

FOX IN THE LANDSCAPE

Tulip, you
Bled on my green rug.

A jungle-red petal
Where my little kits

Rollick, fallen like a warning—

Yesterday I sat outside
In the returned sun

Trying to make more
Friends; after all these years

To think of yourself
Snapped, the sweet sap

Tremoring between
States of ice and melt.

An old love wrote to me
From his wife's country place

To say he had been hunting there
And could appreciate the hounds;

In a white coat he is closely
Setting people's bones, opening

Their backs with the hands
I knew

The cancelled paths
Of saying no or yes: I could have fallen

To a fearing of the little foxes lately
Come into the yard

(There is so little I know about what to do)
But I let them be.

Published in *Poetry*
Leslie Williams 2008

THE FAMOUS DIRECTOR SAID *I LOVE TO SEE PEOPLE COMING OUT OF DARKNESS*

The woman at the party who had been married to him
had the strangest eyes, her irides ringed
with black, then white, then black again, like the eyes of a bull.

I was only half well then,
a monoxide star drawing every time
I'd linger in the garage—

I who so loved comfort
was kept alive thereby,
unable to make a choice or withstand the smallest pain.

She said to me, a stranger:
It's strange what we will do
to get what we want,

or what we do when we don't know
what we want, which is most of the time
unless we're cold or very hungry.

She said she met him outside her apartment
where he parked his bike; he was going home
to put back together what he'd torn apart

the day before in a self-destructive fit, but instead
they went to Jenkins's and drank and danced
in their cowboy boots and smashed bottles against

the wall—she took it for granted while it was going on,
a form of imperative, the top-of-the-mountain stuff
she never doubted at all.

She left me with the opinion of herself
that she had been completely open,
though, she came to believe, not from a Healthy Place.

She left me willing to be crushed again
beneath the wheels, each meal a kind of viaticum
to grasp, to seize, be fed by hand,
to be combusted by the sound of a voice
or a savage attitude.

The place a carnassial love creates, where we go
if we're called to, that kind
of courage— to go again
to his body, his cross tattoo—

after her funeral I knew I was afraid
but nowhere can I prove
that I slipped away from the visitation and went to him
in the almost empty house, how I felt standing at the door
inside my stockings and modest dress before he answered it.

ECSTATIC NEIGHBORHOOD

Each night the jewelers take the rubies
Off brushed velvet necks

In the windows, and the merchants mix the newest
Salts with more traditional meats—

When time-wasting was a criminal
Offense, what clocks there were lacked

Minute hands, though the Puritans were always
Improving the time: turning a thing to good

Account. When I still had three more hours
I didn't ask the questions I needed most

To ask, but had my tea and sat in a sunny chair
And in my body felt no pain, reading about the radio

Telescopes of the Very Large Array, trained on reaches
Where Big Bang atoms still race outward from before

The time of Vincent of Beauvais, who avowed
Fresh warm goat's blood would shatter rubies,

Diamonds too; from before the time of priests
Who salted infants against demons by blowing three times

On their faces, placing salt upon their tongues. From before
The time of Saint Augustine, who often prayed: Lord, shield the joyous.