

The Words Seeking Place Among the Words

This openness he can't find the edge of

--Jori Graham

Dearest,

For the wedding we gathered at a place out on the south shore of Puerto Rico, a resort with beach and beach towels and pools and pool towels and those promised Caribbean breezes and a long wooden dock with a green light at the end of its long end as if Daisy Buchanan herself had written and directed this scene,

adding in for more contemporary tastes
little iridescent fish jumping out of the
water and the pelicans and oyster
catchers, puffins and murrens wading
here and there, and the PA blasting Bad
Bunny's "La Canción" at people in the
pools and at people in the ocean and at
grown-ups at the swim-up bar drinking
coladas.

"At the pool, especially, as you know, the experience of posing seems somewhere between transcendental meditation and a visit to the barber," says The Man with the Blue Scarf. To me, I think. Posing what? I then think.

But first about Daisy Buchanan, who is slyly relevant.

I offer her up as a case in point, a teaching moment.

Study.com says she's a "shallow woman who charms people with her voice but has an amoral nature."

It's that "but" that brings it home, don't you think?

The impossibility of a soft landing given evidence of how dimly aware we are of our stupefyingly high-octane inability to know what we mean.

Like the moonlight over the ocean looking for the place on the ocean

where out of salt and wind and a sense of who we are without

language, and the rollers gentling the coral reef offshore

and look who's happy on the inside, like

The threads carrying the quickness in on their backs

We know this is true, this happiness, because I have for you four recordings of Mozart's Magic Flute and in one, the German lines are soft and rounded and filled with colors, seductive and gorgeous like the zinc buckets out in the garden filling with raindrops. Or French.

Sweetheart, I want to know how possibly can the language that begins the line be the same language as the language that ends the line?

There are moments in the Mozart that make life worth living and that you know this too renders the question of God's presence utterly irrelevant. This is where Daisy Buchanan blushes.

I promise to play the operas for you, one after another, until you are satisfied that your hypothesis is provable.

Meanwhile I have a room full of visitors tonight. It's like the departure lounge of the soul, and I could use a prophecy or two. I am not the only one with sadness, you know, but there is also, from time-to-time, a deep joy. Chopin. Mozart. You in your cranberry shirt. Your stalwart attempts to help me learn the language.

Not to worry. I have no evidence here that can harm you. The words are only the crumbs of words, to be swept up.

I hold you now. In bad English.

All quotations, Jorie Graham, "Self-Portrait As Hurry And Delay," (Penelope at Her Loom) From the New Word, Poems 1976-2014