Summer 1991

My Great Aunt, Who Did Not Speak Italian, Between Chores

Robert Sims Reid

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank

Part of the Creative Writing Commons

Recommended Citation

Available at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss36/26

This Poetry is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in CutBank by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
In shade, she cocks a hip and looks
along the line of elms, the pond
a thick flat green in August.
That man from town, what did he say
about waterfowl, fish and rain?
Conservation. To conserve. To
keep. She crosses her arms and thinks:
Near Calcutta, a brittle band
serenades the train bearing west
into liquid sun (she is sure
she left that picture there, that stack
of journals in the bamboo rack
near the kitchen pump) a train loud
with beggars doling groveled coins
for a trip to worship cattle
and cobras. Imagine! The dead
float out to sea on dark rivers
while beasts roam the city like lords
and deadly snakes cannot be killed.
She drops an arm and the train stops.
Another and the last coin sticks
to a more practical palm. She draws a deep breath and the dead dissolve into the sea, the band falters through a last horrible measure, leaving the sharp whir of locusts and frogs. Real cattle drop their heads to stagnant water at the base of the hill. Inside, a man calls, a man propped in bed doing paint-by-number parrots. In the house, a crippled piano. Breathless clarinet. Twenty china dogs. Phenobarbital. Artifacts. In there... paralysis and clocks. So cattle drink. The train plows on. Sun collides with a pyre of elms. She hears her name and tries to think. She hears her name and bites her lip and says, "E molto distante?"