

**KATHLEEN WINTER**

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**History in the Louvre**

Invisible pictures  
hang between  
the masterpieces in museums

as women lived in history,  
silently.  
Ours are such slender

centuries, exhausted  
by waste, graced  
by emancipations.

The bodies of half  
of humanity  
achingly

becoming  
visible as human,  
as human

is a dark and halting  
animal,  
ever possessive

of its own  
framed place  
in hallowed space.

### **In the Clutch**

As my Wills and Trusts professor said,  
*When you carry a hammer,*  
*everything looks like a nail.*

When your hammer is poetry,  
everything's a poem,  
even the horrible pet-store rabbit

loosed on Sonoma Mountain,  
furtive but bright white, elliptical,  
low to the ground, scuttering—

not exactly greased lightning  
on those rabbit's foot feet—  
across the road at dawn.

Last week, my husband spotted it  
against the autumn weeds.  
How that rabbit survives

from one day to the next  
is mystery to me,  
and how it came to be here

and what furred or feathery inevitable  
will snatch it up  
to feel the shudder of its misplaced life.

## **Morning**

they come as promised and fractional gifts  
our dreams of the dead

we live with them  
to lose them over again

to hunt them in the skittering  
instant of waking

as owl scours darkness  
for quick tenderesses

our parents' careless faces  
explain themselves

in terms we understand,  
invented by our longing

### **Song for Alberto R. Gonzales**

Of all evil, the root  
is wishful thinking,  
to conceive of a single root,  
convenient as god stinking  
with human consciousness,  
to conceive it dumb  
enough to be grass, watercress.  
Evil as plant will plumb  
not do it. Even evil as a grizzly,  
shredding skin from bone,  
can scratch the surface merely  
of human mind at work to hone  
delivery of injury, to sustain,  
by law, application of pain.

—U.S. Attorney General (2005- )

## **Florida; or, The Luxury of Diversity**

trying to find the alone spot  
on sand complicated by bodies

envying the man on his back,  
his legs a vast, libertine V

treading away from radios,  
from loose-limbed children of a certain age

marking the young men assured in their indifference,  
the possibility of being beyond their desire

now listening for bathers  
chattering in a different language

granting me sympathy of their present voices  
but fused to sweet foreigner's solitude I suck

from my ignorance,  
whenever I travel out of English

## The Swan

I want to see the air-conditioned home  
where it happened, in a July night's reprieve  
from visible humid heat: galley kitchen oven  
of trout baked in vinaigrette, in foil,  
the twin beds of a ground floor unit  
whose windows, yes, even blessed fenestration,  
the best part of a building, were forgettable.

I know there was a couch in the furnished  
living room where my just-grown woman's body  
sank in a reverie of wine, of dialogue unraveling.  
That I was fresh, was ignorant, was confident  
the specific gift two bodies can make together  
existed, eventually was knowable, was good.

The swan, friend of a friend, was first-time  
visitor invited in to supper on a whim,  
a self shameless in the critical instant  
of its demanding, making my words  
a language outside animal understanding,  
pretending I was willing though together  
we knew I was slack, the body a swag  
of sinewless resistance over his arms, lifted  
from the couch and carried to the bed,  
the sheets, the naked skin of him,  
the blackout.

When I opened my eyes  
to daylight, swan in my narrow bed,  
the verb he said amazed me awake—  
its unpretending precision, first shock  
of the truth of it as painless as the instant  
of a skin slice, fresh slice, deep harm  
that would be and be.  
That smug and unrepentant word,  
wielded, was another deed.

## **Economy**

I was young when my father sold me  
for two missing cows,  
the cows he'd sold to buy  
my brother's wife. So I went  
to the neighbor who'd left them  
in my father's care, to feed.  
Rich man, he took me  
when I was fourteen,  
the father of my babies,  
two and three.  
He was fifty-four that year,  
maybe. He has a farm, a house,  
a tile roof where I work.  
The children belong to the father.  
My kids are girls:  
it hurts to watch them grow.

### **Anti-Peace Activists**

The anti-peace activists congregate today  
in our small green town,  
as though to demonstrate there can only be

so much enlightenment, their pale faces  
having had enough of it,  
their mouths set grimly for business.

The sun slants past their signage on its way  
to orchards, to vineyards, to the chill waves  
falling over themselves to be touched.

This town is surrounded and the marchers  
know it. Now, after years of getting by,  
they feel themselves hedged (how did it happen?)

by the organic fields sown round their trim  
streets, their downright houses, hemmed in  
by the prevailing wind, loose views.

The anti-peace activists congregate today  
in our small green town,  
waving the flag like there's no tomorrow.

## **Agricultural Evening**

Evening as a word,  
crepuscular.  
Evening seems almost too mild  
a precursor to night,

yet hear the flight of the owl  
stalled in a salad of other sounds,  
the harvest carrying on  
dangerously with its equipment.

Looking into obscurity  
as into a future,  
satisfactory as a dream  
that burdens dreamer

with the taste,  
the intention, of comprehension,  
only to release her  
to herself again peering

into the dusky medley  
of wind, of bird,  
of human whirring.  
Evening.