

1912

*John Allman*

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*There is no Space or Time  
Only intensity,  
And tame things  
Have no immensity.*

—Mina Loy

Which is what Robert Falcon Scott thought  
driving his Siberian Ponies until they dropped  
and he didn't have the good sense to eat them  
the way Amundsen ate his dogs,

but just holed up

in his tent, where one of his companions said,  
"I am just going outside and may be some time."  
All that Space blowing white and Time rising  
from below the surface and going under again  
disguised as ice.

But let's not talk of the big ship  
going down,

the floating pianos,  
the gowns wrapped around a throat,  
the weightless dancing dead.

Or of continental drift,  
the interlocked fingers of a grasp loosened,  
being where we are because of quarrelsome crusts,  
contending weathers.

Some of us born. Some of us given.  
Some of us parachuting down the air,  
twisted in the syllables of a song.

This is nothing to waltz to  
or praise. It was beyond us. It was too near.  
The voiceless wind between moon and sea,  
the tug of words unformed, the waiting-to-happen  
emptiness that a body revolves in like so much  
waste, the mind without its subject, without its object.  
All this pure intention. All this History. All this movement  
of ends to a means. The uneven roofs of cities  
shackled to the roar of a populace,  
where you, father, first drew breath.

# Le Sacre du Printemps

*John Allman*

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Or *principe. Priorité. Prise. Prison.* The first  
bassoon sounding the murder of innocence,  
the first twisting of the pelvis,  
  the first splitting of the ground  
  where something green pries itself  
  loose  
and free. But what Nijinsky could not teach as leaps and spin,  
  
what the audience most abhorred, the abeyance of long legs,  
elongated body, the abiding swoon,  
  what riot and riparian sweep  
where death prevails and a people rise from their seats  
  as from the womb of events  
          with pounding drums and one man's percussive  
  damnations, the day's ordinary smile and curtsy stripped,  
flayed,  
          there are police outside, *toujours la police* outside,  
  
  the young century still licking itself  
  smooth, while the young girl screams,  
a world's tumbling debris not like falling cathedrals or the sides  
  of mountains or collapsed  
Pleyel pianos,  
          but a noisy smoke,  
  smashed sentences, abrupt spilling  
          of absinthe, laudanum lips that meet their match  
  amorously,  
  
          and even if later  
the poet with his bandaged head lists to one side  
and grimaces like the priest with upraised blade  
  for the sake of a future,  
          the spilled blood of his syntax  
          and *voulez-vous?* trapped in the roof of his  
mouth  
          where the speech of desire  
          will not desist or even explain itself,  
because *c'est comme ça,*  
  it can't be undone,  
it can't surrender,  
  
  though blood seizes blood  
  
and the people storm out of the theater.