

Bourne
toWrite...
creative writing
workshops

The Curtain

by Steve Brown

Zeuxis painted a bunch of grapes so convincing that birds attempted to eat them. Parrhasios, meanwhile, painted a curtain, which Zeuxis asked him to pull aside to reveal what he had painted

I.

The flap of a landscape – like a curtain flap:
a rolling sea, being tugged inshore, waves
massed and weighty, as if clogged with marl;
the shove of wind against your face; the unpeopled
monochrome of an English weather: all
line up.....And if you should see a single figure
struggling over the bars of groynes, his breathing hard
a pulse against the wind – he carries a message
solely for you: a single name, perhaps?
The seagulls scream their guilts into the air.

II.

Stepping to that midnight mirror, uncovering,
you scan that body, one you might have drawn:
that intimate prosthesis. Not the wished for one,
perhaps – but, still, your cover story, who you
pass as. You note the foreign changes:

the tumbled forest, tangled roots, the roughened,
discoloured bark, fungal mis-shapings.
In the accumulated litter there must lie
some amber droplet – something to connect you
to a summer leaf, the straining radiance
of childhood.

III.

Look – you are scattered among stars,
and free, at last, of gravity. Your lines are cut,
and you are free to drift forever.
A great dome aches above, below,
your head. Only your word sustains you
- which you have forgotten. You tumble lightly
behind the closing curtain, endlessly;
you are dissolved into all the synonyms of blue.