

Feral

Gary Webster

I'm quietly digging here, throwing up
soft brown dirt between the roots

of this tall Nordic spruce - one is
much like another, with little nuance

or greater purpose, it seems to me, than
turning nutrients and light to seed -

fallen needles, humus, smaller pebbles.
But I've never been a nature lover,

walking as I do with maps and compass,
my right hand brushing the monuments

to a greater good, my other holding
starchy tubers enough to feed the masses.

As for paying my tithe, that and even more
I'd do happily for a simple mat and a bowl

near the fire, and a warm red light
to sing by. But whether darkness is

blackness or blueness, and who
should be the rightful owner there

has never came up until now. I circle, or I
trot from tree to tree. The chimney stack

above Hedensbyn central heating plant,
the gray white sock of steam like a

dogs tail was simply one way; another
tracked the scent of melting snow and blue

ice up as it tumbled down the granite face
of Vitberget. You could piss on the same

speckled stone whether there or along
any foundation wall in Skelleftea dating

before-1975. What are these frail blue flowers
to me? These questionable mushrooms, whether

you call them butter or lemon? We've been
driven out against our will. And as for

all the reading, and utopia and the far left,
it was more Rousseau than Marx for us:

we fought for that balance. And just because
the shine went from my pelt, and my tail

hung down at times, remember this: it was
a simple effort to keep the peace. And as

for the Garden question, and banishment
therefrom, I will make no reference, nor

to any fruit unfit to eat, nor to any sin, original
or otherwise, which to me is nothing short

of admitting to self infliction. Look.
I'm tugging at my braided reindeer skin

and red felt collar with local silver
studs. My neck is wet with trying, my hair

at the nape is standing from the fright.
I'm stripping pink lingons with my small

front teeth and rasped tongue. I'm laying
down a bed of greens for all the meat

that's bound to come, for all the blood and hair
and splintered bone. I'm reading my Darwin more.

(What choice do I have?) I'm getting ready,
I'm getting accustomed to the cold. I'm

missing home less and less. The burn inside
my gut, the knot there is starting to loosen,

my voice is growing well beyond the lights of town,
my taste for playgrounds and pensioners.