

Rough Marble

~ after PASS 1988-1989 Marble, Louise Bourgeois, MassMoCA

Wait, I want to talk about Jorie, yes
but first Louise's sculpture
because Louise preceded
with those exquisite creatures
those coarse weighty marbles of might—
textures maybe in a birth canal,
a rough road. When I pull
down my pants in the rest room
at the museum I see my thighs
resemble Louise's rough marble
and somehow I feel beautiful
even though I am old. It's the sensuality
of aging that always gets me
how a trick of light can change
my own body into a thing
of beauty—or a sculpture
of legs and cheeks
and thighs and eyes
can change
into ovaries and vulva.
I feel the energy,
the nerve and verve.
Once when I was dating
the man who'd become my husband,
my back to the wall of a gazebo,
he pressed his body to mine—
first kisses by the body of water
electric, his hands pulling
at the silk I wore
so there was no difference
between fabric and skin.
All that arises, as I watch
morning light out my window thrusting
the shadow of a tree against—
I don't even know what, exactly
to call it—the canal's concrete
embankment? Is that the word?
The river runs through it,
that concrete that walls and floors
the river to contain it
the way the body's beauty

and sad decline cannot help
but be intertwined as one
along a rigid path that forsakes beauty—
the way of flesh rushed into old age.
When I speak of Jorie
I want to say I wish I could have
written that poem
about salmon and fucking
that Jorie made in the 1980's,
or something close to it
though my poem might turn
more cerebral, like her later work
if only I could understand it. All I know is
that time is a quiet river, moving,
that the body never forgets how
it moved and once felt
that Louise's pebbled marble still weighs
down into the museum's floor
and body, oh—
and well, there it is
the impossible wait.

Anastasia Vassos

NOTES:

Louise Bourgeois' PASS 1988-89:

