

Swann's Way, Brooklyn

*the memory of a particular image is but regret for a particular moment;  
and houses, roads, avenues are as fugitive, alas, as the years.*

--Proust, last lines of *Swann's Way*

My lo,

As in a dream we cannot wake from, I write to you out of snow falling  
deep upon the kingdom just as it falls upon palaces and vacant lots,

upon the mountain tops and the garlands of spruce  
that anchor the mountains, as well as upon doorknobs of silver

and doorknobs of copper in town, and upon cabins with roofs and houses  
without. In a snow such as this falling on the streets of Brooklyn

and upon the brownstones along the park where I had committed  
a growing number of sins with many more yet to commit,

because I am what Jane Austen called an "Imaginist," I was fitting  
with blunt shears an old carpet to the radiator upon which the water

in the pie tin lay frozen, while a latticework of ice crystals played  
up and down the insides of the windows which had,  
just a day ago been pried open by uninvited guests.

—plates and mugs, my del Pilar guitar and sleek racing  
bike, three largely symbolic checkbooks and cheap  
vases—all the books, all the music. Turntable, amp,  
speakers, speaker wires tipped with gold.

I had been traveling, and like Proust, I suffer from homesickness and the fear  
that every journey will kill me.

Thus, like Proust, I imagine living on a yacht, moving around the oceans without having to  
get out of bed.

Had I been home—

Like a dream I cannot wake from, like overlapping fragmentary portraits, which come from  
sense of perplexity and dispossession, more pronounced as the plot unfolds.

To make this letter for you I am besieged by newer books encroaching like an army of Visigoths, like *memento mori*, insulting me with the impossibility at my age of finishing everything I must finish, and each with its own insistent voice—

- Kaplan's *French Lessons* and Anne Carson's *Grief Lessons*,
- Balakian's *Ozone Journal*,
- the collected Letters of Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg,
- Carl Phillip's *Daring* and
- William Barret's *In Time of Need*, who points out that Proust, like Balzac, stood at the confluence of two separate streams of Realism and Symbolism.

Also

- García Lorca's *Poet in New York*,
- *The Collected Poems of Li He*, (Late Tang Dynasty),
- and a yet unwrapped copy of A21's *A Vast, Pointless Gyration of Radioactive Rocks and Gas in Which You Happen to Occur—A Trip Through the Multiverse*

As with everything human, the idea is to give shapelessness a form. As in a dream I cannot wake from.

Vis. If you've visited the Vatican, you've seen the three scenes of the Creation starting with the "Separation of Light from Darkness" (Genesis 1:3-4), there's God wrapped in pink drapery and occupying most of the tableau, a complex perspective, and which Michelangelo painted in a single day. Next is the extraordinary "Creation of Celestial Bodies and Plants" divided into two asymmetric parts, each one containing the figure of the Lord.

On the right He faces outwards, creating the shining sun and the pale moon with one sweeping gesture, while on the left the Lord has his back to the viewer as He creates plant life (Genesis 1:12-16).

The third panel, with the "Separation of Land from Sea" (Genesis 1: 7-9), shows a completely new perspective and is equally beautiful.

God's Bare Buns.

Clearly, my love, had you worn your midnight-ride sorceress shirt, the Holy See would not have.

Swann