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View from my childhood room

Adin Ljuca

Everything is just like this photograph — cloudy.
Fogs are frequent here, pictures fogged up.
Before my impressions take shape, and words fit together,
the fog lifts and broadens my horizons.

Everything is just like this photograph, only
one doesn't hear the flapping of wings
of the flock
that flies away past the lens.
But the sound has slipped under my skin.
As the summertime croaking of frogs creeps into my sleep… the whole night long.
I'm just as addicted to the sound of a phonograph
needle touching a record, to the sound
of turning pages in a book.

I zoom in on the scene in the window.
What I don't see or hear — I don't forget.
Like writing with light, poetry is
doomed to be choosy.
But it can't do without the inexpressible.

I approach and retreat,
magnify and shrink.
I deceive myself
with precise images
and unambiguous words,
while the leaves do quiet photosynthesis
and heavy rains fall,
to clear up the air
and water down the view.

Everything is just like this photograph, only
the luxuriant spruce is gone
that I planted to obstruct my view.
A shell chopped it down, as with an axe.

The mulberry’s gone, the walnut tree, grandfather, father.
I don’t see myself there either.

The view from the room where I spent my childhood
I carry with me like the color of my eyes.
The rest is used up, altered.
The cells of my body have quietly been exchanged.
Even time that doesn’t exist passes.

And fog is coming again
to save me from
the hypnotism of too much clarity.

(Syracuse, June 2025.)

Translated by E. Wayles Browne

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