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A Lecture on Diction

Curtis Whittington Jr.

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The Elemental Diction

It is no lover's language this,
nor any enemy's, this
that is now the bright wind's kiss,
tickling the ocotillo's bones to laughter
(listen! it is a hangman's laughter,
laughing after)
that is now the choked halloo
of the hills, the broken bone-showing
hills, that is now the horizon's hopeless uplifted echo
or the sky's, where the big sun, beating
in the bowl of a golden bell,
booms overhead
in a slow funereal knell,
this that is the language of the vast dead
land, idiom of death and dark beginnings,
inelegant, elemental, stone-severe . . .
listen!

the tough tongue of the desert talking:
stone in a stone mouth striving, a slow
stone speech you do not, no,
but the deaf death in you hears.

—*Theodore Roszak*

A Lecture on Diction

When with wings summer clears the morning
and with sleep your eyes are shuttered still,
I see your hair coil soft in warning
across the pillow beside me, like a codicil
of night. Brief then, that image, the tableau
that hair, memory and morning wove,
but in that coil of moment on pillow
was birth: a definition of love.

—*Curtis Whittington, Jr.*