

PAMELA RICHARDSON

Small Black Things

i.

This morning as I
trekked sun-blinded
across a field of delphinium,
the black iridescence of
a slug caught my eye.

Sole of rubber
boot suspended –
I stood and mimed her
impossible slowness,
thick and unctuous.

I wanted to merge with her
then, be tucked
in a sweep of tall grass.
Sly as a comma
in a José Saramago novel.

Time slips past like
the slow hand
on the clock.
Like molasses in January,
my mom would say,
when January lasted
half the year and
molasses made every dish
a French-Canadian specialty.

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When I got home,
plums, small as kalamatas,
beckoned me to pick them
before they fell.
I could only reach a few.

ii.

Read
to taste the pleasure
of entire worlds
submerged in a single letter.

H H
H H
HHHH
H H
H H

H is a ladder step
for a descent
into writing.
A bridge
from I to I.

In French,
H is *hache* -
meaning *ax*,
echoing *ash*,
tool and result,
one.

So then, what is fire made of?
I asked my love.
It's a process, he smiled.
The in-between, I thought.

When I finally slept,
H. Cixous,
doyenne of dreams,
sent me a letter.

L L
L L L
L L L
L L L

L sounds like *elle*,
meaning *she*,
echoing *ailles*,
French for wings –

L'Hirondelle avale ses ailes.
The swallow swallows her
wings.

*J'avoue avoir avaler mes ailes,
mes ailes pour voler,*

I confess to having swallowed
my wings,
my wings to fly
or steal away. (Crook,
caught out,
abject bird!)

Right there then now
L splits.
Half flies upwards
the other half
is left behind to
fall, fail, flail,

L L
L like an elbow
soft and sharp,
a folding over, bending in,
a lever of bone, wrapped in
skin.
L is reunited in a lullaby.

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