

What's New

We are all new, and electrons doing around, in order that beginnings be made.
--Liz Waldner, "The New Age"

Treading the salted rim of the New Year she joins me accidentally for drinks
on the balcony, such papery skin, deep blue, like a body-covering bruise,

by which I mean, we both know she wants this time together, someone gentle in her ear,
maybe this one, and she knows I know, that thought would please her and what pleases her,

even if she can't hear it, even if she doesn't need to hear it, is as I said the low hum
of (whose?) voice and the fact of this from someone likely related, maybe one of her sons?

(He calls me Mom, she thinks.)

She won't trouble me with any manner of doubt, nor the many insults of her body.
Across the scarred table her hands flutter. No, nothing hurts.

We shop the open-air market for fabrics and elephants carved from penga wood, bargain with
merchants who speak a French we do not understand. No electricity but palm-sized calculators,

photocells blinking yellow phosphors of commerce, and we stay to chat up a merchant, trading
lazy words in a made-up language, and as the ocean darkens he lights the oil lamp.

(Hands us each warm Moroccan beer tasting of olives and rust.)

Only the lakeless, oceanless, autumn through the windows is true, that and barberries larded
with bright, red, inedible fruit. Finches singing the trees in minor thirds to calmness,

that as well, and purple heads tilted toward (one wants to say) the golden sun.
She can't hear them.

I ask her to say if she can hear me when I talk, and if not, we'll do something else.
No. She can hear me fine, she means to say, waving away my doubts, as in the old days.