The Birds of Paradise Have Congregated

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The Birds Of Paradise Have Congregated

by

Lucy Clark

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THIS HIGHWAY GLOWS IN THE DARK

A foggy evening with no edges:
mating season, the pavilion, black-eyed canapés.  
You in a litter trimmed with wild vines, gone to sleep at the conflux of two dried river beds.

Sightless night.  
I wash the perfume from my body. I’m a ghost-mine.  
You’re a ghost-mine. A rope ladder is a thing to follow into memory. It’s the river I can’t cross, strange rushes growing where the clay is cracked.
Or vuoi ch’io ti racconti
una storia di pesci
mentre il lago s’annebbia?
Ma non vedi
come batte la sete nella gola
delle lucertole sul fogliame trito?
A terra
i ricci morti d’autunno
hanno trafitto le pervinche.
E mordi
gli steli arsi: ti sanguina
già lievemente l’angolo del labbro.
Ed or vuoi
ch’io ti racconti una storia d’uccelli?
Ma all’afa
del mezzogiorno il cuculo feroce
svolazza solo.
Ed ancora
urla tra i rovi il cucciolo perduto:
forse il baio in corsa
con lo zoccolo nero lo colpì
sul muso.

Antonia Pozzi, April 28th, 1937

You want me to tell you
a fish story
while the lake fogs over?
Do you see
how thirst rattles the throats
of lizards in the crushed leaves?
On the ground
autumn’s luxurious death
has impaled each periwinkle.
You chew
the burnt stalks: you bleed
a bit at the corners of your mouth.
Now you want me
to tell you a story about birds?
At muggy noon
the ferocious cuckoo
fluttered around alone.
And still
the lost pup howled in the brambles:
maybe the bay horse
flying by with black hooves
kicked it in the head.
HEATH
after Antonia Pozzi

Faces of the mountains
etched in water thick as slab glass.

I open an ointment to spread across the landscape
and discover that it’s poisoned, that the landscape’s
stuck in April, no progression. The river snatches clouds
and drowns them like white kittens. Smudges
of gorse and periwinkle drag on, yellow, purple –

The wind gusts: I contribute.
The trees thrash: limp with rage
calibrated and continued in unbroken streaks,
a knife-fight on the heath
between you and me. There’s no weeping
but the screams of dogs, horse screams.

In the orchard where I itch to touch
and touch again what we hung from the trees,
to recreate, through force of cry, an unknown, let’s wade
into the flowering where our anger’s a divine source,
shoved into the openhanded blossoms like brilliant lead.
I'D LIKE TO HAVE YOU FOR A GUARDIAN ANGEL

At the picnic by the waterfall
you could lead me to the precipice.
You could slide down the short incline above the drop-off
and beat your wings, open your mouth
into a chasm for me to jump into.
Your hell mixed with mine –
I think we could find a bed in there
where, as you wished, everyone would be watching.

I want it to be the papal chambers.
I want to walk up the hall of maps.
It's the fifteenth century. You carve your map
on my back: who you are – knotted guts
in tints. Who I am: disemboweler.
Earth's unmapped interior has one gatepost inside of you,
one inside of me –
between us the door stays open.
HERE'S A PORTRAIT, A GALLERY

Her hands change every time I look. Some days she spreads ten fingers, sometimes seven and stumps, sometimes her left elbow grows out of her right palm into a tree. She hides her fingers in her hair – they become fish eating drowned things. I have my wrists stretched out for you to tie. You slap them back. Every hand has its signature, its staving off. In a way, the unspeakable “take me prisoner” undoes the tight knot while I eat away at what’s stored up –

The captive has a twist of wire. The captive twists between the room where bars are brittle, the tile-lined room, mechanical behind a sheet of water.
FANTASY SNOWFALL LEAGUE

This isn’t a snowdrift, it’s our own eggshell sized right. Inside the cavity candles in ice bowls. Ten thousand winter activities to succeed at: remain kindled, divide yourself from the Furies’ slow bludgeoning. Gracious snow is covering the pile of broken pots behind the house – now it’s a garden of serrated contours.

I’m waiting just like you. Twilight’s concentric circles revolve at their own pace. These times in the interim, the laces easier to hack, the spines beneath easier to love, struggling – still, whatever stings as we walk here stings for miles.
OUR HOUSE IN FLAMES HAS BEEN IN FLAMES FOR YEARS

I try to stick to my punishment
but when it outlasts me, I walk out of it.
I walk into an alleyway that’s capturing the sun –
you’re waiting there.
“A crisis notices itself,” you say, and point out
embers in a heap.

I gather pocketfuls of rocks: too soon to count
as I may pick more up and put them in my mouth
till I feel heavy enough.
Then I’ll hand you something extra –
it fits in your palm like a tongue.
BACK INTO THE PARTY

In the green room
the band undressed. Dislocation
oscillated with the war drums’
bump behind the mount. The wild
persimmon at the cave mouth swarmed
with crows, and as they shook
through the trees I chased behind, dipped
beneath a limb, over a reached branch, flew
at every distance all at once until
I sheared off, tore from the site itself
and panted, “a peripheral” —
my song after the party
when the sideboard’s swept, the air’s
beat out of smoke at heart-height – hard
to recognize, to hear: a circle in the woods
where birds tear fruit, and sing, and loft
no shelter over the brackish inlet.
IN AN ENVELOPE, YOU CAN SEE TERRITORY

I stall out on the highway. Loop, reload, unhitch – distinct in the distance, two people have stationed the night, their voices red, yellow, long.

It's the fall. Earth undone. Men and women slide among the leaves. The sea appears during this blue hour, otherwise vanishes, diminished, a blank spot in a larger blankness –

I untie a boat. Limitless storm to wind towards: trash in the sea, the island of garbage, plastic, rotted –

that's where I throw out rescue rings. The bells, the circuiting crescendo as I'm knitting and unknitting, at the center of my body, a listening chamber.
THE BIRDS OF PARADISE HAVE CONGREGATED

On an endless counter –
brass and glass.
On a patio mosaic –
colored tile, moss.
Ruby wave, tentacle
and one more joyride.
I have a silver dollar
that opens a portal.
Sliver of apple,
meet me on the porch –
oblivion
and a lightshow
overture of golden furnace,
riot on a pallet
at the foot of the mountain.
At the base of the tree
out back, flowers singed.
SMOULDERING EVENT

Odd information here. 
*It is small,* says one note
on the plaque for an elite burial.
Beneath, blond archeologists
with golden muscles are unfolding
skeletons and shells.

An artist has rendered a king. *Descendant of the sun* – he offers an object east towards
river water at dusk, now gem-like:
factory run-off, silos and pin oak

forests between attractions.
Inside the mound suspends some
giant luminous past.
REMOTE CELLS

The new sphinx permeates. She bleeds a little at the corner of her lip. She’s circling the city on wings as big as sofas and a stripe of eyes runs down her back into her snake tail. Each eye is a computer. No one vanishes. Hum of tiny wax bees she drops, nanobots – here’s one on the windowsill, alive with fine particles. Another landscape: the new sphinx prowls the cliff – her mechanized body is my mechanized body during lift-off, high above. All electronics powered down but then: an eye snapped open, we exist.

In a story about what’s underfoot, long corridors. Someone’s kept running back and forth as sand kicks up. A helicopter lands. Hum of fine likeness – she’s a hologram in the desert, blinking. I’m part of her screen, blank and then we are the color of the backs of eyelids.
PERIPHERY

*aft* Antonia Pozzi

I cut the map up so my house fits
in the center, ringed with gardens.
There’s no space for echoes to reverberate
when the air’s filled with bright flowers –
I don’t hear myself. In patterns of sound,
silence, something opens: here’s a paradise
with no reflection, even in a puddle. Birds land
before I get a chance to see – so I see birds
and water blades stirred up to catch
whatever laughter spills before it turns on itself
in anger. The inverse of a laugh –
the laugh retracts, or carries back into my body
where a siren sounds –
an unmapped siren, inexplicable.
BLANK SPOT

He came as a hologram above the bed – not as a dream, even if I was asleep – and stared. I opened my eyes. The room appeared as in the hologram: sunlight, long mirror – I ripped the sheets up, stuffed the washer without looking left or right no matter where I rushed in case his hologram appeared again, blank, bent forward slightly. Out on the street, unsure if the sky and sidewalk panels were soldered together or had leaked as holograms of storefronts matched up wrong, I forgot to leave his house keys with the butcher like he’d said and so I had them in my hand on the bus ride. Hot palmful not to be put down.
I FIT INSIDE A CRYSTAL, THIN AS TISSUE

I take care to emerge – like the actor
on stage who comes out in a box
which her colleague unpacks. She glistens
in his arms. I whirr, decompose. Hear
my eyes turn like white marbles? My mouth
falls open. “I touch on silence,” I say. “I touch on
aftermath: I’m in this room, desiring, but
far away. A gap is between us. Make some noise.”

Good body that announces resurrection,
a tradition, the outcome’s absolute
bedfellow – here I am again: when I go to sleep
I don’t sleep. I climb the balustrade
outside amid the floating drapes and curtsy
at the moon, night, bowed down until
the trance recedes, still ringing in early daylight.
THE DISTANCE AS A LONG COVERING TO FOLD BACK

In terror – terror orchestrates –
I live a little. I build an isolate house
of silt particulate, cloud obscuring
whatever fractures. A set of cloud-slashes
align into a full stripe that measures the horizon
as a snake takes on its prey, by increments –

I open my clear eye, then my hazed eye.
When the weather’s good what disappears?
The regiment’s camped on the far ridge
and with my ear pressed to the ground,
they’re murmuring. I’d like to roll beneath
the field they guard. I’d stick my tongue in its salt.
APRIL

Squeaks from nowhere –
I am wearing my rubber boots.

In times of stress the rule is:
clean the greenhouse.
Pull up the dead palms. Refresh the gravel.
Somewhere someone is getting
gored by an ox, but not in the greenhouse.

*

The begonias were invalids.
In the fall, I left mine out to toughen.
All winter long I watched them freeze:
ic petal, translucent red –
my murder ritual.

*

At this point: nobody in the greenhouse
except dead bees. Every summer day
they flew in but couldn’t exit –
if they’d asked why I trapped them
I’d have said, “Why do you want to leave?”
DYNAMIC FALLOUT

I like an action lifestyle. Bones I rummage into plants and animals. Time for tumult: I drive reverse into the woods. Death makes a sewing basket of her arms, full of notions – the moon, the glass house –

keen for it, the birds participate, lattice the breaks with blue. I braid between adjacent rooms, squeeze beneath the cemetery. My tongue’s a root. It’s sifting down. To file in, slide through.
GLAMOROUS LOVE GOD

You have a mink cape
the snowcaps fold
diligently into rock pools
someplace tropical.
I hear, in the bedroom
on the coast, you break,
get caught in rust, tear out
the back of an old dress –
the dress flaps open.
Tonight’s a glittering
coin toss. Garlanded trash
the flood zone scrapes,
cuts – “I want, I want,” –
thus you proceed to grace
the abandoned beach.
THE PASSENGER

We made a water landing. The woman next to me glinted in the light – so did the other passengers – as she pulled down her luggage overhead. I watched from the exit mouth while everybody pushed into the river. Then I swam for shore where the passengers became a single giant: she strode through tall grass. She made a furrow and I followed in it.

“I’m following an echo,” I thought, “a time path.” The furrow became trench-like. Water hit my heels, and ran ahead of me. Entering a gully with mud walls, I walked in shallows till the gully opened, pouring out onto a vast, cracked rock: the rock was what I couldn’t see beyond.
IT ISN’T EASY TO LEAVE FOR THE SEASHORE

There I meet a friend – we eat dinner in a restaurant. Waiters in white aprons, the beach flashing beyond the plate glass – “It’s low tide,” she tells me. “Waves in exile. The ocean drags its feet.” I mention that I’m eroding but she says to forget stories of madness, that when Venus was born from a shell all the salt cracked off her body. We touch hands and I point to a cut where what’s picked at remains. “What flies out?” she asks. I can’t distinguish.

In the powder room, an arrangement of exotic flowers with thick petals which I break one by one until the flowers are all stalks. In hours like this – stasis, drawbacks – it’s an adventure to find a birthplace: the beach is blue, the tide reveals black daggers in the mussel beds.
SHIP’S LOG

Roses, silence, trees we’d kept indoors all winter wheeled outside, the thickening of things over the deck trellis – new growth encroaches. None of us feel safe. When I began to turn the ship onto her proper course, questions fled past like fish in air anxious to return into their element. Now memory becomes a floor, swept, me rooting through the dustpan – rooting through an unhealed wound. Rolling towards, rolling away, the fact remains: we’re headed for the confines of the earth.
A crew stowed away:
a synchronized swim team.
One starless night they dove overboard to practice
their routine, which involved the ship as axis to
a bioluminescent wheel – they streamed sargasso grass
and orbited. “Who are these people,” I thought,
watching them groom the glow off of each other
back on deck: all of a sort, same height, broad shoulders,
excellent posture. They slept below
in artful configurations. I waited up.

*  
Fog in the morning. The whole sea, sky: gone.
The team changed into violet costumes
and I saw them, apparitions
smoking breakfast cigarettes lounged out on deck or
drinking coffee in high rigging –
“What have I adjusted to,” I wondered.
I found the stern and leaned over the transom:
water we cut rushed away behind and disappeared
but: silver motion, patterns underwater –
tiny fish were seething and unseething.

*  
After dinner I asked if I could see
this one particular, famed performance piece?
They folded napkins, stacked the dishes, left
in separate directions, stooped under the low beams.
I washed up alone.

Within the hour
a gong rang out on deck. I climbed above:
they balanced on the port-side rail at even intervals,
arms stretched, swimsuits alive with moon –
I’d arrived, they sensed.
BIRD STORY

In the story where the woman is a nest expert, she memorizes nests. She models nests and builds specific nests that replicate exactly nests by rare birds, weird architects. She makes her last nest. This one’s a puzzle: how to pitch each twist and branch so that the captive, who won’t build in a cage, won’t lay in strange space, will set her eggs in there.

Two eggs in the end, lightweight and almost larger than the nest mouth, wedged inside. They never hatch. Months pass until the moment when, as if in exchange for something else, the woman walks the nest to the field’s edge and leaves it.
PERIPHERY

after Antonia Pozzi

I fight with everything I see –
kick it towards a ditch, throw it into a wall.
Beyond the wall, deep bowls blend up into peaks.
I’m afraid of what decides to rest –
teeth buried in the ice without a jawbone, bullets
in old rocks and trunks. What shines and snaps out,
disconnected in bare fields? A portion I wait for:
wet breath off the mountain that undresses,
in the spring, a body, thawing –
my body’s an interior with rhythm, and the rhythm
floats the distance smoke floats before dying
on the marsh. It says, “that old path.”
It says, “that barricade against the wind –
its surface adds a false roof above the chasm.”
BIRTHDAY PARTY

We are wearing grey robes in a full-blown rose garden.
Half the tunes played intersect other tunes played
on farther-off pavilions.

I only hope a treat’s in store for me:
treat green as a jewel bug and dangerous.

We discuss the explorer’s club:
“T’m not sure. I like to climb, but I don’t go below.”
“I’m the exact opposite.”

I try to recall a switching in my body.
A switching in my body when we all know
veins run the same way, blue towards arteries.

A peacock eats the sun.
At night, there will be dancing –

The pavilion at the heart, lit with lamps, almost on fire.
We put on costumes.
“I dance around my costume.”
“I dance inside my costume, since it’s also me.”

Faces in the trees of climbers,
and their laughs are building up a dome around the party.
Also the glow of people beneath trees
promising to catch the climbers –
catch them, take them underground.
WHISTLE OF GO-BETWEENS

I’m not going to any party or any sacred place. I’m going where the hundred-year-old woods lean up over the active dead. This rock in the creek is a heart rock, so is this one –
caroming vessels. When I obscure the image – cannons flattened under fallen trees, thousands of nights accrued – old noise instructs the open darkness: racks of fetters chime, the squadron

hoods their prisoners in the blank wait-out where breath sounds loudest. I’m the pillar where their heads are shoved, and I’m a glint through the eye slits, a hot gem buzzing in the hall of masks.
IN THE CAVE SYSTEM

The caves got smaller.
Rock walls
could not accommodate
the whole of me,
my heart held out
in a dry chamber,
light shut.

Heart on your own
in the mountain,
take on magma, take on
the earth’s core fulcrum,
pick up a beat
from the bear-brushed
cave floor, sluice
of groundwater.

A hunter in hunger
can push past
curtains of rock.
I carry the dark
in safekeeping.
SPECTRA

We walk quick to the Nocturnal House. The animals live in a wrap-around understory closed to us by tall glass panels which we rush up to and touch. Blurs in the larger blanket of display trees. A secret half-brook runs across pebbles, then siphons through a pipe at the jungle wall. “I’m interested in power,” she says, and do I learn her and unlearn her both at once? She’s nodding her crazed hat, the animal’s wild body. Hands full: a bird flies down her wrist, a blue fox fades against her thumb. Night-in-a-ring, night on time-looped repeat – here’s a howl followed by insect-lull. “I’m interested in jungle sounds,” I say to prove I’m here.
ZENITH OF NIGHT

High point of sleep. “Tension,” she says. “Everyone is gritting their teeth right now against the safety of the pillow.” I’m amazed at how the shutters, drawn in every window, create a uniform.

She and I build a fire in a corner where two alleys cross and end. A fire on dry ground made of trash we’ve picked up. “Help the day up,” she says, though to me that’s not what we’re doing. We’re feeding ruin right back into light itself. We’re the arc-half of the self-devouring snake. Fire as tail-in-mouth.

The witch sits quiet in the heat. The witch is at home. When, on a window overhead, a strip of red and half a sentence, I stand up to hear: “and torn,” someone says. “Completely torn apart.”
EARTH SEEN FROM SPACE

Here’s the spaceman. He’s got his heartbeats printed on his chest so we can observe them via webcam. “As you were,” he says to Earth. We’re a long distance call, but he gets through. A one-way mirror trimmed with gold, and the runners in the park: what do they know? Winter night, everybody’s lit up with reflective tape. Duos, trios – a solo runner dips behind a grass bank, then curves back into orbit.
HOW TO DESCEND

Wild woods. I'm filling in a hole – the burial hole.

In the static of distance below ground, I feel for your hand. We walk out of the cave to see one of us has been pierced, willing to take the strangest gift. You send me a link: a golden woman dips her body in a crater lake.

I find my way to the taste of collapse, scoop red seeds from the dirt – red I crush between my fingers, stained, mouth stained where I've painted a nest of tangled branches.
THE FORCE OF A WIDE FIELD

This time, synching hot lips with a voice in the garden:
“‘I’ve proved something. I’m proud to prove it.’
The way forward’s marked in blue. I reach a gate
and rest my hand against the gatepost –
one young robin fallen from the nest and prone,
a measurement of age, how formed things are.

Kiss up against the gatepost, cherry
in full green – I’ll pocket unripe fruit, depart and promise
to arrive elsewhere. What a skull means in the grass
(blown apart). A dance comes drumming up from underfoot.
WHAT MADE THIS CAVE

Hundred-thousand-year-old perforations underground, hot, intertwining through the multi-storied basement. “What’s it like to be a record of the times?”

I ask the island. I also ask myself. The colored pebbles at the center pestle down into a disappearance. Disappearance means invisibly: forms stitch into air, earth, ground underfoot and inhaled daily.

“Hello proud frequencies,” I say, “I’m looking at you though I don’t know if you’re there,” and, “I can’t see you but I’d like to string you on a wire among plastic beads.”
PINK LIGHT GOES BERZERK

Here’s what we do in the kingdom:  
Zeus is the leader – “Zeus” is my codename. 
In the park at the heart of the island there’s 
a lagoon, merfolk, skull-sized diamonds. 
The viceroy (“Sycorax”) 
perfumes the valley with complex madrigals. 
I have a small ache in my tooth 
which evaporates if I wink. Otherwise 
everything is fine. Forecast: sun showers. 
Menu: love feast. Prophecy of island time: 
the union of pleasure and pain 
results in a touchdown.
WHO SAYS THE ABSENCE OF A WITCH INVALIDATES HIS SPELL?
-Emily Dickinson

I pop out in an unknown neighborhood:
stone driveways getting lapped up in the sun
and sucked into garages.
Grass here is delicate and dotted
with azaleas in clumps. One house is rustling.
It has a low roof, picture windows,
no ornament. It does have plant groups:
hostas and a bamboo zone.
Suspecting emptiness, I run up to the house.
I touch its red door and its panes.
Inside, all is in shadow except
the pattern where the curtains meet the glass.
DEAR BIRD OF PARADISE

I see you, palpitating jewel-fleck
in green heat. I’d like to put you in my chest
between my lungs.

*

A picture window overlooks a landscape. Dusk.
“No bird of paradise,” I say,
standing by the window till the sun is gone.

Along a tree-lined road nearby are nightingales –
(each tree has a bird in its head, protector.)
Fireflies have cast another net of lights
among the leaves.

*

For you, I do the dance of veils: each veil
is brighter than the last. The final veil
has made me disappear.
PERIPHERIES
{
variations on “Periferia”, by Antonia Pozzi

Lightning arms the evening
and your red outside
has no inside,
has no echo.

We put two cigarettes
in a puddle. Your laugh
gets caught between blades.

In a little while
factory lights go out.
Factory sirens sound.
People tear thin holes
through the fog veil
they encounter, going home.

There’s a pile of dark beams
in the mud.
Silence weighs with us
as with unfinished houses.
There’s no trance like your trance
to hold my trance:

I’m thinking about caves
while watching clouds,

factory vapor
people run through at night
with swords, their bodies
cutting ribbons.

Here is another darkened mountain.
Silence cracks a cavern between
houses – that is, you and me
in the mud around this lamppost.
As before, on earth, 
storms surge. 
I'll smoke with you: 

these embers are our god eyes, 
light around our mouths, 
then the steam 
of dying fire. 

I think 
in the same position every day. 

What’s stacked against us? 
Silence. Our materials. 
The weight at the edge 
of what we’ve built, 
the light we shine on it.
You are out of the cave.  
Let’s go into town.  
Today and every day  
if we were a chain  
I’d climb over us.  

Some glint in the mud  
is a kernel  
where you drop your smoke.  
I drop my smoke –  

The town’s a-clang; it’s sunset  
and we cut our way through  
dust with hot knives.  

I hear you:  
you have made a hallway.  
You are made of space.  
I understand  
our house is not yet finished.
West of my house,
the factory building.
The attack of sunset over it.
People coming out at six
on cellphones
get into their trucks:

I’m right across the street.
There’s no fog.

Somehow you are here,
alive, and gathering —
were you lost?
Our call got disconnected
but your laugh happens
now, and opens.

Whatever space I think about
belongs to you.
I build a new home
on the edge of what exists —
a double home.
Someone’s leaving:
one of us – or can we both keep
standing here?

Spring in old mud.
The distance clots.
I have an interlude
I jump inside:

Coals make a Z in space:
heartbeats. You laugh
a laugh I’ve seen before.
Its red resumes, a raw material.
You build a factory and say,
“People exist. Silence assumes.”

A stone house, empty, open:
“What waits with us?”
“A place to exit into at the edge.”
Notes

Antonia Pozzi (1912 – 1938) was an Italian poet, scholar, teacher and mountain climber. She lived between Pasturo, a village in the Italian Alps, and Milan, where she studied literature and philosophy. Pozzi wrote over three hundred poems, which she often circulated among her friends in the form of letters, or notes slipped into pockets. Fascist rule made publication of Pozzi’s work impossible during her lifetime; in 1989, the first complete, uncensored edition of her collected poems, Parole, became available. Pozzi is now hailed as an Emily Dickinson of Italian poetry. (Antonia Pozzi, Lieve Offerta: Poesie e Prose, edited by Alessandra Cenni and Silvio Raffo, Bietti Editions, 2012.)

pg. 2, 3
“Thirst” is a close translation of Pozzi’s poem “Sete”, which she wrote on April 28th, 1937 (Pozzi dated most of her poems). On the same day, Pozzi wrote the poem “Brughiera”. “Heath” came out of the process of translating “Brughiera”: after many attempts, I arrived at a poem that was not a direct translation but still inhabited the landscape of Pozzi’s original.

pg. 13, 25, 38
Pozzi wrote three poems with (almost) the same title: “Periferia” on January 19th, 1936, “Periferia in Aprile” on April 24th, 1937, and “Periferia” on January 21st, 1938. In an attempt to get inside the edge that Pozzi kept revisiting, I tried translating all three of these poems at the same time. The two poems titled “Periphery” resulted from this experiment. The final sequence, “Peripheries”, riffs on Pozzi’s first “Periferia” six times.

pg. 22
“Ship’s Log” borrows a line from Pozzi’s poem “Approdo” (January 12th, 1936). She writes, “Non andiamo ai confini di una terra?” – “Are we not going to the confines of an earth?”

pg. 36
The poem takes its title from a poem written by Emily Dickinson on an envelope. (Emily Dickinson, The Gorgeous Nothings, edited by Marta Werner and Jen Bervin, New Directions/Christine Burgin Books, 2013.)