

DISFIGUREMENT, IN THREE PARTS

RALF WEBB

I

Sit in the close room. Roll up your shirtsleeve.
Your forearm is corded by blue veins. Eased
to the surface by another heavy August day,
in this, your new city of subways and white noise.

II

Your arm has an abrupt topography. Lashes
put down by a metal object. Something came
and gave you a sign: mark yourself thus,
and you'll again be able to eat in the company
of others. Mark yourself and let your currency
hemorrhage, let it pool in the strange basin.
Swallow a cup of water. Wash yourself, walk.

III

Pass your fingertips over the scars. They are
raised, parallel. Like the railroad sleepers in
the backwoods of the back town, where tall trees
in narrow silver suits let light perforate
your ignorant face. Before cities. Before their
incoherent premises, which echo and quake
and cause the body to mutilate, then bloom.

DIVERGENCE

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It is Sunday, and parts of your body struggle. The curb atrophies into road, your jugular greens. Neon crucifixes plot jewelled coordinates, which you fail to follow. Silhouettes whom you may or may not know appear under plane trees, and stare. Signals report; you can not answer. Vehicles reel past. Your face gets disarranged, then rearranged, in their succession of anonymous glass.

It is Sunday, and parts of your body struggle to relate to other parts of other bodies. The streets smell like sterilised carcass. Red leaves vortex. You have become a friend to your acquaintances, and an acquaintance to your friends, whom you fail; as the defunct street lights fail the empty lots of light. As the sprawling vines, choking the row houses, fail to unwind

CULTURE, STRATA

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White rooms repeat themselves
Across the former warehouse districts
They proliferate as divisions proliferate
Are your devices in order, current
Is the line of your garment suitably clean
Can you suggest affluence by omission

White rooms contain singular audiences
And mutely occlude confluences:
The ecstatic intersections of the city exterior
Are you immaculately iced, impervious
Did you quit your hayseed accent
And cut your blemishes off, whet your jaw

Inside white rooms men repeat themselves
Via gross presence, via platforms
(That man is a fraud, as that man is a fraud)
Will you let them pillage your ethics
For pure transit, dazzling ingress
Out of the margins into aseptic white