

MARY SZYBIST

INSERTION OF MEADOW WITH FLOWERS

In 1371, beneath the angel's feet,

Veneziano added a meadow—
a green expanse with white
and yellow broom flowers, the kind
that—until the sun warms them—
have no scent—

God could have chosen other means than flesh.

Imagine he did
and the girl on her knees in this meadow,
open, expectant, dreamily rocking,
and the girl's mouth open, quiet,—

is only important because we recognize

the wish. For look, the flowers
do not spin, not even

the threads of their shadows—
and they are infused
with what they did not
reach for.

Out of nothing does not mean

into nothing.

LONG AFTER THE DESERT AND DONKEY

Gabriel to Mary

And of what there would be no end
—it came quickly.
The wind runs loose, the air churns over us.
No one remembers.

What I remember are the bright afternoons
under the elm's cool awning, watching him
watch the clouds. Hour after hour, he was content
to sit large and thick in the grass,
his skin breaking to rash.

I loved how dull he was.
Given a bit of bark or the buzz
of a bright green fly, he'd smile
for hours. Sweet boy, he'd go to anyone.
He had no preferences.

As for you—you hated anything unsettled, unsteady,
anything that was only half itself. You liked
what you could stack in a cupboard.
So I brought incense, spices,
small alabaster jars of honey into which
you'd dip spoons for the boy. He licked them cheerfully.

And when you washed him, pressing his spine
against the bucket's edge to scrub him,
he never splashed or fussed. His mouth would droop
sideways, and I'd feel I was just about

to understand him. But our good boy—
he was no mystery.

You were the one who eluded me.
I remember the first time coming toward you,
how solid you looked, sitting and twisting
your dark hair against your neck.

But you were not solid.
From the first moment, when you breathed
on that single lily, I saw
where you felt it.

From then on, I wanted to bend low and close
to the curves of your ear.

There were so many things I wanted to tell you.
Or rather,
I wished to have things that I wanted to tell you.

What a thing, to live with you and have
no words for it. What a thing,
to be outcast like that.

And then the boy left
and everything unfastened—
it was like something was always dissolving
inside you—

Already it's hard to remember
how you combed his hair or how he
tilted his broad face in green shade.

Now what seas, what meanings
can I place in you?

Each night, I see you by the window—
sometimes pressing your lips against a pear
you do not eat. Each night,

I see where you feel it:
where there are no mysteries.