The Repeating Fog of Spring

ROGER REEVES

Tentatively, the dead return, return their green
Thinking to the house and floor of the earth.
The gray slant of spring slides its marble lid
Back to reveal this green breathing and the bone
Bursting in the bird song and tree light. Clocks,
Having forgotten to pay their taxes
& obeisance to the emperor, his poor
Sense of time and his boney finger
Linger ing on its golden hand,
Leave each second in its nest and water,
Leave time to become a straw hat that slips
Down over the sleeping face of the day,
The day refusing to leap out of the tall
Grass by the river because the black horses,
Money changers, assassins, and beauty
Advisors trundling behind the emperor’s
Caravan bang their winter hooves on the road.
No one listens to a king in spring, but the dead,
We feel for where they left the key in the door,
Lifted the fog to reveal where we are,
Not at the threshold of this repeating
Fog of spring but firmly in its wet field,
Spring shattered all around our feet.
The wild things, the wild things in us wake
With the blue tongue of the dead, their threshold
Songs wetting the windows, slipped in the slur
And curve the fox makes in the grass, the black
Pads of his feet patting the heads and dust
Of the dead. The slow music of the eye
Lingers in the rain, listening to the dead
Play beneath the foot of the wild thing
In the grass, the wild thing, the wild thing in us.

About the author

Roger Reeves is the author of King Me, Best Barbarian, winner of the Griffin International Prize and the Kingsley Tufts Award, and Dark Days: Fugitive Essays, his first nonfiction book. He is a recipient of a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, a Radcliffe Fellowship from Harvard University, and a 2015 Whiting Award. Best Barbarian was also a finalist in poetry for the 2022 National Book Award. His poems and essays have appeared in The New Yorker, the Paris Review, Granta, the New York Times, Yale Review, and elsewhere. He lives and teaches in Austin, Texas.