

PARAPHRASIS

– five poems –

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i. *Rewording*

And when we spoke about love,
we did not speak about love.

Instead we spoke about hands.
Some of them would be warm.

Some of them would be violent.
We did not speak about violence.

Instead we spoke about clouds.
It did not rain at all that day.

It did not rain much that year.
It was the most arid decade ever.

We gave in to internal liquids.
We did not speak about love.

Instead we spoke about history.
A hundred years since the flood.

See that building? we would say.
Everyone who lived there drowned.

ii. *Relocating*

We met a pilgrim in Santiago de Compostela,
and we were not surprised.

Later, in St. Petersburg, we found ourselves
eating tasteless tex mex.

But the rare steaks near to the Winter Palace,
they made us want each other.

Home again. Someone had stirred up a political
debate while we were away.

We made new plans to cross the Arctic Circle
to watch the midnight sun.

There are two more questions that need to be
answered, but spring is here.

I'm too fascinated by the migrant birds, at least
the ones who don't return.

iii. *Intermezzo*

We shared the bread without
asking where it came from.

Strong winds all day.
Some believed in ghosts.

In the innermost rooms
there were no guests left.

We shared the wine without
knowing its country of origin.

Forecasts of heavy clouds,
but the rain never came.

Some woke up and felt compelled
to change their names or faces.

Some fell asleep while aching to
have their bodies replaced with air.

A tiger took shelter in the moss,
scaring up a flock of seagulls.

Then there was a series of events
that may or may not be of significance.

There is a lot more to add to this.
We are figuring out how to say it.

iv. Transference

In October I realized that
we were late for November.

When December came,
everything else was late, too.

I think I was planning to tell you
that I had been missing you, but

instead I told you how much
I wanted to sleep with you.

Christmas. Did we watch that movie?
I quit smoking, but it was a mistake.

New year. It was meant to be
someone else who quit smoking,

but they quit
something else instead.

I saw them.
They were trying so hard.

We, too, should try harder.
January. Snow, whiteness.

We can see the North Pole from here,
time is such a frozen little thing.

We could crush it, I guess.
If that would change anything.

v. *Rearranging*

Recall the vastness of indomitable youth and
the spirited hubris of juvenile lovemaking:

Next there were funeral drums in town, and
her sweater lost its scent of rain and wood.

We never went back in there, not after she
gave birth to a tiny creature in Suburbia East.

Next there was a silvery train arriving from
the last of the sieged cities. It was rumored

that the war prisoners had been left behind
to die. They all wore one-colored sweaters.

What color? We whispered in busy city streets,
we did not know what else to ask: *What color?*

Next we were summoned for questioning,
lining up in front of the home department,

where my one last question was dismissed:
'Your honor, may I rephrase my entire life?'

Next there was an acid rain, and it flooded
the country, disfiguring everything except

for a few things, including a little boy on the
beach, lying face down in the ignorant sand.

It did not look a lot like love. Maybe it was
after all, but we did not speak about love.