

NOVEMBER'S COMMON SPARROWS

air pollution didn't slow me or down me on my way to work. nervous insistent wind did.
i'm layered in shades of brown, black, grey protection & alertness.
this area of town's a reserve for the disenfranchised, dispossessed, dreary,
the dangerous sons & daughters of those who didn't/don't/won't have enough to go round.

trying to make it to my shift on time yet watching sparrows & chickadees eat people's
fast food droppings & what's growing in the splinters & allies
that has any kind of possibility. for tourists there's an on-the-edge border zone of window
displays -- stuff few locals can afford. there aren't that many tourists.

then, entering this town's reserve i note what's in the Goodwill's windows,
the Christian charity windows, the pawn shops' windows, cracks in windows...
each morning the nearby men's shelter and the youth shelter efficiently evict
shabby bodies onto the street. our shelter has no rules.

necessarily walking through those disturbed clusters of forms
is unsettling. a few initiate hellos cuz they recognize me, they want money,
cigarettes, to flash masculine bravado. some are pissed & project
that on me simply cuz they can. their hostility is futility made noisy.

i'm daydreaming how i'll spend my next pay on treats for birds who visit
my yard, the cats who grace my life, the goals i have to get functional, organized.
i want to become a savant regarding who is on which drug, who is coming off
which drug, who is about to smash through into violence & jail time.

sometimes, amidst these shelters & sidewalks there's someone shuffling toward escape
& a good path -- some one looking to make contact & find light.
my daily ways of keeping my chin up, my socks dry, boots shiny, laces tied, not losing
my mitts, not forgetting what has to be bought on the way to work or the way home

keeping my scarf fashionably tumbled but substantively protecting me from
cold airs, foul smells, unfortunate toxins & whatever's important to protect against.
good luck & kind love i got from my pragmatic grandparents - mundane skills & expectations,
limits & boundaries, daily practices

of my grandparents have brought me comfort, a mythology
of predictability, competency, primitive efficacy
like these perma-reserve residents i'm chronically disenchanted & irresolvably tired but
unlike these folks, & accidentally, i weather wind more gracefully.