

Greta Aart

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Reading Grandmother

You were so excited
to see me after these years —
together with P,
our first visit home.

You had never met him,
although you knew him — in odd
photographs
that show only his back, from his poetry
and *nouvelles*
written in languages you do not
understand.

In a quiet corner, you touched the pages,
the spine of his book.
I saw in your eyes, not mournful
but an indefatigable gaze, curious and
tender.

You promised without your teeth
to come visit us, two oceans away —
walking round and round in Luxembourg
Gardens
before setting foot on Plato's Greek
temples.

And what will you become, who will you
be
when you are on the roads again, these
are questions
you probe unceasingly, lowering your eyes
to peer through
an abyss — between your existence and
our meek presence.

I imagine the void
of your solitude, crystallized instants
through which I observe
you are now at peace, ready when time
ends.

Dear Paris,

I come to you for salvation,
old and delicate,
aging yet timeless,
like New York that lurks in my history.

I drag with me Marx and Hemingway,
on the train I read Machado:
*lesson number one, don't pick up
the spoon with the fork.*

Am I still seeking
movement and romance?
Am I still the fresh pianist
who played Chopin tearfully

and drowned myself in the pool
of delusions and first impressions?
Wings of fear and anxiety capture
my feet when they reach la Bastille,

and yet I follow an address on my palm,
address of a man waiting for five years,
and only by five years
can free me from the past.