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Field

Albert Goldbarth

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Field

by Albert Goldbarth

"... there was always a spot which it was forbidden to touch, or to walk upon. It was dedicated to the gods—and especially evil ones—in return for their implicit agreement not to stray into provinces where they might molest mankind. The same idea obtained in parts of Scotland. Uncultivated pieces of land were left fallow, and termed the 'guid man's croft.'"

And this is that poem. Not much happens.
There are countless possibilities. I imbue
the poem with a solid man, and a hint
of woman (sometimes the reverse is true).
Not much happens. There are images,
small everyday ablutions, that are potential
strategies and symbols: he wanders
under moons and comets, his lungs full
with biological processes, fish, fruit,
or the probability of their disappearance,
the gesture of a pianist's wrist peaked
like a thoroughbred's foreleg, a dance
troupe in ritual circle (this is the female
entering the poem), the funeral, the children,
the mosque, the mask, the map, the home.
Not much happens. Anything can;
but this one I leave for tattered health,
mistallied votes, financial misfortune,
the ups and downs of sexual deprivation,
undernourishment, and overcaution:
unworked. Let this be my guid man's croft
that I will not finish or furnish or sign
with any name but my true name.
I leave it: propitiatory, begun, benign.

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