

Open

Kristen Gallagher

The wind feels its way through the gate at night, lifts the loose twigs from the lawn and blows them through the curtains, banging the velvet sash against the window frame, and presses into the house as if it were a field, free on all sides. Silence flows with it, into the mind, a state immediately accessible, and stays the night. The house fills with its soft music. But an empty drawer that was left pulled out jostles, and wakes the mice under the stove, who scamper off, followed by honks of faraway geese, gathered beyond the portico. The floor plan, constructed for obstruction, reverberates inside the walls. This is the end, where the wind changes texture, seeking again the void of a meadow and the empty yellow centers of small white crocuses, then back over the hills, flapping the fur of the farm animals, who stand at intervals, perforating the horizon, along with the fences and trees. But all else is otherwise relatively unoccupied. Nothing closeted nor committed, only a sky cropped by none other than human perception and left to do its thing — live! to live! undecided, unsettled, lengthening and spreading across the whole ground, carried on, blowing over the early blooming bulbs, out toward the bounteous waves crashing at the generous seaport, making chaos of magnolia leaves across the asphalt. Because this is April, a feeling of wanting to be free from the harsh familiar weather, though it continues amok, candid, frank, without navigational hazard, passing over the farmers' hands, wrinkled from so many past suns, rocking the chairs on all the porches with its invisible fingers, forcing points beyond the headlands, producing sympathies by passing through an organ pipe, or over a metal string pulled tight over wood, or creating knowledge that renders the interior of a heart available. The turning of the globe is never decreed. It just unfolds like a map too long available for public use though they say it's not the territory. The roses this June will be the same roses as every June, but the shape of the bush develops according to the path the wind takes through all the living things in fixed positions, cutting or breaking the flow of space, not as much as death does, but more like these cut branches of quince awaiting bloom in the kitchen, heavily scented with the sleep and dreams of a Japanese film that reveals a passage to the future, or the simple field before the tallest cliff in California, or the vain striving that exploits the English hunting grounds, kicking up the scent of game, or how an elder sitting in the heat with her fan, leading from the action of a hand, discloses to herself a false breeze, as she says, "Oh yes, that was the day we dealt the cards outside on the folding table, last spring, after hours of grilling, and you took a photo with that old fashioned camera, the one where we could see right into the aperture, and we drank so much we became *completely unclenched*."

All vacations begin with a prayer, but eventually we return, like the roses, to our strange city of birth, to our houses and apartments encased in windows, to a job, to news of the latest scandal, confidences made public, or to raw dealings and lost opportunities, from one topological space to another, to live a life of dailyness, unsettled with memories of having loved too much, and the etched florets on the wine glasses at the rental cottage where the rocks form a door to the sea.