
of love, their praise
extravagant
worthless, aimless
drift of half-formed
thought: an afternoon.

iii.

A husk, a skull upon a shelf;
that lavender integument:
an evening sky. In a dooryard
she beheld chrysanthemums.

II. HALF-BROTHERS

i.

Her love for him
is everywhere disrobed:
Poor families pass
in heated cars
their faces like
the palms of children,
a portly pastor
pauses, buffs
the nails of his left hand
on his right shoulder,
in a crippled moon
light, reliquae of roses.

ii.

Every Sunday, they come from lives
like different cities to be with her.
"Is nothing sacred," she will say.
Is nothing sacred? They want to know.

iii.

Delicately drawn on a pale blue sky,
young winter maples. This afternoon,
three starlings bathe in melted snow.

III. HOW EVERYWHERE DEATH

I am an old woman at her window
watching the street. It is winter
and what I see is mingled with a memory
how everywhere death is mixed with life.
Or, as against entropy, the sun
will lift the sea in its long light
the slave usurp the language of the master,
I am everyone, and you are me.