

Lisa Russ Spaar

Magnolia

Morning at last, but sky
still scored by night's unleashings—

the slimly departed storm leaving
its silver, anginal shiver of aftershocks—

blenched and fallen branches,
leafdross, a strew of burs, nuts, crotchets

disquieting the windshield, puddles,
the drive out—and a lonely salvo of sirens,

distant, salvaging what remains;
and in this house, an impotent,

residual sadness of sundials
that even this washed light,

its burlap sheen on the window,
can't dispel—nor can this magnolia,

emerald-shingled tenement
of clinquant glints and florid cones—

stand in for what the wild storm
silenced when she stopped singing.

Sycamore Tantra

Insular majuscule
of this remnant
scrappy text—scarlet ivy
and copper witch grass
at the margin of our yards—
I'm on fire for your stuccoed font,
threadbare, friary, stripping
daringly above the fray,
day-wracked and boldly
discarding your dun
and ochre clothing
leaf by leaf, each lone raft,
each bit of sleeve, patch of jacket
settling quietly into the net
of emerald bamboo below—
daring to be—just— *initial* —
to be left, an elegant,
isolato scribble, inarticulate
and pure, like our bones
which cannot always
belong to our bodies.

Be Mine

Am throat: pent syllables
adumbral. Am serif
wedded to the blinding margin.
Am tide. Am cordate lace
on this hour's sand.
Am self , mine,
who no more knows how—
 the orchard
italicizing into fruit,
starlings the air translating,
inflection of my body, my soul,
with you—
yet, am asking.
Am yours.

Pond

Slave to the sky
with its seven sorrows, seven joys,
this hour grows a candid gold

that magnifies and keeps private
a few first bats,
cloud lattice, nest of shadows,

our last minutes before parting.
And these thistle specks
of chipping sparrows—

quick sounds for the spirit's work.
Noun or verb, that singing?
I know, love, that I should leave.

Now their silver word, again.
Or did it stir inside me?
Imperative or query,

the saffron yolk of sun,
descending? the wind
that lakes the green wine

of the evening air,
then settles?
Leave. Love.

Equally, the water
holds them
in its grave unbroken trance.

Vineyard in Spring

The world is rife, strained
with the old work of beginning again,

smalt, sexual, congested with blossom;
but here, among lean sorrel fields

scored by cane-trained crosses,
we are novice, tongues fugal

and devout as two mockingbirds
in chevron surplices, flickering

through files of wicker plaits,
feasting in cursive orison, note

mating note, air donning the pelt
of our meaning, the flesh made word.

Natural Bridge

If this were our terminus,
pelvic atrium plied by swallows, jet-trails—
crest of limestone glyphed with stains,
bolts from the highway
we traveled here, gauntlet of billboards,
bus hordes—and our fate to find
my head in your lap, looking up
beyond ourselves into the torrents
of scalpel sea , all our histories—
dead loves, lost homes, selves—a backwash
of leaves in the flushing trees,
& the glass stream beside us a transcript,
trout, cloudlace brushed by shadows of the dead
& these cliffs souled without humanity,
then I'd know us infinitesimal,
prehistoric, naked in blue gaze, the span of us—

Chinese Maple

Last fall, your death came thrillingly,
destined, hormonal, a burning abduction;

winter brought this strangulation,
livid, naked.

But if I could be for myself
even a dream of what I,

heavy-hearted, saw at dusk,
the ghost of your red arousing,

fable of birth, garment
of blood we wear into this world,

I might never grow old.
You make me homesick for remedies

with cordial names: japonica,
tulip poplar: a reverie

of the deepest hibernations
which know no infidelity,

have no other future
but their own awakening.

LISA RUSS SPAAR is the author of *Blue Venus: Poems* (Persea Books, 2004) and *Glass Town: Poems* (Red Hen Press, 1999), for which she received a Rona Jaffe Award for Emerging Women Writers in 2000. Twelve of her new poems appear in *Exquisite History: The Land of Wandering: Poems & Prints* (The Printmakers Left, University of Virginia Press, 2005). She is also the author of two chapbooks of poems, *Blind Boy on Skates* (Trilobite/University of North Texas Press, 1988) and *Cellar* (Alderman Press/University of Virginia, 1983), and is the editor of *Acquainted With the Night: Insomnia Poems* (Columbia UP, 1999). She is editing an anthology of London poems, forthcoming from the University of Virginia Press in 2007. Her work has appeared in many literary quarterlies and journals, including *Poetry*, *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, *Ploughshares*, *The Kenyon Review*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Image*, *Shenandoah*, *The Yale Review*, and elsewhere. The recipient of awards from the Academy of American Poets and the Virginia Commission for the Arts, Spaar is the Director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Virginia, where she is an Associate Professor of English.