

MEMORY

A little bookstore used to call to me.
Eagerly I would go to it
hungry for the news
and the sure friendship.
It never failed to provide me
with whatever I needed.
Bookstore with a donkey in its heart,
bookstore full of clouds and
sometimes lightning, showers.
Books just in from Australia,
books by madmen and giants.
Toucans would alight on my stovepipe hat
and solve mysteries with a few chosen words.
Picasso would appear in a kimono
requesting a discount, and then
laugh at his own joke.
Little bookstore with its belly
full of wisdom and confetti,
with eyebrows of wildflowers—
and customers from Denmark and Japan,
New York and California, psychics
and lawyers, clergymen and hitchhikers,
the wan, the strong, the crazy,
all needing books, needing directions,
needing a friend, or a place to sit down.
But then one day the shelves began to empty
and a hush fell over the store.
No new books arrived.
When the dying was done,
only a fragile, tattered thing remained,
and I haven't the heart to name it.

This poem embodies so completely the beauty and importance of an imagination that seemingly never leaves anything out, that is wholeheartedly and holistically inclusive of everything and everyone, just as the little bookstore here, whose memory is devastating yet essential to recollect, is full of delight and desire, of loss and despair, with the news, certainty, friendship, donkeys, clouds, wildflowers, rainstorms, intellects, business men, and Picasso in a kimono laughing at his silly jokes, until what remains of the store and the grief and sadness of losing such a place dissipates and simultaneously a pure joy and a deep absence present themselves.

- Logan Hill