

Sydney Lea

Young of the Year

for Cora Jane Lea (b. 10/26/2007)

A small hare's stride displays itself in snowdust up on this knob
that we call The Lookout. *Young of the year.*
I whisper the term our old folks use to name
a prior spring's wild things—or the year itself, young year.

New grandfather now, have I a right to the phrase? I speak it no matter.
To me its assonance appeals;
its heft of optimism and forward-looking
correct a mood. It's a counter-cry to my vain appeals

to some power unseen that it remake me into a youthful man,
that it change this world. I scrutinize
a certain mountain's western flank, ravines
turned to fat white rivers in winter. I likewise scrutinize

me in relation to mountain. I used to charge her up and down
in a slim few hours. Today I wonder
if I'll climb there again, my strength and stamina less
than once they were. What isn't? The mountain. The mountain's a wonder.

With inner eyes I see its trees, knee-high, at 4,000 feet.
Above them I step onto aprons of stone
at her summit. I'd never have dreamed how much I'd love it,
knowing that child. In youth the thought would have turned me to stone.

On The Lookout's granite, a wisp—unidentifiable, blooded—of fur.
So many hundreds and thousands of victims

in a cruel season. Behind the mountain an airplane
roaring to put me in mind of bombers searching out victims,

yet in time it may even be that I'll prefer to see her from here,
not here from her. I mean the mountain.

Wonders never cease, it's rightly said.

The inner eyes go back and forth from baby to mountain,

where even now in January the hardwoods' fraught tight buds
display their purple, enduring signal
of spring. Which will come. Which has never failed to come.
Already the girl and I have developed private signals:

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I can waggle my tongue before her, or flutter my fingers, and make her smile.
I can lie back humming in uncanny peace,
child on my chest, and I can remember how
I held her father. But I think I hold her better. Peace:

perhaps it's for this one exchanges his further dreams. And perhaps I know
what's worth the knowing here on earth,
among its weather-decked hills, its beasts and birds
in their ceaseless cycles, migrations. Of course the glorious earth

will take me back, of course the young-year hare give profligate birth.