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Sarah Giragosian
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AT THE EDGE OF PRINT

Sarah Rose Giragosian
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PREFACE

Crafting a body of poetry under the auspices of a senior year thesis has been my own gesture of deference to the master poets who have influenced my own work. Their poetry is the stimulant that has kept me sleepless and my poetry project rigorous this past year. My influences have been diverse, reflecting both my circuitous ramblings through the library and the more thoughtful literary recommendations of my advisors. The works of Elizabeth Bishop, Marianne Moore, and Hart Crane have proved most enthralling, instructive and maddeningly enviable.

I most conspicuously profess my influences in “A Triptych of Frames,” which originated as a playful piece emulating (though aping is the more apt word) Bishop. However, the poem evolved into something larger in scope, an homage to my writing mentors (a word I use in a broad sense, meaning those that I have encountered on the page and those with whom I’ve worked personally). Throughout the triptych, I trace the literary lineage of contemporary female poets, beginning with Marianne Moore and ending with one of my own mentors. However, Bishop always remains central; even though the poem is my most autobiographical piece, my experiences (which are related according to place) circle outward like radial spokes from Bishop’s work and past.

When I first conceived my poem, I conceptualized Elizabeth Bishop as a chess piece capable only of moving obliquely, or “sideways,” to a conclusion. My poem organized itself around this image, which began as

a simple pun but ultimately became more than a cheap or unmerited allusion. Much like the fort I mention in my poem, the chess board signifies a battleground, one in which mentor-poets shield an art form so profound and precarious, guarded but approachable, that it can only be handed down in pieces, step by step, figure by figure, to the next generation.

For me, one of the most alluring elements of Bishop's poetry is the imposition of the artificial and self-conscious authorial voice which she masterfully threads in and out of her lines. The reader will find traces of a similar voice in my own poems, such as my triptych poem and "The Scrimshander." The work of Moore, Bishop's mentor, also has had a quickening influence on my pen, as I have attempted to sharpen my gaze and imitate her highly perspicacious eye. Moore employs the gaze to possess the objects which surround her, and it is her gaze that confers meaning on her surroundings, elevating the overlooked or seemingly inconsequential to literary subjects. One may argue that Moore "possesses" the objects around her in multiple ways. The objects are possessing (or entrancing) under Moore's piercing gaze, and they come to possess *her*. She becomes obsessed with the objects about which she writes, but hers is an exalted obsession, one in which she revels and which yields revelations. My poem, "Apropos a Tortoise," has its roots in Moore's work, both in subject matter and tone. I have attempted to don

her scientific gaze, and also move from a self-consciously descriptive voice to a more metaphorical domain.

My body of poetry shows thematic interests in the domestic realm, womanhood, animals, art and literature, the artist's personality, and Armenian history. I should note that I originally conceived my thesis as a poetic means to meditate on my Armenian heritage. While my cultural heritage is no longer the focus of my thesis, I do include several poems about Armenia in my body of work. These lyrics show an interest in the interlocking themes of familial and political myth-making, revisionism and evasion that constitute Armenian storytelling.

In truth, I can't apply the word "lyric" to my Armenian poetry without a self-conscious shudder. More lacerating than lyrical, most of my original drafts relating to the Armenian past, such as the Armenian Genocide, made plain the common mistake of the novice writer. The Armenian Genocide has proved to be a subject too emotionally fraught for an inchoate poet like myself. I found that most of my drafts relied too much on an outpouring of emotion to carry the writing—exactly what T.S. Eliot warns against in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Eliot no doubt would have taken more offense than fancy to my infinitely ungentle, infinitely suffering images. While such a rich history is worthy of meditation, I found that my lyrics about such subjects as the Armenian Genocide were too distracting from other pressing poetic concerns, those of form and technique. My decision not to limit the thematic scope of my

poetry has afforded me the time and space to focus my energies instead on craftsmanship.

I cannot write of my influences without a nod in the direction of my own mentors, poets Mary Jo Salter and Robert Shaw. Their exquisite craftsmanship and canny use of verse has steered me towards a range of poetic forms, such as the sonnet, blank verse, haiku, and syllabic verse. Moving away from the safe confines of free verse has lent a new dimensionality and pregnancy to my lines. I find that writing in verse opens up new possibilities for poetry's felicitous connections and fortuitous discoveries.

Beyond their affinities in prosody, the works of Professor Shaw and Professor Salter share an aesthetic and a mode of looking that have been critical in my own work. Both poets engage with subjects that provoke a second look, in the way of a painted shutter or a family album that exposes the ways in which time contorts memory. However, in their works the retroactive glance is implied but not dwelt upon; what's most important for Salter and Shaw are initial impressions and the way in which memory tailors de facto perceptions. I mention the aesthetics of the "second glance" in such detail because I want to distinguish between what has come to be a banality in the poetry world and the aforementioned innovations of Salter and Shaw. A rather trite and limited vision of the writerly act is that it is motivated by an impulse to revisit an impression or a moment in time. Although I give credence to this vision, Salter and

Shaw complicate the poet's gaze. Salter's work often preoccupies itself with the moment between vision and cognition, when the eye's focus is imperfect and perception is clouded, lending itself to figurative readings. Shaw's work perhaps dwells more on glitches in memory, which allow him to recognize the dialectically expansive possibilities between past and present—the slippages in retrospection. For me, the wonder of seeing double is in the capering between the self-amended perceptions of the past and the immediacy of the present. A more sobering dialectic can be found in Salter's "Distance." In my poetry, I have tapped into such disjunctions—the natural disconnects between signified and signifier or past and present—and mined them for poetic material.

My poetry also is interested in the illusionism that necessitates a second glance; its most obvious manifestation exhibits itself in my poem "The Display." Over this past year, I've learned to register the figurative before the actual when describing the world around me, as can be found in the line, "Strings of insect-/ stitches fall from your hands like words" ("My Mother at Her Desk, Binding a Book"), a more interestingly off-kilter simile than "Words fall from your hands like insect-stitches." In such a world where the eye constantly beguiles, my subjects constantly strive for validation, which comes in the form of the printed word or image. My poetry is very much a poet's poetry—not in Ashbery's sense—but in the way that my subjects often require ink to verify their existence.

The first section of my poetry has its namesake in the poem “A Triptych of Frames.” A triad of frames (which directly gesture towards photographs and, more obliquely, mirrors) meditates further on art’s interplay with artifice and illusionism, which are found in such poems as Auden’s “The Sea and the Mirror.” From the beginning, my readers enter a world so fraught with illusion that the second look—by extension, a second reading—is requisite. I’m interested in provoking a double take. My poem, “The Display,” begins, “Gone: the lilac dives, / the glitter of pollen. Gone/ too are the cosmos.” Beyond the level of punning, my poem repeatedly shifts from one plane of existence to another, flying from a world characterized by both nonexistence and cognizance to an entirely different kind of metaphorical terrain. By the poem’s second stanza, the reader registers the butterflies as artifacts; while on display, they’re read with a colder (deader?), more empirical eye.

I speak of the second glance as a corrective reflex, a moment when the eye refocuses from the figurative to the actual. However, I want to expand this notion of double looking as an illicit look, the kind prompted by that which is generally brushed off or circumvented. Throughout most of “The Display,” the speaker holds an exhibit of mounted butterflies in her gaze, but the second glance, the illicit look, is motivated by the state of the butterflies, which of course are dead. The speaker’s gaze is self-consciously transgressive: “the voyeur eye frets”—as it flies from surface (the glass), to the dead butterflies, to their captor as an emblem of death

(figured in a sardonic child), to the butterflies' pasts before death. In "The Display," the "bugs with pupil-/ patterned wings, stare back;" ending the poem on a note of jarring uncertainty: the eye's fretting is stilled, but only as the figurative becomes dominant over the actual. If the printed word or image acts as a validation of a higher existence or as a cathartic balancing of the metaphorical and actual—the recorded and the merely seen—a full validation does not occur in this poem.

"The Display" illustrates the central concerns of my own poetry project. I've classified my collection of poems into four parts: I. *A Triptych of Frames*, II. *The Stories We Don't Tell*, III. *The Burning Boy* and IV. *At the Edge of Print*. Each of these subtitles is extracted either from a title or a line of Bishop's poetry or my own. My works are organized according to these subtitles, although they also can be interpreted as a figurative progression from a visual perception to printed utterance. One might also find an analogy in the cognitive development of a child, as it matures from registering the visual to speaking of its visual experiences to character-making (by which I mean the written word or image).

Like many of the poems of Salter and Shaw, the poems in *A Triptych of Frames* are populated by metaphorical barriers that invite the second gaze, such as panes of glass, windows, frames, photographs, the camera lens and well-delineated physical spaces. These barriers force perceptual realignments from object and figure interiority (ie: the innerness of a

cathedral or dragon, the innerness of a butterfly display—made consonant with death—and the innerness or insularity of academia or a fort) to exteriority, as in the world that the speaker’s figures and objects occupy. In these poems, there’s a movement towards or longing for the inked utterance, as though the illusions and figures in the subjects’ worlds can be made comprehensible only when the speaker produces tangible documentation of her experience.

This is most evident in my poem, “Bath Abbey.” Like the other poems in the first section of my thesis, “Bath Abbey” is fraught with uncertainty, abstraction, and ambiguous identities—a world where the subject must struggle to find her bearings. It seemed fitting that I include in the first section a moment in time when I felt most lost, figuratively, literally, and corporeally (as though my very body was not my own). “Bath Abbey” metonymically represents my experience studying in England, a world of “chimera,” “angels” and “dragons.” In this poem, the figurative world overshadows the real, making it necessary for me (as writer) to impose order through prosodic techniques such as blank verse and syntactical simplicity. “Outside the birds and angels storm the walls”: so begins the poem, equating the real with the fantastic in the same line (as figured in the “and”), and connoting battling factions—what I will extrapolate as the sublime and the profane. As I pointed out in general terms earlier, the speaker of the poem validates her experience through the printed page. The cathedral metamorphoses into the body of a dragon, and

the speaker has “reined” its scales “into rolls of film, subdued their fire/ into bunched curls as thin as smoke and ghosts.” Note that even the abbey’s photographed representation, which subdues or reigns in the speaker’s perception has a tenuous (after)life. Art is as fragile as the speaker’s experienced world, but at least the artistic gesture holds the “fire” at bay.

Transitioning from the *Triptych* poems to the poems under the title of *The Stories We Don’t Tell*, the reader is prodded from musings on the beguiling nature of vision to restraints in elocution—from visual barriers to barriers in speech making. In *The Stories We Don’t Tell* poems, I engage with the ineffable: speech is hindered, either consciously or unconsciously (as in the manner of a stammer). Of course, the reader will understand that this subtitle (as in the poem which is its namesake) is half-ironic—something *is* being uttered, even if my poem’s subject is about the ineffable. The utterance can be something as dark and determinedly hushed up as genocide or as coincidental as a forgotten line.

The poems in *The Burning Boy* take their cue from Elizabeth Bishop’s “Casabianca” (Interestingly, Professor Michael Snediker interprets this poem as Bishop’s tribute to Hart Crane. Also see *Notes* for the poem’s primary allusion). I take up the figurative stammer in Bishop’s poem, as well as Crane’s emblemizing of desire as a burning, and I make both an aesthetic in my own work. The majority of these poems contend with illicit love (particularly same-sex love). My work validates the obstinate

boy (or, in my case, girl) who burns each time he registers the love that dare not speak its name. I find the act of burning—or at least a flirtation with destruction—in my poems “PE” (in which burning takes on the mythological trappings of Icarus’ fall), “Ararat and the Ark” (which could also be read through a queer lens, as God and Noah are coupled and inescapably bound together as creator and perpetuator of a race) and “Moths,” which confounds and threatens the boundaries among bodies—human and moth, metaphorical and actual. Much like the burning boy, the subject of “Moths” (who is “spent,” “netted,” “tagged” and “marked”) contends with a love as ineluctable as her own destruction. The precariousness of such a love makes it only that much more precious, more closely guarded.

The final section of my collection of poems, *At the Edge of Print* (a tailored line from my poem, “The Ink Monkey”) are a natural progression from the stammered verbalizations of *The Burning Boy* to the (margins of the) written word. However, even the printed word or imprinted image, which can be as tremendous as “the blue book of the universe” or as fleeting as a girl’s reflection in a bird bath, teeters between the oblivion of the white page and the self-substantiating characters of print. In “Apropos a Tortoise,” the turtle’s life is substantiated only because the speaker supplies words—notes— for it. The poem moves from mere empirical description to a larger meditation on age, death, and the speaker’s self-identification with the creature. In the end, however, the turtle’s shell is

analogized to a token, something that will be handed down (in memory more than substance), but inevitably will wear, as many of the most well-regarded printed words must.

The delineated topics of my body of poetry can perhaps best be comprehended as demarcated spaces, all of which interact but require too their own terrain, their own neat place. My poems call out to one another and to the works of great poets, but I also partition them, as the speaker of “Moths” partitions the inviolable.

I

A Triptych of Frames

The Display

I.

Gone: the lilac dives,
the glitter of pollen. Gone
too are the cosmos.

II.

The grave enclosure
frames the line-up: they're tagged now,
stiff in their lockup.

III.

Mounted, splayed like cards,
the butterflies are random-
spotted, like dropped dice.

IV.

Perched now on the stalks
of pins, the once-spastic flies
still my flustering.

V.

I'm compelled to look
closer while I'm landed here.
Their scales are stained glass.

VI.

The voyeur eye frets.
I count their flourished laterals,
Displays of death and color.

VII.

Death, then, smirks like some
child with a net. He hovers;
this is his oeuvre.

VIII.

He waits with his web
until it's sunning, or soused
in spoils of bruised fruit.

IX.

Or worse: needling fare
from a bulb's calyx, its feel-
ers mining sugar.

X.

Not stomped on, nor swept
away, these bugs, with pupil-
patterned wings, stare back.

Bath Abbey

Outside the birds and angels storm the walls.
Their wings appear to be still usable,
not clipped or chipped away, but heavenly
ascension is slowgoing. Angels robed
in stone and flocks of fattened pigeons climb
a Jacob's ladder slick from rain, its rungs
arranged to meet a sky that spills over
with vaporous colors of tea and milk.

At times I hear them laughing audibly
beneath the choir vault: beggars, mostly—those
who come to dry off when the rain starts. I
have started coming—not to pray or pry
into their suffering—only to look
around. The city, populated once
by noblemen and lepers, conquerors
and socialites, was England's capital
for getaways, a pamphlet tells me. I
have milled around the shops and manors, roamed
among the tombs, my camera posed to shoot
the scale-like stonework of old cathedrals,
their rambling naves, their bodies fantastic
like chimera or dragons. I have reined
them into rolls of film, subdued their fire
into bunched curls as thin as smoke and ghosts.

Today the city's lights and luster bleed
through stained glass windows, drawing us to Gods
with crowns the shades of goldenrod and plum,
to suns offsetting the electric blues
of angel tunics. Townspeople and guides
converge with travelers and joggers; we're
all drenched and blown away by fan-
vaulted, altitudinous ceilings. We
relax, entombed within the splashy bowels
of chimera as angels rain and thrum
their fingernails against the window panes.

A Triptych of Frames

After Elizabeth Bishop

I. Walnut Hill

Sufficient bliss/ For me...to lean against the window and peer out,/ Admiring infinites'mal leaves.

—“To a Tree,” Elizabeth Bishop

By nightfall I could make out orange points of light. My window yielded wisps of talk, but little meaning, like clipped silhouettes defining white space. Sometimes I could see their limber frames against the crooked door, and I would wake to find their cigarettes like trampled caterpillars toed and cold against my fort's mud floor. They left their prints--chewed-over book leaves and throwaway news for me to thumb through. Mom indulged them, called them *kids, just high school students, far from home*, and welcomed all their nightly trespasses.

Not kids to me, a nine year old, who thought their seven years on me an infinite expanse, their talk of frosts and fathers, moors and bishops queer and grown-up. They liked me, though, *and* the fort—its childish carpentry more penetrable than a city made of dreaming spires—a sanctuary scaled by June bugs, children, Boston ivy, toads, and homesick teenagers, each one at home among the leaning walnut trees and walls. I noted much: the walnut leaves like nibs against my window, trees like book spines, named.

II. Years of Summers

(Many things about this place are dubious).
My house, for instance, is nothing
like our palace-sized parsonage
my mother religiously cleaned and cursed.
I never wanted to move to the cottage,
fit for weekends at the beach
and slim, coppery couples
who could afford to get away.

A drafty, ash-gray rental,
the place had all the markings
of transience, but eventually we lost tally
of the summers passed beneath the low-slung
walls. We settled into that sort of snap pea
of a house while its dimensions grew snugger,
more liable to snap.

Every summer, stick-limbed kids
unraveled their kites
and my mother slid open the timber sash
windows to admit the sea air.
Face to face, counterposed and enrapt,
we read together on the couch:
*Nature repeats herself, or almost does:
repeat, repeat, repeat; revise, revise, revise.*

III. In the Stimson Room

I see the slight censorious frown,
and the possibility of blue ribbons,
but the photograph is cast in black and white
and the camera does not expose
the elaborate upsweep of her coiffure.
Hardly girlish anymore, Miss Moore
conjures up the “fairy-godmother”
in Miss Plath’s mind as she bestows
fine-spun praise or waffled criticism
to those in her confidence.
It is a subtle art, no doubt,
professorial appraisal,
requiring the sideways

advances and evasions
of a chess piece or a poet.

Not so at a lavishly laid dinner table
before the poetry readings.
The waiter, with no reason to be in high spirits,
withholds a glass of red wine
after an artless inquiry into my age.
Across the table, a poet asks if I write.
Self-conscious, trying to moderate
the mildly moronic remarks
to which I'm prone at moments like these,
I answer, *yes*,
and bracket off a response
with a series of disclaimers
stressing my amateur meter
and a weakness for free verse;
between bitefuls of undercooked steak,
I confess a propensity for melodrama.
The poet nods vaguely,
in what appears to be part pity, part doubt.
And do you write?, she turns and asks
the student beside me.

Sunday night: the lamps gutter
and the Stimson Room yawns before me.
Girls angle themselves into the elbow
of the high-backed chairs, arcing the crook
of their knees over the chair arm.
Their whispered lessons thrum
like the tentative incantations of ghosts,
whose papery and palpable spirits stack
the bookshelves. I look for them in the framed
photographs that beckon like windows;
they all share the same dimension,
the same lore,
unwritten and intimate,
strange—
like being asked to look
at someone's family album.
I could be strolling through the galleries
of a castle, taking in the household's illustrious
bloodline. Above the bookshelves
stand the rows and rows of poet-icons

buttressed by the relief panels of students,
plainly idolatrous and eager to please,
bustling out of their frames.
And in a corner sits Sylvia Plath,
with her crimped ringlets
and her hands knitted in her lap,
nodding over Miss Moore's
long unnebulous train of words
(as young Miss Bishop wrote).
The photograph bears the year,
1955, April: a cold spring.
Over here, in this photograph,
is my teacher at my age,
twenty years later,
and there,
her teacher at her age now.

II

The Stories We Don't Tell

On Losing a Line

I've lost it for good:
all I can recollect now are its hindlegs
kicking off my palm. If only I'd had a pen—
something to hold the words in place
before they nosedived back into the garden,
one by one, a clutch of marble-backed toads—
polished, with skins cryptic and eruptive.
Someone else might find them—
slick with imaginary grime—
though I doubt it: they're buried now,
their legs are past-expiration
like an old poet's finger joints.

After Jane Austen

*Our Chawton House, how much we find
Already in it to our mind;
And how convinced that when complete
It will all other houses beat
That ever have been made or mended
With rooms concise or rooms distended.*

-Jane Austen in letters to her brother, Frank Austen

She sweeps through the dusky rooms,
eyes appraising the timber sash windows,
the creaking door, the writing table
where her mind rustles, then rests.
*The torments of rice puddings
and apple dumplings forgotten,*
she moors herself in the parlor room,
braces herself against her letters,
the shapely sentences that fix her,
finger to pen, palm to parchment,
in the low-pitched, red-brick cottage.
On the *little bit (two inches wide) of ivory,*
she registers fools, fashions, and heroines.
Her pen races as she mentions
Elizabeth and Catherine,
running as though windblown,
their petticoats dewy and mud-spattered,
like bird wings.

Jane resets her pen in the groove of her hand.
Her lines curve to censure, now,
as she writes of mercenaries and clergymen,
girls drilled in the riddles
of money and matrimony.

The sun drops like a bead of flecked ink,
and Jane, amid her billowed white shift,
can only just discern a voice— faraway, inflected—
calling to her. As the door groans open,
she shelters her manuscript
beneath the coarse cover of a blotting pad.
Her arms rise like arches,
her jaw seals like a vault.

The Milkmaid

He poses my body near the window,
where the sunlight skims
the tabletop, reproducing
the vivid sheen of milk.
I'm as supple as clay for him
while he swings my hips against the table,
coils and cuffs my sleeves,
and pins a swath around my waist.
He heaves and puckers the cloth.
To balance the pleats in your skirts,
he explains. During his labors
I hold myself upright for hours,
glimpsing the shivery flourish of his brush,
and the paint, as it drips on the floor,
winking in answer to the last hours of daylight.
I tire; needles of pain pick
and tear at my back
until a warm tingle spills
down my spine.

Afterwards, he holds me softly.
He says he fancies the heft
that stretches my skirts,
and draws his fingers around the whorls
of my callused fingertips.
The night lengthens: my dress in his hands
is sifted and set at a grave angle on the table.
He will paint it in later, he tells me,
tangling his thick fingers
around its loops.

Among needles and needless things,

she recovers pieces of her girlhood:
the stiff threads and sleek pins
that held her together. She remembers once
crouching in the attic, beneath the bats
strung up like black garlands,
and searching for a doll her mother
may not have thrown away. The head
bobbed at the touch, her heart
rocked like a treadle.

Wife now, she kneads her knuckles
into unleavened lies. She seams together
some unholy home of husband and wife
where she is but flesh and figment,
a finger ringing a drain,
a mother tendering meals and mandates.
Once she crawled into the attic,
where the spiders dripped from the walls,
and listened alone for the tick
tick ticking of her heart.

The Church

The pitch and slosh of the storm outside
anchor us firmly to our seats.
We sit in line, twenty souls huddled
together in the murky light of the church's hull.
The full-throated Armenian woman sings
a hymn that thrills through the beams
and bones of the structure.
She croons and captivates us,
gives ritual to our joy and pain.

This Sunday, I remember my ancestors--
the ash and Turkish dust
clinging to their cuffs,
their terror hulled
like a pomegranate seed.
Who marshaled the grief
of my great-grandmother
during those wind-tossed weeks?
I picture her pacing the decks,
passing the Sundays and the days between
inside the nest of her hair,
plucking sand from her scalp
and worshipping black seas,
anointing herself in sea salt,
and, one day,
wedding a young doctor from Turkey.
Who better than he,
another Armenian adrift,
to give dimension to her demons,
scripture to her sorrow?

Beneath the rigging of the bell ropes
and the ribbing of the building's underbelly,
we kneel for journeys freighted
with blood and sacrifice. We fix ourselves
near the stone altar in communion.
The Armenian pastor and her ark
merge in our minds as the bulwark
against the rushing waters outside.
I imagine my great-grandmother

at my age, kneeling at the stern
of the ship's altar while the men
trim and hike the sails,
and her boy-husband at her side
looks more the part of pastor than lover.

Homepage

At the shore of the Ellis Island
site, the two of us,
father and daughter, find a link
to Passenger Arrivals
that takes us to my grandparents.
They're my age, barely twenty, with their names
misspelled, their families missing.
The system crashes:
the computer buckles under the weight
of memory and a blue wave
washes over us. Then—
just as quickly—it lifts.

We find a trail back to our home page,
and you print and fax the artifacts
of our past—the ship manifest,
a sepia snapshot of a vessel—to your sister
in Seattle. There's a tentative clatter
of teeth against tea cups; they're my own
I realize later, as I imprint my toes
into the blood-red hues
of our Turkish rug.
We've learned nothing new,
and yet, you remind me kindly,
that is not the point. I know this;
I know all about not knowing,
and still I think if only I could hit upon
the right keys, something screened
would open to me.

The Stories We Don't Tell
For my great-grandmother

In the murderer's cocked face,
the butt-end of his bayonet,
there is no rhetoric of reason,
no straight-edged story
that can explain away
the long marches across Turkish desert,
the sands rimmed with bodies,
or the forgotten gray bones
tracing the way to Aleppo.
You never told us about the children
who dropped like bread crumbs
as they left home in exile.

You knew there was no place
for gaunt-faced valor,
for fleshless bodies miming resistance,
or for the hope that slept around your eyes.
Your God did not stand a chance
against the demonic will of men,
and the moon-faced lunacy of boys.

Change of Address

Addressed to one Prof. Jane, the letter pressed
inside a slender volume seems to shift
and shudder like a body waking. Sheets
unseal from page fifteen of Gertrude Stein's
Three Lives. The book, once Jane's, now catalogued
and stamped by lettered, bookish types, has shipped
its contents here to me, some forty years
too late or right on time. Professor Jane
was either schoolgirlish or foolish—both
it seems, to mark then forget lines once penned
and posted, simply, lovingly, by Pat.
The two were friends, both corresponding, cross-
ing country, hands, and time, delivering—
and so reliving together—their days.
Like wildflowers or swirls of hair, the tucked-
away regards remained guarded over
the sunless years: the favored, forgotten
epistle held the stenographic rites
and writings of friendship: *How do we keep
the breath of conversation alive?*, Pat
inquires of Jane. Distance delivers soft
and leaden penciled-in silences. I
have sent the dust and decades skittering
across the wooden floors; this breakthrough stops
me. Winter light unwinds from windows high
above, while students wind away from class;
their clustered numbers circulate and chime,
and fill the stacks in part trespass, part rhyme.

My Friend's Find
For Fox

*Old volumes shake their vellum heads
And tantalize, just so.*

-Emily Dickinson, *A precious, mouldering pleasure 't is*

Scholarship is the lover's squint—
a general nostalgia
for what the beloved has seen.

Tantalized: the two of us, twisting
our necks over the great lake
in the manner of lovers looking
not for the view but for a glimpse
of what the other sees. I think of Emily
tracing the canyons and miles
with a long thin finger, as you do now.
The volume in your hand, land-
locked for so long among dry tomes,
crackles beneath the salt of our fingers
as we look for traces of her shaky hand,
her marginalia breaking like vines
along the page. But instead you dig up
only her father's cryptic inscription
on the cover sheet, *For Mt. Holyoke
Seminary*; he's removed as usual.
We're gone too— we go flipping
from desert to creek;
The Great Salt Lake of Utah
has never absorbed so.

Your red hair catches a trickle of light
like a lantern casing a candle,
though something (someone) signaled
you with a certain slant of light or a tingle
down the back, sending you into the deep regions
of the library. We're accustomed to canons
standing before us; the stacks are loaded,
lush with ghosts, but the moments are few
when the forgotten spine of history bends before you,
reminding me of the trail eastward
that brought you, friend, to me.

Erin—explorer, scholar, friend—
the long strand of red hair we found
pinched in the binding of your find
made my whole body cold.

I thought it was Emily's.

I've kept it tucked away;
whether it's yours or hers
seems a trivial question now.
I don't need to explain that to Erin,
who, reading the book,
reads me, knowing it's this thread of hair
I hold that mandates the writing of a poem.

The Nest

I found it in the eaves,
dropping tenderfooted sparrows
from its limbs, its resurrected frame
born of the loose-jointed maple tree
that hangs below my window.
Sometimes I hear the soft slapping
of wings, and a fledgling,
dragging, cagey,
falls like a paper airplane to the lawn below.
Soon though, its muscles
will master the logic of loft,
and then the nest,
compiled of castaway grit and tuft,
will be left like a seasonably shed heirloom.
But for now (since I am here),
I add a flyaway hair
to its linings of moss and loam.
I watch as the wind comes and catches
it, burying it in the leaves,
deep where the snakes slough
their skin, and the thin membrane of a shell
is crushed underfoot.

III. The Burning Boy

Love's the boy stood on the burning deck
trying to recite, "The boy stood on
the burning deck." Love's the son
stood stammering elocution
while the poor ship in flames went down.

Love's the obstinate boy, the ship,
even the swimming sailors, who
would like a schoolroom platform, too,
or an excuse to stay
on deck. And love's the burning boy.

— "Casabianca," Elizabeth Bishop

Sketching Water

Observe the motion of the surface of the water which resembles that of hair, which has two motions, of which one depends on the weight of the hair, the other on the direction of the curls; thus the water forms eddying whirlpools, one point of which is due to the impetus of the original current and the other to the incidental motion and return flow.

—from Leonardo da Vinci's notebooks

I. Drawing Water

Da Vinci pored over water:
rivers in particular;
he studied their snarls and twirls,
like a lovesick Florentine
drawing the hair of his lover
into his thirsting palms.

II. Waterfalls

They fell from his fingers:
those moments of watery pregnancy—
he barbered torrents into tendrils,
captured cataracts in charcoal. He kept
them close like someone's upswept
hair he brushed onto flat sheets.

III. Perspective of Disappearance

As an apprentice in Florence,
da Vinci approached art's question
of distance and nearness—
his perspective of disappearance—
with the exactness of a geometrist,
riveted by the tangent of two touching bodies.

IV. The Return Flow

To fathom depth, a man, or the movement
of waters takes the span of a pen,

and the eye of the lover. The course
from me to you leads across an ocean
and across a room; I paddle with a pencil,
and the ripples seal fast.

Showers in Bath

I. In the Watering Can

The cold head I hold
tries to cry but can't. I feel
for its spouts and valves,
glimpse through soaped-up eyes the scales
of lime leeching through its eye-
lets. The curtain hangs
heavy like seaweed, like me,
liminal, adrift.

II. Under the Umbrella

The sky is a peek
of ribbing; I'm looking up
a lady's hoop dress.
Ribbons of rain slip
like the waving filaments
of an upturned calyx.

From beneath this dome,
I'm twirling, happy. Yet we
both forecast a leak.

III. Bath:

a city of locks
and hot springs, rivers and weirs,
and a kind of weird
resilience we rely on
to hold back the flood

that's already cracked
through the plaster of our flat.
The walls spring forth tears.

Ararat and the Ark

“And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.”

-Genesis 8:4

Such a cruel baptism: forty days
and forty nights of floods
enfolding the earth, the rats, the koalas
and men, and all but a couple
of silkworms and slugs in blindfolded wrath.
Noah dreams of stepping into a room
and finding God at the doorframe,
His hand outstretched and a cradle upended.
The races recede back into the mud—
the damned and the adamantine
deported to a country braced above the waters
by a fine figment of hope.

Noah huddles below deck, stringy and hollowed,
as the divide between father and feather
shrivels in the drab battle to live.
The waves arc and buckle
against the gopher-wooded ship,
testing the carpentry of human faith,
the holding power of nails and names.
Noah translates the timber's lines and knots
to years, counts the ages of carnage,
the centuries yet to endure.

Some storm-flashed nights
he sees God suspended in the waves,
the spirit's spine curving in the white crest,
tracing the motions of pathos
and apotheosis.
Bone and sea brine slide together,
and, for a moment, Noah cannot tell
if it is God or the sea pouncing.
In the seventh month, the ark anchors
against a dark slab of a leviathan--
a new world for a new race. Ararat bears
Noah's progeny through genesis and genocide;

the mountain catches the wind like a mast,
carries the songs that support the cradle and coffin.

One century before the millennium,
the Hai people will wash Turkish sands
from their eyes with tears.
They will carpenter life
rafts mortared of blood and stone,
and sail on the axis of their fathers' trunk,
on their mothers' breast bone.

The tide will arc them away from holocaust
and home, away from the mountain
that rises, spire-like, in their dreams.

The Cypress Grove

In the emerald thicket of the cypress grove,
I kneel and wait, considering the lavish light,
the herds of sheep
bowed and resting in the field
like apodal peddlers of milk and wool.
My dark skein of hair grows heavy
under the sun, and a thin
gauze of veil sticks to my chin.
I grow impatient waiting for Arshile.
I toe the cool black earth, pregnant
with stringy adder prints and wild fruit seeds.

Arshile arrives, breathless,
bumping his head on the tree limbs.
Hokees, my soul: the lyric and hush
of the word set my head ablaze.
He whispers, though we are alone.
I enfold the stalk of his chest,
the bumps where his shoulder blades
push against his skin.
His mouth slackens at the core
like the husk of a pomegranate seed
before the seeded-apple snaps,
spilling juice over.

We fall against the cypress tree,
the knotted bark that once ferried our ancestors
to the heights of our mountain top.
In this world there is only him and me,
and the arm of wood that holds us up.

PE

I've endured the flagging football games,
the redundant jogs,
the pestilence of the locker room.
At its steam-confounded mirror,
Julie, a stringy first-stringer,
pulls back her hair;
my ping-pong gaze bounces
from my reflection to hers.
The blurred, washed-out version of me
is caught and lured—
seen as from a fish-eye,
snagged in a membrane of vapor
before the skin peels away. I fling
a pinny, such porous armor,
over my head: it's crude and marked
like a toad's mail.
Basketball is half-flight, half-fall,
and I'm featherless, scaled,
burning like wax in my white socked feet.
Our coach, apt and Amazonian,
a matchmaker of sorts, partners us for one-
on-one, but it's Julie who runs the courts.
The maple floor springs us from key
to key; I'm lunging, fingers outspread,
a bulge of longing.
Guarding her, I'm guarding myself.

Moths

*It is to be learned--/ This cleaving and this burning,/ but only by the one
who/ Spends out himself again.*

—Hart Crane, “Legend”

I. The Catch

Palm-netted: the moth on my finger
blinks her wings. I resist an impulse
to rub them together and fling her
flakes like confetti. I carry her pulse
in my hand, identifying the mottled grays
of her kind—a kind with little variation
in hue or height. The crazed
flutter starts; I note the frustration
that comes from being tagged and marked.
My fingers flit above her thorax,
stuttering against her sparked
fury, and a wing’s fine cracks.

II. Spent

Laying out clothes for the morning
(a throwback from a puerile
and primitive age), I realize
I’m cataloging colors: egg-grays,
yucca-whites, and the papery yellows
of accordion doors.

 You sought after me
first, collected me into the asylum
of your arms, where together we shoulder
the burden and blessing of our sameness.

A singed dawn:
we find dusky moth wings
pressed like flower petals
inside the electric light.

Our mouths meet; your tongue
is sallow and ivy blossom.

In the dart and quiver of desire,
we require this space:
room enough to close the partition,
to shut out morning light,
or to balance astride the flame's eye.
And, for me, to forget the red fistfuls
of apple blossoms knuckling the windows.

IV. At the Edge of Print

Inside the Courtyard

The girl gallops around and around
the dead yard, her feelers extended,
her hair a bramble thick with bird wings.
She knocks her hooves through the rivulets
of frost. The ice shivers apart, resolving
itself to veins. Its chips finger her pant legs.
Somewhere a bolt of mercury slips.

A clattering carries
through the half-cracked door.
She hears her parents sitting with spoons
and neighbors, straining
their tea in little cages
and draping paper napkins
over their knees. Her mother
makes a sign for her to come in,
but she pretends not to see and trots away,
her protean face cocked at the sky.

At seven, she's lithe and voracious,
arboreal and grave. She bucks through screen doors
and vaults out of windows. She plants rock gardens,
and glances in the copper bird bath for her face.
In the limed water lined with plumage,
she catches herself—for just an instant—
as she is: neither centaur nor nymph,
nor some unblinking winged thing,
just a reflection.

Astronomy 101

Observing Pegasus make his daily trot
around the big pen of the universe,
I string together some phrases
about the phase of Venus tonight
amid the stationary stars—
those lunar molars with their sharp glint,
glimpsed as the earth grinds down
on its axis.

Vega, with its coy wink,
catches my glance. I swoop
the telescope's saucer-eye
towards my object, and notate
with a star a cosmic tidbit
for the benefit of my professor.
Vega, the first Grecian vegan,
I begin, *achieved stellar recognition*
for his popularization of the food pyramid,
figured in the latitudinous tortilla chip
of the Summer Triangle. I pencil in a comet
darting from point to point.

And here comes Perseus,
riding out of the haze, looking wan tonight.
No doubt his heady load kept Galileo,
with his legendary gall, dawdling
at his telescope, fiddling over the lens—
straining to see those visions
that would only accelerate his fall
(astronomical, like my last blue book exam).

I illumine the scissor-hands
of my watch: the witching hour
cuts through the gloom. Students
shoot in and out of the observatory.
The galactic gallop winds around and above us,
but we've fixed ourselves to pencils and planets,
our eyes following the arrows—
the sky's chalky highways of stars—
ticking by. I reach into the depths
of my bag for a chip,
fried to perfection, while ten
billion light years away
the blue book of the universe opens.
I begin to read.

The Ink Monkey

The animals are known as "ink" or "ink pen" monkeys, because they were kept to prepare ink, known in China since at least 2,000 BC, and trained to pass brushes and turn pages. ..To add a tiny and rare monkey to the business of writing would increase a scholar's pleasure and his reputation for eccentricity.

—Len Provisor

This animal is common in the northern regions and is about four or five inches long; it is endowed with an unusual instinct; its eyes are like carnelian stones, and its hair is jet black, sleek and flexible, as soft as a pillow. It is very fond of eating thick China ink, and whenever people write, it sits with folded hands and crossed legs, waiting till the writing is finished, when it drinks up the remainder of the ink; which done, it squats down as before; and does not frisk about unnecessarily.

— Wang Tai-hai (1791)

Among the chaos of curios—
hunks of jade and bone,
oblong tubers and rice papers—
the sleek-bodied apprentice
preens itself with the same pure water
used to concoct inks. Runty,
no bigger than the biggest butterfly,
the ink monkey loops
around its master's arm,
alighting long enough to be baited
with a fish-shaped stick of ink
scaled with gold and musk.
Shen flops down his brush
to watch his monkey at its task,
its luxuriant fur bristling
like the cloaked back
of an antagonized clerk
as it grinds the stick into concaved stone
and sparks of gold dust fly,
mix with water, and liquefy.
At the ash-edge of print,
monkey and master set down
the wordless axioms, the axed looks,

of primacy and primate;
they guard and thumb
the tools of their trade.

Come, the scholar signals
to his simian assistant, gesturing.
He snaps a couple of soybeans
into the animal's hand, but no—
it smells the ink, which entices
like the slick sludge on pond flowers.
A scrapped page is handed over,
and the monkey, ink-intoxicated,
lunches on the blotted leaf,
consuming the insect characters
of Confucius. At the unwatchable stage of dawn,
as the sun's rude light punches in
Shen's window, the leaf detaches from its hold,
and a tail, prehensile,
flicks.

Apropos a Tortoise

I.

Notes on a tortoise:
slumberous step, darting eye,
crown cross-hatched with age.

II.

He cleaves to shadows,
his leathery shell shucking
off chinks of sunlight.

III.

The patrician head
stays my hand. He tries his limbs,
they creak like clockwork.

IV.

His impossible
lineage I trace in lines
incised on his back.

V.

He loses balance
And capsizes into wet
Leaves; he's frond-flooded.

VI.

The domed head retreats,
curves into a chamber dark
with soft coiled flesh.

VII.

Hibernation starts
with fraying skin and spoiled
fruit; the days darken.

VIII.

The carapace chips
away with age, its bony
plates are scored and thin.

IX.

I raise the emblem
of age to my face. The dark,
inlaid mirror shifts.

X.

The reptilian frame
bears the cracks of grandmother's
old cameo brooch.

Iktsaurpok

(Inuit) to go outside often to see if someone is coming.

— from *The Meaning of Tingo and Other Extraordinary
Words from around the World*

For Mike, with Alzheimer's

I don't know where you go
when you leave yourself,
but even if it's blacked out,
the place has grown familiar.
I hope so anyway. I sing Elvis lyrics,
All Shook Up and *Stuck on You*,
anything to switch on the portable radio
in your head. Usually ineffectual,
my singing, but not always.

An inversion in time: sorting your laundry,
I unearth the artifacts of your life,
gain a mother's privileged peek
into her grown son's pockets: fifty cents,
soda caps, your pictures of insects and birds,
a wallet more liberal in photographs than bills.

I note the things you never forget:
the name of the King and your favorite sister,
how to slick back your hair
and tie your shoes, how to mark time
and twirl a girl. Often you wait at the door,
expectant and jacketed,
as though for a date.

The Scrimshander

Plates, screws and cage
lumped around his head, his body pressed
flat like an iron, the boy blisters
under his sheets. He tastes metal
and paste in his apple sauce and jello,
but doesn't complain much of the pills,
only of being so still.

One afternoon, his father
brings him a box festooned with curlicue seas,
a ship running beneath a banner that reads
Deluxe Scrimshaw Kit, and a harpoon
flung like a flower to the great pyramid
of a dorsal fin. The boy is caught;
the touch of fake ivory beneath his fingertips
anchors him. Knife to bone, he works,
carving whalers, tiny, itinerant, bold,
bracing themselves against the splash of a wave
and the certainty of contact.

Their great whale, glimpsed and penned—
pinned, so to speak, to bone—
makes the crew look wonderfully cocky
in their dwarfed ship.

The transformation from beast to bustle—
blubber to bodice, oil or umbrella spoke—
is balanced on a knife stroke.

Such a painstaking labor, this art.

The boy aligns a universe
on a walrus tooth,
while the vessels and vertebrae
of his broken neck
quicken to keep up.

My Mother at her Desk, Binding a Book

Cohesion begins
beneath the crane-necked lamp.
You're quick and birdlike at your task
as you tongue a line of flax thread,
your needle worming through
the loose sheets. Strings of insect-
stitches fall from your hands like words,
returning me to a time, years back,
when we observed our Sundays in the woods,
and our journals (gnarling
from my overwork and your workmanship)
held us up; the stories seemed to slip
from my shirt cuffs then.
You packed sandwiches and coolers of juice,
and I brought the bones
of my ten year old existence: pen,
pocketknife and notebook.
I've filled the blank-faced book—
the tabula rasa—you crafted me,
and still you work, bending the supine spine,
threads twining and turning to cordage,
as the nest of scrap paper grows beside you.
I note your fingers, the pads taut and red
like the tips of crushed flower petals
as you string together
with awl, clamp, and rice paper
the fibers of a poem.
I write it here, in a journal
with a back guttering
like my desk's fluorescent bulb,
showing all the signs of overuse.

The Artist and his Mother

This picture took a hell of a long time. He'd let it dry good and hard. Then he'd take it to the bathroom and he'd scrape the paint down with a razor over the surface, very carefully until it got as smooth as if it were painted on ivory...Then he'd go back and paint it all again, all very fine and done with very soft camel-haired brushes. He scraped it and he scraped it and he scraped it. Then he'd hold it over the bath-tub and wipe off with a damp rag all the excess dust and paint that he'd scraped off. That's how he got that wonderful surface. It's the only painting he ever did that way.

—Saul Schary, on watching Arshile Gorky paint
The Artist and his Mother

The surface of the painting is like a mirror...He had a terrific surface, like a living thing. Surface control.

—Willem De Kooning on Gorky

Memories clutter in the space
between the weft of the canvas
and the painted calm of her face.
They're scattered in the verdigris
of his paint and the ventricle
of his brain. With labor he finds
them— finds her: the pale miracle
cast from oil, ochre, inks and vines.

The Black One carries his mother
to the tub—a camel-haired brush
and razor in hand— and scrapes her
face away. He's tender, deft, fuss-
ing over her, his blade laying bare
her revenant, drawn and shaved down,
recast and saved. They're still a pair
(at least on canvas): mother bound
to son, son to mother, composed
as they had been before they fled.

*When something is finished, it's closed
off, Gorky said. That means it's dead.
I believe in everlasting-*

*ness. Sometimes I paint a picture,
then I paint it all out. Skinning
the canvas, he gives flesh to her
again. Parts of her body jut
out like a fresco, but her face
he levels away. Her eyes cut
like a butcher's blade, they are braced
for the mortal eye that views her.*

She changes color like a bruise.
He overlays her with madder
and rose culled from paint tubes; their hues
bring her into relief again.
He remains just a boy, hollow-
eyed and lean, photographed at ten
(his last with her), poised to know
nothing of her death forever.
In one instant, a camera's click
affirmed her existence—a snap-
shot extended it. From a quick
pose, its print, and memory's map
(sources he shouldered from Turkey),
he revives her in paint, layers
of powders, primers, and debris—
precious like tokens that were hers.

In the half-state of his homeland,
he gives her sprays of wildflower
with surgical-white, withered hands.
He could be transplanting his heart
to her chest—or hers to his—all
rests just on the gesture. He knows
she'll never be borne out; he left
her fists unfinished, her dress bare.

Only the guilt of the bereft
could so gild her borders. Despair
takes the form of the maternal:
the curved apricot and apron,
and the knocked-off material
of the Madonna and her son.

Like her, he's scripted for frescos,
cursed forever to render flowers.

NOTES

Preface

Salter, Mary Jo. Open Shutters. NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003.

Shaw, Robert B. The Wonder of Seeing Double. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1988.

Bath Abbey

*Angels robed/ in stone and flocks of fattened pigeons climb/
a Jacob's ladder slick from rain...* A Jacob's ladder motif flocked with ascending angels decorates the West front of Bath Abbey. The relief is the fruition of a dream; a medieval bishop commissioned the relief after dreaming of it.

A Triptych of Frames

Elizabeth Bishop attended Walnut Hill High School.
a city made/ of dreaming spires: an allusion to Oxford University
Many things about this place are dubious: from Bishop's poem, "The End of March"
Nature repeats herself, or almost does: / repeat, repeat, repeat; revise, revise, revise. From Elizabeth Bishop's poem, "North Haven."
Miss Moore/ conjures up the "fairy-godmother"/ in Miss Plath's mind: Plath called Moore a "fairy-godmother incognito" in a letter to her mother
In the Stimson Room: a room in the Mount Holyoke College library celebrating poetry and the Glascock Intercollegiate Poetry Competition
The photograph bears the year,/ 1955, April: a cold spring. Reference to the year Elizabeth Bishop's *North & South—A Cold Spring* was published.
Over here, in this photograph,/ is my teacher at my age,/ twenty years later. Reference to photograph of Mary Jo Salter as a student participant in the Glascock Intercollegiate Poetry Competition.
and there, her teacher at her age now: Elizabeth Bishop

Bishop, Elizabeth. The Complete Poems. NY: The Noonday press, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992.

Plath, Sylvia as qtd. by Vivian R. Pollak in “Moore, Plath, Hughes, and ‘The Literary Life’” in *American Literary History* 17.1. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005 <http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/american_literary_history/v017/17.1pollak.html>.

After Jane Austen

The torments of rice puddings/ and apple dumplings forgotten. Jane Austen in letter to Cassandra Austen (1807).

On the little bit (two inches wide) of ivory. Jane Austen in letter to Edward Austen (1816).

Her pen races as she mentions/ Elizabeth and Catherine. Elizabeth in *Pride and Prejudice* and Catherine in *Northanger Abbey* violate codes of decorum in Georgian England when they run (with complete abandon) under the public gaze through streets and fields.

As the door groans open,/she shelters her manuscript/ beneath the coarse cover of a blotting pad. While living at Chawton house, Austen wrote her novels in the family’s common room. When others entered the room, the creaky door would alert Austen that she was not alone and she would quickly conceal her work beneath her blotting pad.

Jane Austen Information Page: <<http://www.pemberley.com/janeinfo/janeinfo.html>, April 2006>.

The Church

Their terror hulled/ like a pomegranate seed. During the forced marches across Turkish desert, many Armenians carried pomegranate seeds with them to relieve their thirst.

My Friend’s Find

Dickinson, Emily. R.W. Franklin (ed.). *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999.

III. THE BURNING BOY

Margaret Ferguson and Mary Jo Salter note in the Fifth Edition of *The Norton Anthology of Poetry* that Bishop’s “Casabianca” alludes to Felicia Dorothea Heman’s “Casabianca.” Heman’s “Casabianca” tells the story of a boy who remained on a burning ship during the 1798 Battle of the

Nile because he believed the ship's admiral, his father, had not released him from duty. Michael Snediker adds that Bishop's poem can be read as a tribute to Hart Crane and his untimely death (see his own work for a better analysis than I can provide here).

Crane, Hart. Marc Simon, (ed.). The Complete Poems of Hart Crane. NY: Liveright, 2000.

Ferguson, Margaret, Mary Jo Salter and Jon Stallworthy (eds.). The Norton Anthology of Poetry, Fifth Edition. NY: W.W. Norton, 2005.

Sketching Water

Da Vinci, Leonardo as qtd. in *Universal Leonardo*. London: University of the Arts, 2006. <<http://www.universalleonardo.org/trail.php?trail=346&work=336>>.

Popham, A.E. The Drawings of Leonardo da Vinci. London: Jonathan Cape, 1973.

The Ink Monkey

At the ash-edge of print. East Asian inks often are made of charcoal ash culled from pine or bamboo. They have also been fashioned of gold and musk, as is mentioned in the poem. This poem was derived from Borges' The Book of Imaginary Beings and Provisor's article about the ink monkey.

Borges, Jorge Luis. The Book of Imaginary Beings (trans.). Andrew Hurley. NY: Viking, The Penguin Group, 2005.

Provisor, Len. "Even a Monkey can Mix Ink," Pentrace Articles of Merit, <<http://www.pentrace.net/article120100029.html>> March 2006.

Iktsaurpok

Boinod, Adam Jacot de. The Meaning of Tingo and Other Extraordinary Words from around the World. NY: The Penguin Press, 2006.

The Scrimshander

Scrimshaw began on whaling ships where sailors wiled away the long days by carving images on bones, teeth and the baleen of whales and other marine animals. A maker of scrimshaw is known as a scrimshander. Scrimshaw is still practiced today on ecologically safe materials. Although the origin of the word “scrimshaw” is unknown, one possible etymology of the word is a Dutch phrase that means “a thrifty waste of one’s time.”

Thogerson, Mark “What is Scrimshaw?” <<http://www.scrimshaw.net/info.htm>> 2001-2005.

The Artist and his Mother

A rather elaborate mythos surrounded Gorky even as a young man. His mother called him her Black One (originally because of his dark features and black eyes), but the name came to signify portent both to the boy Gorky and the villagers of Khorkom, who called the Devil by the same name. Gorky came to call himself the Black One in his later years.

Gorky worked on portraits of his mother from 1927 to 1944, several years after she was force-marched and killed in the Armenian Genocide. *The Artist and his Mother* was his magnum opus, which he never finished, nor intended to finish. Friends and colleagues called the painting Gorky’s greatest passion.

Matossian, Nouritza. Black Angel : A Life of Arshile Gorky. London: Chatto & Windus, 1998.

