Night Piece

By Ben Belitt

Rise, cleanly trust, divided star,
   And spend that delicate fraud upon the night—
A lover’s instance moving mindful air
   To make its peace in dedicated light

Whose look is charnel. Lusters, intent and blind,
   Give darkness downward with a glow like sheaves—
A gleaner’s pittance withered in the bind
   That keeps the summer godhead of the leaves

And bends tremendous evening under it,
   Doubles its theft within a lonely course
Till eye and eye repeat the counterfeit
   And shape the replenishing mercy at its source.

All else were ravage: a demon-gaze of terror:
   The emblem blackened in the living head,
The eye, the image, and the image-bearer
   Struck to an awe with smiling on the dead.

Therefore that bounty which, however false,
   Tenders survival, and is purely given,
And lends the viewless prisms at its pulse
   To make an easy legendry in heaven.

Restore that grace! Indeed, the look is grace
   That deals this desert providence in air
And lifts a deathshead, burning, into place
   To serve a lover’s faith.

Rise, carrion star.


Source: This Scribe My Hand: The Complete Poems of Ben Belitt (Louisiana State University Press, 1998)