

POETRY

Notes From My Boat: July Revisions

This is how I live on the lake:
 a layabout,
sails clinking like bracelets,
 a dooryard of laudanum water.

In the early morning, when it's
 nearly cool—when nothing moves
but the fish and fishermen out on the channel—
 flickering lights, poured like salve

along the harbor, are green and pink beacons
 among the predawn stars. I speak to them,
on sheets of paper—words I reshuffle
 each day like clouds: cobalt, Isabella-moon,

Rilke, newt, horizon...

Lori DeLozier

Heraclitis

That note I left to myself
back in '58 to open in '75,
says "good luck with Joey."
Who's Joey?

Anne Silver

Amerykański

Brudna, czarownica—
Think you can bury it
under your tongue, spit it out
after I leave. How many years,
babcia, I've watched you
in the kitchen translating beets
into duck's blood, folding flour,
W's into V's, father into *ojciec, tatu*.
How many years, your hands braid
Slavic hard into my hair:
Ty wyglądać twóje tatu.

Still, I confuse the two bloods
don't know but one way
to say *bread*, who sends the mushrooms
every month, what saint to pray to
to translate *appendage, uncertain origin*, words
that are not preserved in dictionaries
as object or ornament. Not the discard
if innards under ice but in the mouth
seeped in the sour of vinegar and yellow
pickling jars: *kapusta, herring, carrots*
I understand more than you think

Staru babcia. I, too, can make a meal
out of bread, sugar, butter. Clumsy
in the kitchen, *tak*, but who taught me
to beat grief out of rugs. Never
count on a man, even if I marry. Find
sustenance in fats of language. Pig's feet
you sift your teeth into and suck. Curse
kurwa mać in your first language. Blame
denim on Americans. Call me gipsy
like it wasn't part of my name. Hide
horseradish between slices of bread
because it will burn my tongue.

Jesteś podobny twóje ojciec.
Like you mean it—
Say it again: I don't love you.

Kimberly M. Lojek

Textbook Villanelle

You chase me hard and swear you love me so
My back to chain link, breath against my face
A smile melts panic, something good to know

Relax your grip, of course, I'm free to go
To save us both this place of raw disgrace
You chase me hard and swear you love me so

I double-take and doubt what I should own
Love always passed and settled distant place
A smile melts panic, something good to know

Such passion cannot die, is made of gold
I've looked forever for this solid base
You chase me hard and swear you love me so

Controlled with charm, you freeze me in a mold
And pressure goodness, love becomes a race
A smile melts panic, something good to know.

Correction chafes, I long for more than show
Fat whispered lies and gifts brought out in haste
You chase me hard and swear you love me so
A smile melts panic, something good to know.

Debra Brenegan

Phobic On London's Tube

The train is still although no station's near:
Blackness outside. I wait for it to start:
Silence pervades the coach, no sound to hear.

Almost my breathing stops: I'm tense with fear,
Panic is in my belly, then my heart.
The train is still although no station's near.

The stillness seems too much for me to bear:
My throat has tightened, I feel torn apart.
Silence pervades the coach, no sound to hear.

But I am getting desperate for fresh air.
I wish that I could leave the train, depart.
The train is still although no station's near.

Somebody's paper rustles: others here
Wait calmly. But, it seems, I lack their art.
Silence pervades the coach, no sound to hear.

A click and then vibration, loud and clear—
Then quiet: we're beginning to restart?
The train is still although no station's near.
Silence pervades the coach, no sound to hear.

Ann Tobias Karson

Flowers

We formed a circle around Linda
and she spoke of Felicity—free-spirit daughter
frequently airborne, skipping;
the sidewalk quilted beneath her Mary Jane's;
always a plume of brown curls stroking the breeze behind—
how the girls at school teased her lately
for wearing too many flowers:
Rose-stenciled tops mixed with daisy leggings—
such clashing whimsy grounds for cruelty
in the classroom, isolation at lunch.
She sat there, anguished mother in a twirl of calico,
the folds of her skirt flowing out in soft blue waves.
Tell her to wear what the other girls are wearing
was the principal's advice.
And when she told us this she broke,
and her rain stirred that bent
forgotten bloom in each of us. The one
waving high above a cropped, even field once,
learning to curse her long neck—swing low with the others.

Michelle Bitting

Listening

To go farther than the first stones in the river
Upriver until the freeze of snowmelt stops hurting
And the thrill of water swirling around my ankles
And the sight of the trees arching gracefully over
Shadows hiding trout from small insects innocently
Flying close to the surface seduction of that moment
Where air heated by the sun and cooled by snowmelt
Meet like river water and my skin and sun and my breath
Ancient transformation I remove my clothes and walk
Up into the scenery where you might be waiting
On that rock that is large enough for two or three men
I command one not two not three but one
My imagination is the director maintaining a separate
Distinctness from the rest of the world
Most clearly in stories where I place myself in the middle
Of the stream and you waiting to show me how the leaves look
Underneath the branches and show me I am not so strong
Nor so hard but skin and breath and eyelids that close
A body listening to your hands telling me a story I have not heard
Whose hands are these that are large, strong, and curious
Soft as they discover bones covered in woman

Mary Julia Klimenko

Waiting For The Chemo Pills

to take effect, I study the clear
plastic cup the pills come in:
1 fl oz—8 drams 3000—30 ml 2 TBS.
swirls under the lip: underneath,
descending amounts. The printing
inside is not unlike Braille—why not
outside for better grip?

Upside down the cup's a mini lampshade;
children could use it to make circles;
it could be used to catch flies at home
to put outside—and ants. Things without
wings need freedom too, I put it in my
purse.

Carol Smallwood

Choice

After I learned you'd had the procedure,
I walked with the dog to the river
and watched an abundance of frogs
leap among dried stalks
of grass and weeds. Crickets sang across
wetlands to thick rows of purple loosestrife.
Nearby specks of light shimmered
and I found, torn and empty on the ground,
a crumpled candy wrapper, sun-glittered,
Nature's Treasure shouting in purple letters
above its orange and gold foil sunrise.

Patricia Brodie

Flying

In contemplative rhythm,
the metal walker rolled out of the evening hallway,
through pulled-back, double doors,
into the high viewing-room of the world outside.
Slowly, across the retirement center rug,
wheels performed their cycle,
approaching that wall of windows.

When wheels slowed in their turning,
then stopped at the precipice,
she let her head, lowered, in that silence stay.

Abruptly, hands old, but still adroit,
tightened on the walker's handles
to slam it hard against the base,
like an exclamation point...
while eyes slowly dared to lift
over the edge of time.
So what, if the way had ended?
So what, if the allotment of dirt had run out
for a trail to exist up ahead?
So what, if she had arrived
where a person is supposed to capitulate?
Just...look how far she had come!
Why on earth should, now, she cry
when she had pushed her old and faithful walker
all the way down to the trail's goodbye...
then all the way up to the sky?

Tom McFadden

I Think Of My Grandfather

on a cramped ship
headed toward Ellis Island.
Fog, fog horns for a
lullaby. The black
pines, a frozen pear.
Straw roofs on fire.
If there were postcards
from the sea there might
have been a Dear
Hannah or Mama, hand
colored with salt.
I will come and get you.
If the branches are
green, pick the apples.
When I write next, I will
Have a pack on my
back, string and tin.
I dream about the snow
in the mountains. I never
liked it but I dream of
you tying a scarf
around my hair, your
words that white dust

Lyn Lifshin

From The First Weeks In New York, If My Grandfather Could Have Written A Postcard

if he had the words, the
language. If he could
spell. If he wasn't
selling pencils but knew
how to use them, make
the shapes for words
he doesn't know. If he
was not weighed down
with a pack that made
red marks on his shoulder,
rubbed the skin that
grew pale under layers
of wet wool, he might have
taken the brown wrapping
paper and tried to write
three lines in Russian
to a mother or aunt he
might never see again.
But instead, too tired to
wash hair smelling of
burning leaves he walked
thru, maybe he curled
in a blue quilt, all he had
of the cottage he left
that night running past
straw roofs on fire,
dreamt of those tall black
pines, but not how, not
yet 17, he will live in
a house he will own,
more grand than any he
saw in his old country

Lyn Lifshin

Camera

His hand on her waist, they watched their
daughter graduate from daycare. They
are still together, her bad skin and his
greed and a space alive between them,

messy house, ordinary girl, and his hand,
his hand on her waist, the confidence
and sex thick between them, their own
biological child squirming in a dwarf

plastic chair. She in a soft plain red
sweater, short sleeves, brown hair
chopped short. His hand with the gold
band is wide. Black-rimmed nails. Just

her waist, right there, the way it still
tinges him with tenderness and lust.
They are happy, maybe, and take it
for granted as around them cameras roll.

Nancy White

***The Martyr Of El Mozote
(El Salvador, 1981)***

They raped her over and over again,
But she kept singing.
They shot her,
And she kept singing.
They shot her again to stop her voice,
But still she sweetly sang.

Her broken body lying on the hill they called La Cruz
Was just the cupful of her soul.

The sweet ethereal sound of her song
Kept floating into the soldiers' ears.
It drove them to fear and trembling,
Drove them almost to repentance,
Until someone took a machete
And cut off her head.

As the blood drained from her neck
They could still hear her song
In their undesiring ears.
Later, they remembered; and still heard,
And still trembled with their fear.

Martina Nicholson

Aurora's Eclipse

I dreamt of dripping stalactites
And dank cave-slugs again;

You must be in your golden-green
Mountains, wooed by the stars
I know a wolf howls at your
Great ancient moon

Valerie Hall

Reworking The Clichés

If they would take one saying
to carve in stone beside her name
they would surely choose the one
conclusion she knew right:
there simply is no synonym for light.

Margaret B. Ingraham