

Dear Empty Coat,

Jeanne Marie Beaumont

The black doorway was always there
and it didn't matter what sort of chair
you set in front of it. Long ago you'd
turned a key with your nimble foot, you
unscrewed the door itself from its jamb,
and so the abyss waited. Stood by like
a butler, a fucking butler, a cosmic joke
you came to appreciate by increments.
It was there in your moaning mouth
beyond your tombstone teeth.
It was there when you walked the dog,
beneath the grate you passed over, and
didn't he stop to gather in for both your sakes
its incriminating scents, and didn't your
two shadows walk ever after nearer than
even your chain-linked bodies?

One moment you were half-dissolving
in a little lion tamer's chair or retching
into a cracked sink or writhing in bed,
flesh spotted like rotting fruit.
Botched cruel life was still life.
You woke up each morning a wonder.
Then you were curled at the threshold
like one rough-treated but treated,
we needed to believe, holding on or pinned.
When did your foot slip over dragging
its leg, and how then were we looking at the
void, last mouth you'd apparently fallen out into?
Exit flesh. Feat or ascent or—
A rush of oily cold air twisted-up our faces.
Let words stain word stains—*refuse to transfigure.*

Letters from Limbo

Jeanne Marie Beaumont

1

It's not that things never change here—
it's the pace of the change. Imagine a bell
that takes centuries to complete its ring,
a slow motion arc well beyond leaden,

that's the pace of the change. Imagine a bell,
the infinitesimal motions of the clapper,
a slow motion arc well beyond leaden
and you might start to feel the pull and drag

on the infinitesimal motions of its clapper.
Become aware of the bell's confines,
and you might start to feel the pull and drag
of the borderlines within which change can occur.

Become aware the bell's confines are
like the sacred space inside any circumference,
the boundaries within which change will occur
filled with the hush of ecstatic anticipation

like any sacred space inside a circumference.
We're in a kinetic process but it won't be rushed,
filled with the hush of ecstatic anticipation.
True, alteration here is gradual and hemmed by margins.

We're in a kinetic process that won't be rushed—
seasons of damp thaw, raw heat, chilled hibernation—
true alteration here is gradual and hemmed by margins
but nevertheless we've the security of repetition.

Seasons of damp thaw, raw heat, chilled hibernation
that take centuries to complete gyring
but nevertheless weave the security of repetition.
It's not that things never change here.