

## **The Recidivist in the Trope**

after Dylan Thomas's "The Hunchback in the Park"

Is that what he is, a man without allies  
befogged by violent infirmities, breaking  
down near the edge of the poisoned  
terminus—privilege and despair  
botched by a sick mimesis?

Late in his life, his reevaluation  
is neutered by nostalgia, visage  
like a mugshot with post-acidic tropes  
of the cut mouth bleeding rhythm.

All that remains is anachronism  
and dystopia, the profiles of our era  
lit by attention deficit disorder  
and hyperactivity—that our responses  
are vapid, derivative and crippled  
by the canon's debt. We remember  
the false stoicism without county.  
This was the real truancy armed  
with dead lines of epidermic poetry.

At the threshold, we must concede:  
he's a hermeneut not a recidivist.  
Our reading is veined and seamed.  
Now, we censure his "crooked bones"  
and perform our swerve. Neither name  
will do, so we declare him a maestro  
of junk with our cryptic third-degree.

Our clinamen is unpopular, stirs  
dissent among rapturist and zealots  
with fatalistic splendor. Any closure?  
No, just a franchise opportunity  
to save the erasure from a poor  
tweet. Why such fear to commit?

It's not commitment. It's one last  
sortie of unselfknowing, skinned  
of ostension, before insemination  
and incubation. That's our fear,  
that all is the ganglionic idiocy  
of marbleizing a classic. He hears  
this diss and rises from the grave  
like Nosferatu. He goes viral,  
unleashing terabytes of malware  
through Facebook feeds. Our friends  
are "unliked" by the millions.

We watch ruined bursts of static  
turn into blue screens of death.

We become blanks of blankness,  
blank-faced, sinuses choked  
with the phlegm of a buffering Wi-Fi.  
Is this the legacy of a chronic agon,  
the one we wage with haruspication?

We're not joking exactly and he's not  
exactly a code breaker drinking port  
from a Kiddush cup. Why the hoopla  
and fanfare? The guidelines were clear  
enough, hauled to account without fault.

This version can't be right. The sarcasm  
is too expensive, besides the bail will  
bankrupt the trope if we get caught  
pilfering and thrown in the gulag. Not  
quite, et cetera, except as variant hobby  
and tactic of delay. Nothing stiffened  
but our caffeinated spines. Our address  
to him wasn't an assassination attempt.

We are butt-headed addicts jonesing  
for a hit of latecoming and exhale  
saying "willow groves" and "rockery  
stones," as if shape-shifting his tropes  
of nature could undo our resolve.

Nothing works and closure is begged.  
How far can we stretch breakage?  
Not far, but far enough to follow  
him to "his kennel in the dark"  
where the advent of next wears  
a black-rimmed hat and points  
to theone printed on demand.

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