

**Selections from *Auguries & Divinations*  
Heather Treseler**

**Anne Sexton**

Suburbs, like brassieres, shape and contain  
their contents, wire under lace, seamlines

and seams along the wildness of woods except

for the renegade deer or tom turkey who struts  
straight down the thoroughfare. Suburbs, like

musical theater, lend everyone role and song

in sitcoms between commercials. The point  
is repetition. The point is novelty, delimited

to the height of a privet hedge, a hidden affair.

How stark, the coordinate machines of the city,  
its concrete floors and carapaces of new money.

Whereas suburbs are seersucker and silk hose,

demitasse or highballs on the shaded porch.  
In the bedroom, late afternoons, I watch

crenellations of light mount the ceiling, take

its white blankness, hungrily. Cotton sheets  
accept the skin of a woman surviving her

despair who broils a Sunday roast, prattles

behind a pram, fusses about collar starch  
and geraniums while she writes of her

madness, masturbation, men, menstruation.

The point of the living room is stilled life.  
The point of the kitchen is producing for

the reproducing. But I am the feral creature

who wanders the street, peering in windows  
wide-eyed, alert, not a stitch under her skirt.

## Factories at Clichy

i.m. Lucie Nell Beaudet (1960-2018)

We came to think of it as our painting: two figures  
embracing in a corrugated field, its patina of sunlight  
and stroked grasses beside the soot-stacks of factories,  
their stern faces flat as prisons. Plumes of smoke  
unraveling the shirt of sky.

“You can't have Paris without the mills of Clichy—”  
you say, and I think of night cafes, an opera house  
flanked by winged horses, balconies spilling like  
bosoms in bloom. Morning streets, swept  
and rinsed clean as a sleeper's eyes

of tousled dream. “You have the rest of your life  
to work,” you add with such pointed sharpness  
that I kiss you in the gallery where the touching  
of art is otherwise prohibited, and an ancient  
light or shadow falls across your face.

How Van Gogh's lovers, narrow and undefined,  
clutch each other as if at sole possessions, released  
from assembly lines to this unruly field of wild  
rye, long-haired rue: meadow of another age  
I might have walked with you.

## Shorelines

Whatever is the opposite of keening, that is the sound the waves make, trawling themselves across the long shallow shore in Ogunquit, Maine: home, in another century, to fishermen who built a tidewater basin, furrowing the soft marshland, digging a channel to give safe harbor to boats named "Susan Bee," "Clementine," and "Anna Mae." In time, shucking shacks and sturdy docks sprung up in Perkins Cove, with a drawbridge and coils of hemp rope weathered like hands scored by clam knives and raw mornings that redden the nose faster than whiskey or a woman in heat. Fishermen, you imagine, lived by tides, their ancient faces buffeted like driftwood cast on the beach by the last spasm of storm.

Painters arrived later, drawn by the ubiquity of light, the changeling shore, these clapboard houses jutting like defiant chins from the bluffs, each built like an axiom from Emerson: self-trust; innate spark; nature's mirror of soul; each man a forgivable god. Here, against the ocean's sotto voce, a gravelly drawl like the history of smokes in a lounge singer's voice urgent in its surges, slow in the pleasure of its retreat. Here, overlooking a saltwater strand as if it were your birth canal, the history of your angst and wailed arrival. Here, alongside white sand and dark wet rocks that cover it, lovingly, lending land some provisional protection: solidity against the inquest of water, which is a version of time, and warmth, though it be from stones.

Here, in a cliffside cottage, you discover your lover's unfathomably delicate ear, curved softly as a conch shell, and the hewn channel of his pelvic girdle, its melding of smooth muscle and bone almost feminine in its line, though it hinges a man in his centaur existence half above, half below a navel that buttoned him, once, to the first woman to offer him hospitality, the care of her body. That day, you found little to say, little to squander in speech. For the first time, when you fell back, sated, you didn't need to ask what he was thinking, you didn't ransack the shelves for some abiding crumb to feed a lingering hunger; you had, for once, satisfied what took you past girlhood's parish and garden gate, granting exile permission and village, citizen and state.