



Winter, Back River

It isn't the stream flowing south
I speak to when I stand on the dock,
but my old lowland polders pushing back
the sea—another winter to hold
the skates I strapped on.
Ice, little fires and chocolate
before I was shooed home to vanish
and reappear at court.
The Queen of Belgium from the Lunar
Sea of Bruges singles me out for
travel through time
on the back of a swan.
We stumble on the country
of Marie-sur-la-Lune
and her self-important rabbit.
Now I'm a traveller to the southland,
far from North Sea snow and porridge.
When I peer through mist, Mary Mother's
light favors the rice mill at Pine Grove,
and a rabbit sitting for its portrait.
What I look at is not what I see—
a map of childhood's meanders unfolds,
and of this silvery back river,
the rise and fall of the tide.

Morgan Point

That I'll be joined to that pull
 away from knowing what I see
speaks to me plainly on this morning
 hanging out its wash of clouds,
calling out like the woman

with flyaway hair who resembles me
 through the sliding glass door.
"Did you see that butterfly hightailing
 it to Mexico? And a companion priest-crow?"
Her voice, briny and sure of itself.

Mother, seawife, celestial hag? She composes
 to the hurried slur of water. In October,
a ship perches on the horizon,
 and a gull's high loop starts the first
line of an almost perfect childhood,

 its story told in syllables
migrating to stars that break
 apart and form again
 to break apart.

Broadway Transport

A woman contemplates The Master of Tequila
she's to meet
uptown at the Nuevo Laredo

Pinches of rain on the windshield

Another woman muses on autumn obligations,
how a Steward of Linens waits for her,
sets the table for two

Folds of rain embrace on the river

The man meditates on the seduction
of Our Lady of the Twenty Minute Meal,
the upstairs tenant timing microwave cutlets

Rain strokes the bus as it grinds past clubs
echoing notes of full throated jazz,
hot in the city

Blue riffs of smoke and clouds mirrored on the river

And this is how the bus run ends, one passenger,
then another reach for keys and fall away
into muddled chords of fog and rain

near the river, and the voice behind a door calls:
“baby, I’ve been waiting”