

ROBERT KLEIN ENGLER

Three Poems

By the Window at Twilight

I leave while he sleeps.

I leave while music from the radio dims,

while the clouds pass across the sky
and gulls reach for the breakwater.

I leave as light darkens above the lake
and others leave for the train with its
long stretch of steel into the subway.

And smoke leaves the fire and words
leave the mouth and blood the wound,
and we go out of Egypt, leaving our
slavery to pant like an old dog that waits.

Wandering under the Cloud

Oh, my mother, I walk the city
downtown early Sunday morning.
Sunlight skips off glass.
I think of you here dreaming
your dream of love.

A wound from the past pulls us
to remember with its flax fingers.
The stones grow warm.
You are here with your worry,

dreaming your dream of life.

Even on this street the prairie
is never far away. I hear in
the chattering of sparrows who
search the undergrowth
something of the song you heard.

Yes, I know you wanted more
than a small song on Sunday,
dreaming your dream of joy,
but listen, the same wonder
draws your son well on his way.

Janus at the Doorway

It's modern everywhere: Along the River Tyne
and on Nicollet Mall ubiquitous steel and glass
reflects sunlight as winter evening gilds the Rhine.

Yes, step by step on the wind of little feet
Somali women in burkas negotiate Minneapolis,
to sail like ships of shadows through the street.

Behind my brother's house, trees make a low
bristle against the sky and drop their weight
of leaves to hold the effortless fall of snow.

There is something in us that retreats from form.
Rare books lay out its spell in faded words—
that perfect blonde becomes the perfect storm.

This is America: closets of treasure underground
over which rival armies tread. Then comes
the god of oil with a slush and slithered sound.

Must he force the issue, make us choose?
Why not end up like old George? He rides the condo
elevator up and down in socks but not his shoes,

I, too, taught propaganda for the liberal state,
only to learn it brightens nothing of the gloom.
Now I read in Latin and slowly put on weight.

The shadow of December declines into its hole.
Tell me again of the mansion with many rooms.
How readily this body drags to doom our soul.