

Carwreck

Terese Svoboda

They command us, though they speak no words.

So Sophoclean, Mother on her Day beside the phone.
Not the cell. No—no *beside* with cells.

The framing is rather ugly, says Monopoly.
Instead, a fructose chirp from the fake cherry,

a billowing car part after halting.
This picture's all we've got.

Hydrangea blanches and looks less posh—
the framing mocks Mom like hotels

no one stops at with rude stuff left
poolside. A bird enters and you can't believe

how the door that frames the sign with the word
printed so small from here, how it was left open.

Mother on her Day takes the car apart
rather than frames it, the parts plant-entwined,

just needing dirt. Monopoly won the fake
two hundred dollars just by showing up,

no cell alert, and by reading the small print—
bird track really—beside the fuel

pooling in pink and blue slick.
Mom! The very word.

Code Name: 731

Terese Svoboda

In the 90's 731's doctor ran the Japanese lab that
distributed AIDS-laden blood for transfusions.

The Tokyo developer's
Let there be land! unearths one cell of 731,
the Asian Auschwitz
where
live GIs lost their livers
to the Japanese whitecoats. A dragon steps forward in
big flame, mushroom smoke and
add to this, fawning. Stomach talk: US and Tokyo. Weeds
occupy
the world. Is there sense to that?

To yet meet the field's dragons,
grief airs itself as joke.
The ballerina geisha
with only four toes a foot circles,
a wee wee wee all the way home.

*We were going to be in trouble if American
soldiers asked us about the specimens*

says the 84 year old nurse Toyo Ishii
to Japan Times, September 10, 2006.

The GIs all bone and vial
How many more?
the field planted
quick before the Occupation,
wild mustard in a crack.

Only the shoes left
I am sad to say, just the horror.
Pickled shoes.
No time for fire.

Or so the nurse says, her name
the same as the director
of the “Secret of Secrets.”

His hospital curls up,
vanishes under Toyama No. 5 apartment block.

The geisha’s toes go just over the bones,
the dragon’s teeth waves its maimed warriors,
the field’s so green and besides—
B-sides of that tune—the reptile egg hatches
in the dirt,
the mother pooping them then
webbing away into the PBS ballerina-themed
sunrise/set, flashing post-atomic fire, all wind-up.

Because nothing stays buried,
(surely hyperbole, where doubt digs) sidereal time slips,

stomachs talk and now we feel all those dendrons,
sighting dragons, a big number—731—

citing lot
and the footnotes of where the Japanese nurse worked,
no geisha, no ballerina who tells you
your toes, your little held back giggle ready to launch

back, then pigs big and little, none alien, all-American,
no prosecution,
which is how we bought their files.

We bought the files.
How much cold can a body take?
How little liver?
The boys’ bones turn up in the Tokyo lot.

Midwest Glacier

Terese Svoboda

They could not tell a plow from a pumpkin

—from *The British in Iowa*, Jacob Van der Zee, 1922

No pop left in the Kool-
pop, just ice and dust,
 a surprising climate
 said the exiled lord
in Iowa, generations before
the dust bowled. Now his great-great's
truck's snout coughs climate-
change, one
 that sucks,
no matter what flavor the Kool-pop, how much
 dust there is
 to disappear in.

I clear my throat,
 a dramatic sound that disturbs
the gods here; motes flash.
 To get anywhere,
 I must propitiate,
offer gas,
pet the burnt orange and sooty

cows. They gasp, the ones not roasted
or poisoned, still carrion-proof

 for they have swallowed the dust.
The problem devolves
to the animals, splayed belly-first
 in the hopeless state,
the pride of.
I'm thinking *who what*
where like a journalist,
 I'm still trying to see the glacier
a-glitter, saved.