

BEVERLY BURCH

Elegy with Bereft Cat

Mac, a tawny beast with devotional eyes, sits
at the french doors and whimpers. Outside

lies the garden path, sun-baked flagstones, Eden.
Flash of hummingbirds in lantern bush and loropetalum.

He snatched his third last week, so house arrest.
Those days, I tell him, are over. Such mewling grief.

Once I couldn't bear to lack what I wanted: it hones
your insides like a boning knife.

Four lovers in one week, I felt neither shame nor doubt.
And other missteps I can't speak of.

Age comes like a scourge: red-hot
with renunciation.

Today a week of storms ended. I lingered
outside, the light in the trees almost

not bearable. Intensity, subtler than passion.
Odd to be grateful so much of my life is over.

Mac's all instinct and he pays.
In another year he'll be contented. A lap,

a walk around, a chase. Eager for
bright spinning things, fresh can of salmon.

Beverly Burch's third poetry collection, *Latter Days of Eve* (BkMk Press, 2019), won the John Ciardi Prize for Poetry. Her work has won a Lambda Literary Award as well as the Gival Press Poetry Award and has been a finalist for the Audre Lorde Award. Her poetry and fiction have appeared in *Denver Quarterly*, *New England Review*, *Willow Springs*, *Salamander*, *Tinderbox Poetry Journal*, *Mudlark*, *Barrow Street*, and *Poetry Northwest*.

LARRY FRANCIS

Early Spring, Pechin Street, 2018
Oil on canvas, 24 x 36 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST