

## **It Was Then**

by Bernard Gershenson

“They waited, so my father” Robert Creeley

It rains, doesn't it, no subject for the verb except "it,"  
It rains, or it rained or it has rained, that's a powerful it,  
Sometimes it sounds like  
I don't know when he's coming home or  
He'll be here this weekend or  
You know your father but you don't  
And he's home fixing some problem with the plumbing  
Some years it hardly rains at all,  
What has it been up to, where has it gone  
The reservoirs dry up, the earth cracks  
I don't know when he's coming home, maybe in two weeks  
You watch the weatherman on TV predict what it will do  
This was before they said things like 40% chance of rain,  
Just cloudy, a chance of rain in the afternoon  
This was before they invented percentages  
I don't remember how happy I was to see him  
Or whether I was happy at all, he was under the sink  
Dinner seemed not formal exactly but not like the other nights  
When it didn't or he wasn't or maybe some leftovers  
That I don't remember the weather of my adolescence  
Except there was a blizzard in January of 1967  
When my mother trudged home from where she'd abandoned the car  
I dug it out the next day, snow on snow, which it was  
In the winter sometimes, but decades later, half a century, more,  
It was just a long, cloudy day, 40% chance of rain or snow or sleet,  
When I remember my father, it was not from that time,  
The long season of his cheating  
Which like a drought  
Eventually ended  
So today is today, gray like yesterday,  
The rain falling now and then, maybe my brother or my sisters could say  
What happened, but when it rains, it's on us all and the it  
Is the rain, the wet, inclement weather, I'm sitting here  
Tasting the lukewarm black coffee against it

## **That Candle**

by Bernard Gershenson

Eventually  
we all talk to the dead

we talk to the air, the ground  
we don't know where they are  
but they're around;

we're close we know,  
all we have to do is fall off a roof,  
step in front of a car, forget to breathe,  
bleed a little too long,  
so close  
and every church a travel agency,  
every ashram, every mosque, every synagogue  
with deals for places  
they're convinced exist.

Who doesn't want to be fooled,  
paradise so much softer than paradox;

we talk to those whose hugs are buried within us,  
hello, where are you, we need help  
with the calculus your death left us,  
the small pleasures that must be in your pocket,  
we can't find them anywhere.

Life goes on, everyone says so

## **Las Vegas Slaughter, 2017**

by Bernard Gershenson

He takes the elevator to the thirty-second floor  
his brother drives to a small church in a small Texas town  
a cousin rents a truck  
what is there to understand as if a reason could  
undo the end of time for the unsuspecting

On this small planet seven billion,  
maybe that's reason enough, I never thought about it that way,

The miracle is some of us are free  
of misery for now

The miracle is some of us are  
blessed with insomnia, allowed to fight demons  
in the dark, searching for sleep in the night  
that stays night

The miracle is some of us are  
only shocked and saddened, witnesses  
to the victims of a war  
though no one calls it by name