

Visit to Berkeley, 1978

Sal Cetrano

Comically, a leaflet reaches at first causes.
Wide-eyed as a slot machine, the kid
working the walk leaks the embattled zeal
of a jogger, not a freedom fighter. His baby
fat somehow offends, as the “working shoes”
whose cost might drench a village square in rice.
His head, a shaggy heart, bobs rote assurance
as he sidles adroitly into tow at my side.
So I stop and take. I walk and crumple.

A few steps past, a mailbox
with a postered side malevolently squats,
caped hunchback carping to passersby
of multiple injustices, chains of contrived events,
insidious misdirection, radios in the teeth!
I read and hurry on, pressing to remember
the way to Savio Wall, a warm snapshot in mind.
Memories of that unlikeliest of heroes,
Spartacus in tortured suede, Gary Cooper
wired with gelignite, flood over me as the mural
comes into view, and it does not matter
that my years have grown deceptive, or that
my freak flag has fallen to the sword.
There are places you can never feel a stranger,
where a fundament of flowers still offers
storybook justice, storybook love.

Yet, mind returning to the callow pamphleteer,
my well-earned 60's hubris projects him

years down the line, M.B.A. in hand, devoted
to the charity closest home, while that ascetic
troll of a mailbox, sanded smooth, painted fresh,
bends its back to new revolutions.