

## Excerpts from *Crane*

Tessa Bolsover

It is true that the moths that clung to the door were translucent enough to let through a dust of light when the dawn sun crested in across the ceiling (stained) to carve an arc over the books, our bed. All moths die of hunger, you told me once; I did not know then where you'd read this. You said the larvae eat ravenously before closing themselves in chrysalis, after which they never eat again. Do they drink? I asked. You did not know.

I awake and the boughs, battered and paddling against the window, bruise shadows in the hardwood. Amplified by rain, the sounds inside resonate like pieces of a disassembled object. Slowly, words begin to spread with a viscous clarity over everything. Words unstruck, simple as honey, invoking all that is secret and unprivatized. In the predawn haze I wash my face, still printed with the fresh tracks of a dream in which I'm standing on the side of a mountain, the bare slopes covered with small white rocks that rearrange their matter slowly beneath my feet.

In *The Neutral*, Barthes describes three stages of suspension. The first is the nonreply. The second, stammering: “to evade not the reply but the nonreply.” The third he calls the dilatory—a method rooted in the hope that the question will be forgotten, the demand will shift. “The essence of the dilatory is its desire to be infinite.”

That language slips through its own gaps does not diminish its material impact. Language overflows itself and yet it's used to control, cordon and capture. Words fold out and back and forward into history. How crystals formed in caves enclose infinitudes of edges; expanding in the same breath that they condense. "Words do not hang on the façade of the present, advertising their availability. They are embedded in history, which forms no continuous tradition" (Susan Buck-Morss).

Reeds bent to wind flicker past the train windows in a patchworked flame of motion. Refracted light appears brighter when broken up into a shimmer. Touch it with a name and step back quickly. As a painter I was taught to squint my eyes to isolate the composition. To blur the details. Some say reading requires a similar technique: one must strip away the words to sense what's underneath. Invariably we find we're latched to words, held in and by their weave. Each vocable wreathed in "a halo of possible meanings" (Barthes); clanging with significations, power relations, histories.

Calendar pages soaked and used as bean sieve

I awake each day knowing little

Hold the pieces careful  
ly Crane said (in dream) the glimmer nouns All

light escaped from other empires

Every morning at dawn I pass the metal crane outside the bank, suspended midair, the total stillness of a stage set. The dimensionality of morning light gives sight itself a kind of depth, like softened metal.

Early spring. I dip my hand into the canal, sifting water; green bubbles just below the surface crest and cling like beetles to the rocks. Error weaves into the frame, softening that which had been calcified. Error like the roots that dislodge fences, error like grass.

Do I lay it down among the shallows. The silver floral switchblade my mother gave me. The jointed clip you slipped into my pocket. Lay it softly in the silt and watch the surface shimmer.

