

Lex Runciman

Spring Without Optics

Rye, fescue, bentgrass,
what can the uncut leaves say to my feet—
spongy ground, ooze and suck,
a viscosity under shoes?

Studded with thorns and tender
eruptions of leaves nipped by deer,
what can blackberry canes, that smooth,
those points, furred surfaces and edges,
and the crenelations, the velvet
fragility and firmness of narcissus, the hard,
ridged buds of magnolia, of dogwood,
the stinging of hailstones, cold impacts of rain,
sun intermittent, building shadow, tree
shadow, or cloud, temperature changes—
what can they say to a body
layered in winter?

By April I breathe pollen thick as language
and would give it a color, whatever
color is—none of your descriptions register.
Wind, for example, thickens the birches.

Of course there are birds—one
every morning sounds like mercury,
that odd liquid weight in a palm. A quail nesting
is a whippoorwill. And cotton shirtsleeves
return, or dear silk, but I prefer
corduroy or linen, eyebrows, the pitch
and timbre of greeting, the gait—
all rhythms, none identical.

Without even knowing how to tell you, I listen;
I have always listened. Any season,

a mile is near or far as an hour, like quiet
or night that never quite arrives.
I read about stars as unhearable chemistry.
Skin is laughter, the message
and measure that holds me and never sleeps.

