

Robert B. Shaw

Postal Pieces

Stationery

How facilely the last of any band,
whether it's a Mohican or an ocher
maple leaf losing its grip on a twig,
taps a vein of spurious poignancy.
Although the only thing remarkable
in such outliers is their being extant,
they nudge us into sympathy: absurd.
Or so I say, annoyed to find myself
detained by a blank page of letter paper
carpeting a pasteboard box's bottom,
orphaned without a matching envelope.
Meant to be sent but clearly going nowhere,
it meets my eyes with its own eyeless gape.
Something is rivetingly cheerless here.
Ivory, deckle-edged, a bit austere,
it might have hosted a condolence note.
But now? It looks more like the cause of one:
impassively exhibiting its pallor,
laid out stationary in a box.

Envelopes

Idle when empty, when replete
they lend themselves to wanderlust,
shunting the freight that you entrust
from state to state, from street to street.

Keeping your tidings under wraps
until the designated slot
allows them entry — is there not
a quester's triumph here? Perhaps.

To send one trekking on its way,
unless you're partial to self-stick,
you need to give the flap a lick.
A smidgen of your DNA

rides shotgun with each billet-doux
(or with each check that pays a bill).
Not many think about this. Still,
to chauffeur round some bits of you

is something these do tidily.
You trust them, meanwhile, to confide
whatever else you placed inside
to no one but the addressee.

Addressed to him, addressed to her,
those lines might complicate a life.
Small wonder if a handy knife
should disembowel the messenger.