

RICHARD BANK

Testation

*He was an old fashioned judge.
The kind lawyers try to avoid.
—obit*

Snaking down the faux Medici steps
and around the cluttered city block,
clusters of prosecutors and pols
are waiting patiently to show their faces.
The deferential cops and all the suits
speak the power now gone for good.

I am among the onlookers; the heathen, the estranged.
I, who had been called in from the hallway
to start again, unable to console the terrified,
who waited their turn like lambs
and watched the imperious fury,
the eager delight at sentencing,
the harsh reality of his tumultuous trials.

We hated to work his room;
the sham voir dire, the frenetic process,
technical and full of minutia and dread.
Now, with the surprised widow
and the respectful old men filing by
there is an air of triumph to it all;
the spectacle a vindication in itself.

Then some of us took note of happenstance,
finished up our business there
and joined together for dinner and some wine,
taking delight in the change of pace.
The living spoke with the living
and we left the dead alone.

PDPOM# 14—El Chupacabra

I talked Spanish in the house with my mom and sisters
when we were little and I still understand it good.

My mom wears black all of the time now and cries all day,
says its for me but it seems like all of the old ladies wear black.

School was tough, mijo. A lot of my friends ran the streets,
had nobody, nothing; they made their own way, they were free.

I couldn't follow in school anyway and the girls would talk
about me in Spanish and laugh. I felt like a fool, tonto.

At the shooting gallery fuimos Chupacabras, man; bad asses
passiando the needle, hermanos de sangre in vacant houses.

It was a way to ignore where we were in our lives and be cool.
We didn't know what it was, man; that it would kill us all.

We didn't know what was in us when we shot up, drew the blood,
watched the smack in the glass spike mix in and turn light.

When the dying started it didn't connect at first. SIDA was new
and the old heads said that the manteca was bad, that's all.

I came up HIV two years ago in jail. It hit me hard, man.
It's a secret though and I'm not supposed to tell nobody.

I thought that I would find a gig someday, a real life.
You know; a job, a girl, money for nice clothes, maybe a car.

At least in here I get my medicine. No place to go anyway
but the streets and my mom acts like I'm already dead.