

John Poch

Ransom Canyon

in memoriam Robert Bruno

I. Lake Ransom Canyon

Two rows of Western Soapberries line the road
to a stop sign before you drop into the canyon.
What leaches from elsewhere, the bright green lawns,
from the maze of predictable brick homes built within
and on the canyon who only adores erosion?
What from the cotton fields, the gins, the sorghum,
prairie dog dross, the power company,
from the feed lot bovine-crush slogging through
their excrement up and off the rim? It turns this water
green-brown-gray as a dying fish, as crumpled money,
a steady cloudiness like the sore eyes
of the very old. After a rain, stand above
the long spillway and watch the smooth sheet suds
at the bottom of the concrete fall and funnel
below a barbed wire fence a cowboy repairs
into the North Fork of the Double Mountain Fork
of the Brazos River.

II. The Chapel

The Curve-billed Thrasher at the chapel perches
among orange berries, wary of cats
and bold coyotes. Hold still and you can hear
the water trickling down the arroyo to the pond
above the other artificial ponds

and ultimately, lake complete with geese.
Here, Comanches traded their white captured
to the Comancheros who, in turn, would turn
their profit. Now, the realtors flip the houses.

III. The Party Island

The flagpole bangs its flagless rope
in the wind. The derelict, rusting swingset
and the empty swimming pool dismal
between two yellowing cottonwoods
say goodbye to summer. On the long dock
lies one Zebco rod and reel, abandoned.
The island clubhouse, full of metal folding chairs
arranged to face the western end, is ugly enough,
aluminum, a roof, and big on echoes.

IV. The Robert Bruno House

More music, really, than sculpture.
—Robert Bruno

Like the dark head of a dead goddess
rising from the orange crumbling rocks
and caliche at the edge of the north cliff, the house hovers as
if to judge
the dam and her lake. Instead she sings stained glass sonatas
in her head.
Rusting steel sheets by the hundreds held by welds of
decades of bending
and a little horsing around are skin and skull of a patient
labor, a library
in the dark core whose several lamps we must imagine. If
you are to wind

on staircases in the wind ushering up from the canyon floor
to this edge,
turning on that steady stair like a vulture to her evening
perch at the rim,
you want this steel to hold like old poetry, the window
to cast its eye over and into
the old spring-fed ravine it misses.