

Outside: A Cycle
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I.

Every season brings with it a chance for transcendence,
a different way to accidentally stretch
beyond humanity for a single terrifying second.
One languid summer afternoon, my mind
wandered towards a concrete-gray cloud, leaving
an imperceptible trail in the stale air like a knife
through water. Unwanted daydreams flooded
through the gash from a radio ad, leaving me stranded,
unable to pierce the static or excuse through the strife
to the indefinitely vacated seat of my life.

II.

On certain disarmingly warm autumn days,
leaves fall from trees and grasp onto rising breezes
in vermilion fervor, straining to squeeze the last drop
of fire from life. Once, walking through a park
on such a day, I felt something burn out
with a soft crack. Outstretched branches curled
and shivered only slightly, yet I froze,
seizing with some vestigial instinct, and looked to the sky
in amnesiac longing as the silent crosswinds swirled,
wondering what once connected me to the world.

III.

When the ground freezes over, I tend to feel nothing
but a rage against the all-encompassing numbness
instilled by the elements and unerring daily routines.
One long winter I tried to escape into darkness,
burrowing into fictions, burning books
to stave off that cold with a cringe or a chill down my spine.
Since then, I tend to look back with detachment
on those efforts to replace despair with borrowed sadness,
understanding the difference between myself and the divine:
I can't know what to do with pain that's not mine.

IV.

Sometimes the only trace of sunlight left
when I step outside from hibernation
is the rust on burnt out blades of grass.
No unspent spark or lasting glint is left
for life-starved eyes. Then, even a slight
echo of birdsong would seem a rapturous scream,
exorcising me from my insular cycle,
plunging me through darkness and cold shock,
past each layer of crafted detachment and dream,
back into the shining waters of time's breakneck stream.