Ode to Time, Lance and December Rain

Tonight’s riotous rain has stirred
in me an impulse towards sacramental prayers
in the driveway, a chorus of hosannas,
a thousand novenas to the moon.

Inside the deep pall of December—
imagining the renewal of something
called time—a rush of gratitude
pulls at me like an undertow

of breaking currents, a crescendo
of applause to every unlikely image
that burns its reverse self
into memory and longing.

I am inclined to take a bow
to the mountains in the distance
like torsos in repose, and to the clouds
that lie down along their pale white hips.

To the duplicitous people in the city
below wearing their slap-dash smiles
and phoning it in like crazy,
and to the charcoal freeway

of branches on the neighbor’s broken elm,
smudged against a blue-black slate
of sky. I’ll recite two Hail Marys to all
the world’s sorrows that I cannot mend

and to the furnace in the basement
clattering its final death throes.
And to the two drenched boys
in red ties and overcoats

who knocked on our door last night;
I mistook them for the pizza delivery
guy and told them as much.
We shared a little chuckle, then I noticed
the taller one’s name badge that said “Lance”
“The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.”

What are you two doing out
on a night like this? I asked.

Lance began to say something like
in snow and sleet and . . .
I smiled my best serene smile
and interrupted Lance with

Well, we’re all full up here, but do carry on.
They smiled too and told me they hoped
my pizza got here soon. I watched
their thin-rounded shoulders

as they descended the stairs
and turned back into the downpour
of night. What more saintly wish
could they have bestowed on me

than one of sustenance? Bless you, boys—
may your latter days be absent of regret
—as unlikely as that will be.
May you say the wrong thing

to someone you love and endure
the hard lessons that follow.
I’ll write an ode to your fresh souls
that walk around in your young bodies

and to your deep and natural
desire to believe in something
beyond those bodies. I wish
you heartbreak and hard work,

debt, a dying furnace and a questioning
that never ends. I wish you shock and disbelief
when one of you hears of the other’s death.
May your long years be a goddamn roller-coaster
of wonder and worn-out stupors, good sex
with the wrong person and just one insightful
moment of gratitude so intense
you burst out crying on a public bus.

May you live a life that has you thanking
any number of Gods that you are
a sentient being well on your way
to disappearing in December rain.

Shoshana Kertesz, photograph