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"For a Moment You Are Nowhere," "Flag," "Nut," "Window"

Michael Goldman

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Four Poems

MICHAEL GOLDMAN

For a Moment You Are Nowhere

Don’t be afraid of your ghosts,
dead Jews, dead parents, amputated desires,
the ground fog you drive through tonight
on your way home,
the night’s wine cut by coffee,
the sweetness half drowned.

You drive down into smoke
and the road’s gone.

For a moment you are nowhere, gasping, guessing,
fighting sensations
the dead can’t appreciate.
Flag

I am not under a Japanese illusion.
This Monarch butterfly is not
a torn flag, a brushstroke,
or a fleck of lint from my spiritual life.

Yes, it is black, white and orange;
by this much do I deliver it
to the abstract feast of my mind,
the flutter called knowledge.

Already the thing is gone.
The brute wisp of purpose
dips and is quickly separate,
it slides through the meadow, the valley,
leaving me, was it wingdust
or the lost pennon of a memory
in the long tunnel of thought?
Nut

I wanted to be a slightly academic maverick like Thoreau, but I seem to have ended up a slightly maverick academic, also like Thoreau and the wonderful thing about this hugely forested endlessly renewable country is the difference doesn't seem to have mattered much. We both prospered, and felt upon our tongues the slightly cracked nut of American language.
Window

You might sit here, finishing, smoked salmon, scrambled eggs, spring glare out Barney Greengrass's window, watching the garbage truck speeding by

with Paris at one end of the New York street and the end of the world at the other

and wonder, purely as a skeptical indeed nearly lapsed believer in Pleasure, how this breakfast

is to be followed meaningfully even unto lunch except by the sacraments of fiction.