

Two Poems

JOSÉ FAUS

José Calderon Supposes

On the fiftieth year of his life
José Calderon buys a set
of black moleskin notebooks
a feather quill relic pen
and a set of professional
calligraphy inks

He climbs the three sets of stairs
to the attic newly converted
into a writing garret

He sits at the desk near the open window
facing out onto the street below
and dutifully removes the plastic foil
from the pack of notebooks
He arranges them on the sparse desk
opens the first page and creases it back
laying it flat on the table top
he dips the quill into the inkwell
and sets about to write
the profound arc of his life

Twenty minutes later
the ink dried on the nib of the pen
he moves away from profundity
and searches the significant achievements
that are his life's narrative

An hour later
he ponders the absurd moments
that surely fill his fifty years

Two hours later
he watches the dogs
chase their tails in the neighbor's yard
watches the squirrels jump into the streets
and at the slightest sound freeze
turn in stutters before returning where they began
or proceeding to where they meant to go

He watches the play
of hundreds of swifts
diving off the power lines
marvels at the well played dance
of dips swoops and plunges
the orchestrated sudden stops and turns
a set of convulsing elastic bands
stretching and pulling away from a center
and springing back only to pull away again

An hour later he opens his eyes
and lifts his head from
the sweater covered arm
that has become his rest
He feels the webbing of the sweater
etched across his face
and sees the sun in its last descent
He looks at the blank pages
and begins to write
Seconds later the quill on its rest
he rises abruptly from the desk
walks to the door steps out
and closes it behind him

In the room on the desk
across the top of the page
a name written clearly
in block letters fades
in the dim evening light

Malvern Hill

The branches have dropped to the ground
heavy with the cold rain's bracelets

The stalls are closed
The wind whistles through the trestles
still in need of a fresh coat of paint
The hands that fumbled at the table
with the bread crumbs in her fingers
have disappeared

When I last saw her
she was riding a horse bareback
hard into the wind and the night

There goes a girl
with a particular affliction
She sleeps hard upon the pillows

I slough off to the only bed I know
the only familiar that wakens me

I
am not the I
not the I
that you would think

I
gather up the straw that falls about
and make whole a man with no reflection

I
 set out to see the yesterdays
 that passed me by
 through the smoke
 burning in the eyes
 through the pages
 littered on the floor
 the messages not read
 the calls not returned
 the letters not sent
 or written
 or thought upon
 or the ashtrays
 overflowing on the dusty sill

And the door
 that constant creak that sounds
 only when I leave and enter
 And the rug worn and bare
 to the splintered floor
 And the many layers of paint
 fallen to the ground
 among the papers that pile up
 with the sameness of the toss
 and the sameness
 of the letters and the words

I am I
 at the border
 I
 at the sides
 I
 at the rail
 like a guilty witness to a murder

My death
a silent falling down
down to the crushing
bending of the legs
and the stiffness of the joints
cramped and crimped
till useless to the neighbors

I carry myself like a gentle man
with my white flowing hair
my face hard into the wind
disdainful of a cane
not a crutch to anyone
no help to anyone

No one waits for me
and I wait for no one

Except for her
that girl that fell
down the dried river bed
as she careened past the summer stalls
and gathered all the color
swept some into the folds of her apron
and tucked the rest neatly in her bonnet

She fell down into a hole
Her rose drawn cheeks
fixed their eyes on me
She yelled
help me please
you there
a crutch to no one
no help to anyone

I saw her fall
and no one came for her

I went no further
than the startled rush
of feathers in a swamp
at the falling of a pebble
into a shallow cove

I saw the crime and did not report it
Who would listen and to what would I relate
a girl tumbling rolling with summer stuffed
into a picnic basket and a pomegranate
in her hand

I know where she rests
but I will not go there
I am not a master of the arts
I am a blessed observer
and a quiet one at that