

LESLIE ULLMAN

*Mind in Spite of Itself*

In January, an icicle loosens  
30 floors over the sidewalk that has never  
known the touch of skin or lingering sun  
but sometimes the pads of small dogs  
on leashes. Now, on a single  
balcony, then another, a flash of color—  
someone in red or violet or burnt orange  
and jeans leaning out to test the sudden turn  
of weather, disbelieving, released from  
the season's recycled air that smells of steam heat  
and curry. It's a large happiness, this scent  
of nothing exactly recognizable  
catching hold of everyone at once.  
Soon it will move on, returning  
the dwellers of vertical caves to their  
habitual scarves and black capes, their ignorance  
of jet streams and barometric pressure,  
the tastefully-furnished interiors  
of their shared and particular malaise.  
Yet here it is, blatant, poised to leave, a moisture  
something young and green wants to push through.  
A mildness not quite spent, having traveled  
from the equator. A scent that seems  
never to have been touched by the pinched air  
of solstice, the disappearance  
of meadows, the imperceptible  
diminishment of love.

## *At the End of Daylight Savings*

sunlight still glares off the road like trumpet sound.  
Birds still thicken the air with messages  
at dawn, a telegraphy that fills the morning

too full for one pair of ears—  
one might as well listen with the whole body.  
And then take that listening

to the base of the mountain whose creases  
are dusted with snow already sure  
of its place before the months lengthen

and darken, each crystal soon to be fed by  
clouds and swells of wind that will drive it  
into deeper configurations.

Then the mountain will glow faintly  
even at night—especially at night—sculpture,  
perfection, apparition that will pour an is-ness

over each dormant bush and distracted eye. Even now,  
even those who have never been on speaking terms  
with God have no choice but to open

to something that sears and consoles  
beneath jackets newly unpacked for the season: how clouds  
and their leavings change the light on the mountain

but not the shape of its silence.

---

Leslie Ullman is the author of three poetry collections, most recently *Slow Work Through Sand* (U. of Iowa Press). Now Professor Emerita in the Creative Writing Program at University of Texas-El Paso, she still teaches for the low-residency MFA Program at Vermont College of the Fine Arts and, in the winters, teaches skiing at Taos Ski Valley.