

66 Trees

—you and I are suddenly what the trees try to tell us we are . . .
John Ashbery, from “Some Trees”

of course I wish him dead
abusively inside me
I think of him in parts

as in that devastating Fassbinder
movie starring his Moroccan lover—both of whom
had terrible truncated ends

Yesterday morning in a bleary-eyed
anxious preflight return-to-my east-coast-life
I learned L’s still in a coma at a rehab center in Queens

she showed signs of visual tracking, close
to a miracle, and twice squeezed her husband’s hand

*

66 trees because we counted them

and took pictures for the police report

cut down in the backyard, the thickness
like so many body bags, bone bright white birch,
among the graying drizzled upper field

stone walls more visible
the neighbor’s house, view, and market value improved

*

we must be reading the same books
that monograph on Proust,
and the anecdote about the rats in the male brothel
a twisted metaphor for identity and gratification
understandable given the era

*

therefore thicker, older
and we priced trees that weekend
in persistent rain
in the mist air sprays that work to keep them alive

a growing copper beech, twelve inches in diameter
costs \$10,000, once you see the silvery-coppery
gnarled bark there’s no forgetting, no mistaking

*

believe me with L’s health and another suicide—
I’m left with a huge hole and writing
seems worthless, \$1,100 worth
of vandalism and a car rental later

who can focus on this yoga bullshit

enough for a psychic breakdown
everything’s come to a ground-down halt
difficult to fathom: another handsome gay man
drowned in faraway Puerto Rico—
emblematic . . . & meanwhile

I have pantry moths and a strained check book . . .

in another email her baby’s locked
in the bathroom playing with the toilet plunger

what are pantry moths anyway?

*

Today, all day, at my mother’s house she interrupted me
while I was working, because I don’t see her enough
and she’s getting older, the ways older gets—

what I’m afraid is falsely recovered
66 trees, body bags

the insides of the bags,
stuck inside the unfolded plastic

smoldering-mulching trees
what I’m afraid of

the missed-numbered decade
the ruthless fugue state I grapple

trucked down trunked down
bitter crop

*

as I read—by the *only* gay Italian poet
who died of AIDS in 1996—*Il Poeta Assassinato*,
a second book on the subject of Pier Paolo Pasolini
and his murder by a gang of gay pickups

intense days, thinking about eighteen-rear-old prostitutes
and the career-making obit of a dear poet-suicide
there’s a (w)hole (world) through the back window of my car
and I probably need a new boyfriend

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