

CONFESSION FROM THE APARTMENT MANAGER

There is the stroke of my brush
painting a language I cannot speak.
I paint all morning and the morning goes,
even if I use edgers instead of masking tape.
Even with white drop cloths I spill
on the brown carpet, and even with rollers
I smear the ceiling, and stain the oak baseboards.

For three hours, each stroke of my eggshell white
conceals the sins of former tenants.
How I would have liked to have seen the fist
drive through the plasterboard
in the kitchen or hear the piss on the wall
in the bedroom or watch Budweiser dry
in globules, now, in these humid apartments
I paint over pubic hairs in the corners.
Even when a cobweb falls
on my roller, the paint dries the bristles,
our brushes sweeping one coat,
then a second, painting in vertical rows
through the bath and bed rooms.
Even if I could perform miracles
with my paint, covering nail holes
without spackle, or paint perfect
straight lines around electrical sockets,
I am unwilling to test the paint dry,
to wash my tray, to accept forgiveness.

William H. Powley