

Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe

She gathers piss and whittle to take out onto the lawn,
she's going to make an oil painting to hang on a wire

above the fireplace, over the stove, behind the television,
three men sit around a small wrought iron table

drinking espresso from thick mugs. *No, don't get up*
she says, setting her easel behind the jasmine.

While she paints the second man's top hat,
a woman steps out of some sunken place in the air,

she is naked, or nude, the painters say, a buxom nymph
with her rude hair piled on top of her head, tendrils

of fire curling down to her shoulder. The men barely
look up as she floats a linen cloth down to the grass.

She brings out a picnic, meat and fruit and wine,
sits and waits, there, in the corner, the meek one

with her breasts and belly. This is the narthex of the painting,
the entry, the beginning of all those men with their mugs

and hats. They are thick and cuff-linked, would not
recognize salvation if it sat on their laps.

The Notebook

I left the notebook behind at the cranberry
tasting on Broadway, if you find it please

return the crayons, they are lavish, the 64
color set, cabbage was always my favorite,

delicious cooked in a wallow with pork fat.
My notebook contains the best poem

I've ever written, it cannot be repaired
or reproduced, I know there were sparrows

flapping in the throat of a tour guide.
It was an omelet, both terse and alone

on the page like an armadillo crossing
the highway waddles slow as trains whisper

past. If you find my notebook please return it,
I am the third person in from the aisle

most places. I will be wearing a circlet
of grape leaves that makes me look

a bit like Caesar, so be careful with your
sword near me, I am still a bit jumpy.

Dance

Everywhere they dance on walls, foolhardy
with spears and feathers, belts of stars.
A little yellow cartoon car rumbles past,

dog in the driver's seat. In Brantôme your eyes
are carried on satin, houses carved from stone,
deep peace of flowers and wheat sheaves.

The dancers bend their knees, turn their heads to see
who's coming behind them, the one with an
upraised club or a handful of jonquils—

it is important to understand the difference
between steel and sky. A child can always
tell, a child is a dousing rod for our torrent of lies.

The dancers are scratched on stones, painted
on the earth from the inside out. Here are women
born before the War, fragile and dry as burnt paper.

This one, her face leather, imagine her upright, imagine
her in a blue dress embroidered with white pansies,
silk stockings, dancing on the waterfront.

Nature Morte Vivante

*Salvador Dali, 1956
(with thanks to K.O.)*

fury. speed rises from the bottom of the well

mortified

apples scream toward the plate
(where their shadows already lie still)

close cold midnight, a horseshoe
spirals past, searching for a horse

the table recedes sea sucking it down,

halfway linen creased and stiff,
not quite

semi-automatic pink bandanna canes
the sidewalk, punching the air
with his face

silver spirals and melts

breakage

you are trying to enter but have nothing to offer

the swallow commands the sea to become
solid, metal to rise, the vegetable earth to decay

small red planets flung from orbit
streak and burn without flame,

the knife dances counter to the shook
rays of the sun.

what is left over, shards, geometry

one day you will ache for it, (family),
reunion of water and chaos.

Roots

I lived in a house in Valparaiso, cantilevered over the Artilleria Hills, it hung like a Christmas ornament, decorous and tipsy as an elderly aunt. In those days my throat

was full of poetry—all the earth required was that I open my mouth. I sang in the plaza for pennies and pesos, it made no difference. The old Spanish baroque heroes

on their bronze horses, the tourists in t-shirts and big white shoes, swirled in the dust around me, the little gray nuns clicking past, humming like bees,

ave, ave, ave maria. At night I sat by my window, roots pushing out through the tips of my toes, the ends of my fingers, twining down over the rocks,

weaving through the *peumo* and *quillay*, the wild roses, over the cliff edge into the sea. I did not leave willingly, they had to chop and chop at me with their land deeds

like machetes, their bloodless Methodist lawyers, they put up a stone, a landmark, they said, with my name engraved on it — asinine, to think this will fool anyone.