

Leaving Lamblardie Street

Other leavetakings seemed simpler,
though a woman is, by nature, territorial—
disinclined in some secret part of herself
to surrender her space: her symbolic body,
or even to deliver into the arms of another woman
her sons, *dare alla luce: to give to the light*,
even when in all its customary urgency, reason whispers
let go, let go, and she knows she must.

Witness this room she must leave
where she worked so often in the silence
beyond silence, in which shades of former tenants
shared linear afternoons of no footstep, no voice,
no face at the door. Sometimes, she thought she heard
their whispers beneath the clock's lethargic tick
accompanying flute scales from the flat above—
ghost music uncontained by mortar, board and nail,
guiding hand to pen, heart to paper.

Witness this tree she must leave. It flowered
beneath her window four consecutive springs
by virtue of a daily vigil. First, the buds: a long,
internal watch of a scarcely discernible promise
the way a woman in early pregnancy
turns inward to her blossoming body; then,
the manifestation: *gratia plena*,
a nascency of movement and light.

Witness this street she must leave. There are
other sycamores, but these are the ones midwived.
There are other fountains, but this is holy water
from healing lions, diffusing from their mouths by night,
aqueous light; by day, an evidence of grace:
a leap to the eye.

Must she leave, now, when the sycamores are budding?
Leave, when the ragged river, clay-colored under barges
and glassed-in conveyors carrying bug-eyed visitors
prepares to be green again: color of Tuscan olives
in a sunlit grove, over which seamless clouds navigate
as leisurely as the river toward summer's
opulent embrace? Reason whispers, let go,
let go, and she knows she must.

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