

The Late Accommodations

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The human eye can discern 500 shades of gray.

Most of those five hundred grays are nameless,
and maybe that's best. Take Lear
on the heath, stripped to the battering cold.

Though mad, he saw human wretchedness
clearly, called it by name: *The thing itself,*
unaccommodated man, a poor,
bare, forked animal. Yes. Us.

I'm driving tonight at dusk, down one of those
thin blue highways veining my state,
alone and buffeted by loss. The horse appears
on a rise where shadows lean over
a moon-gray pasture—owl-gray, pearl-gray,
dapple-gray. When my list runs out,
I'll be back in the road-hum, stuck
with my heartbeat and sorrows. Instead,

I pull to the shoulder to watch the mare,
her muzzle moving through gauzy grasses—
an unhurried scythe cropping toward me.

The moon casts shivers of light
down over her, glinting her eyes and draping
her flesh in a silver-gray mantle.

Cerecloth. Shakespeare invented the word.

A soothing balm of syllables: *cerements.*

As her shape loses definition—slate gray,
shadow-gray, ghost—I hear Lear’s
shattered voice (*Look there, look there!*)
as he struggles to deny what no one can.
And these are life’s late accommodations:
consenting to ease a shape we love—
and even, in time, our poor, bare, forked
selves—toward erasure, and on, into a vast
accommodating field of anonymous shades.

