

BUFFALO NICKEL

Listen, can you hear the faint drone of sirens
moving through a river of cars? They are a violence
tattooed on cities, and we lean like plants
from the stems of our bodies, lean as toward

the drone of the sea. We need a new coin
with a jet on one side and on the other,
God. What would he look like? —Jambalaya
of noise. —A city's recrudescence

of glare. *Engine Rock*, aboriginal its orangish-
red glow. —Reptilian, all escarpment and scale.
Ochre are its bones, bleached pink and lavender its ashy

halo. The Nebraskan sun gold on their horns,
at dusk their wooly hair like smoke. As a boy in New York
I touched one, held the clear, bright language of myth

on a nickel. Wilderness is where
we never wander. And where, and where

and where. Dusk, the ghostly pastels of a few TV's
shimmer in Taos Pueblo. Where the creek divides
the kivas, a few beer cans tinsel the ground. —Trash

offerings up to some divinity? What did you
discover today? In La Junta, a man was trampled
by his own horses. The limits of the land,

the limits of the body. --Buffalo, brown-matted fungus of God.
Home is not here, but there, not now, but then.

Mark Irwin

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TOMATO SOUP

The simplicity of unadorned taste:
tomatoes, flour, salt. Unceremonious
and so unlike an English stew.

No hidden bones, chunks of meat.
No skeletons in our closet,
Can of soup, can of water.

You eat it after doing simple things:
skating, skiing, or just taking a walk
down a street of look-alike homes.

No iron kettle to hide ingredients.
A stainless steel pot on an electric range
works best. Do not add salt or pepper.

The simplicity of unadorned taste.
We love it the way the Italians
love tomato sauce with basil:

as a stronghold of culture,
a stubborn remembrance of revolution,
of green vines tied to stakes
and the pendulous warm red fruit.

Mark Irwin

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**ROBERT MAPPLETHORPE'S PHOTOGRAPH
OF APOLLO (1988)**

What's missing is the body, its nakedness wrapped
in marble. What's missing is the hair, the floating hair
that falls in chalky tendrils. Only the face, huge
and larval-white, peers into the darkness.
Still, this is perfect youthful manhood, iridescent
against chaos. The eyes, wild and vacant, look
but see nothing. What slaking difference?—
They have known ecstasy, that patina
marble carries everywhere. A suddenness
unwarranted, beautiful. The lips, moistened, part
more to breathe than speak. Such desire,
a poetry. The silk of the moment before him,
the rest becomes salt, memory, history.
There is order here, but passion is its spectacular
disarray. The music turning toward light
shadows. O god of the healing art
where is the beautiful lyre of the body?

Mark Irwin
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