

POETRY SLAM

Or upon reading about the decline of American verse

An essay by Mark Edmundson

This iThing world we live in is magic
Ellington Mingus Roach Switchblade
iPod powered in the neotropics
A stilted house on a rainforest lot
Abuelo a jar a kerosene lamp and mosquitoes
Mended hammock mildewed with cotton rot
Harper's in English by international post.
The Ngäbere for red is tain; drüne for black
The Ngäbe word for blue is blüre
A cognate of a morpho's wing's back.
Even Homer preferred wine dark I'm told
The color of the sea before indigo
A half pound red pargo fried fresh—a gift fish
Shared with adolescents on white plastic dishes.

Apple comfite and three tain picante
Stacy, the backstay of my MFA,
Wrote, We're all pretty much made of cornflakes
Strolling on the spindrift, what she had to say:
Of Micheal, He gave me my life
On Raotan, I wrote The Cheerleader's
Greece is the best place to swim in the summers
and I love the shape of a poem on the page.
How many grapefruit sized
Tumors could they expect to pull from her pelvis?
Oh, she told me she was ready
An embarrassment of riches, really
But regretted leaving babies
Of four and three.

She said we were poets, we couldn't help but live
Passionately—concur or not
I threw in the lot and gave my shit away—
A new life language and duggout rot
Volunteered in Caribbean aqueducts
Seduced a beautiful black future wife
With no electricity or gasoline or literacy
I drank boxed wine on Uncle Sam's dime
I Stopped sending postcards
Once she'd died.
How gutted I'd been
When she sat up in bed and said
Oh, I'm so sorry,
There's just so much blood.

Miss Doris, I miss your book being so far
I've sent it back with my love to Brooklyn
Mainstream internet wifi buya
Let me think Professor Edmundson
Where are the poets now who have such hunger?
Let me finish digesting your essay
Let me pour myself another jar
Now that my pull has died: no union card since
Which, on some level, is what might've mattered
But oh how she swung for the fence.
Looked into the life of her own being
Adorned nature with the new thing
True poets *are* the legislators of this place
And Yes, We're pretty much made of cornflakes.