

A Last Word

*An evocation from Alice Benessia's photographic series "Alla Terra"*

the newborn opens his eyes  
to the light;

there are no words  
for the laughing  
wonder of four fingers,  
one hand,  
a bassinet.

Later  
there will come a vaulted  
expectation  
and a chair  
where light is seated  
awaiting darkness  
where knowledge awaits wisdom  
where an unseen man awaits  
her touch.

How can I countenance  
the fearful grief  
of her symmetry,  
of seeing being seen  
and still, not seeing,  
of letting go of holding?

How can I turn your head?  
How can I cock my own?

I could be happy just skittling  
like a spindly branch  
over the cobbles.  
And here, at just this angle,  
at just this height the dog in me  
wags his tail.  
He can see  
between the ballustrades a river,  
between the mannikins  
a wind-chime of legs.

Piss on it - the wall - just for relief,  
and to see the stone grimace, helplessly.  
at my happiness. Beyond  
the stones, the trees hedge in;

this side, the sky opens

where trees lean together,  
speaking softly  
to the wind.

No words  
are sufficient.

A wrinkled stone cupping  
rainfall on a hot day:  
an offering

by the waters from the mountain,  
by the dark and empty shelves  
of all the trees we have sacrificed  
for all we know, she wept.  
In the library of what is lost  
when all is gained,  
I lay down and dreamed  
for thee scion.

The old one  
closes her eyes  
to the light;  
there are no words  
sufficient for this soft shawl  
of departing.

I want to come with you.  
There is a path by the wall  
to the bleak and beautiful  
peaks of the bright and bitter gods,  
the eroticism of ice-clefts,  
the lovely dendrites  
of their unthinking being.

But not yet, not yet.  
I do not wish at my death  
to say I *was* here, passed by  
saw this and that: a tree, a rock,  
a baby, a poem, an observation here,  
an explanation there.

I want to declare, yes,  
yes, I do, in sickness and in health  
that I overstayed my welcome,  
that I fell topsy-turvy  
into the toppled world's embrace,

and by my last breath spoke:  
I *am* here.