

FIVE POEMS

CHRISTIAN GULLETTE

Blaze

Mulholland burns. Getty nudes
stand sentinel in ash.

Marie Antoinette's porcelain
in jeopardy a second time.

What a shame to watch
her lover's pillow burn.

From the hilltop museum,
it's difficult to tell
the city from plywood empire
backed by buttresses.

I'm thinking about us,
how easily it could all become smoke.

I tell you about the Watteau
with the lovers, the *innamorati*
who wear no masks. They're enchanted
by a guitar.

The Vessel

Hudson Yards, Manhattan

People pose on eighty landings,
a copper honeycomb.

A two hundred-million-dollar sculpture
above West Side Rails.

I watched a 70s porn where men cruise
those weedy lots
now penthouses for oligarchs.

On the old piers, guys pinned name tags
to their shirts, in case they fell
through rotten boards and drowned,
no family to claim them.

New York City,
my first crush.

I've been away too long to live here again.

Maybe I'm just as gone
as the old neighborhood.

It's magic hour.
A handsome stranger takes a selfie.

Balloon Apocalypse

Based on an online report

18,000 pieces of balloon waste
litter the Great Lakes,
some with handwritten notes
from a Kansas elementary school—

I can see how those dreams
would look like food to seabirds.

At the Party Store, my little sister's job
was attaching mylar letters
to a helium cannister's black rubber beak.
Consonants would spin in the wind
spelling dissonant greetings.
There isn't any logic
why my parents release balloons
on the anniversary
of my brother's death. If a balloon goes up,
it comes down.

Seahorse with Cotton Swab

after a YouTube video

I snip clear rings
of a six-pack of tonic, swab
coffee table edges with a Q-tip
to get the crumbs out.

There must be a saint who died this way,
trying to polish
the inside of a wave.

New Year's Day,
and the world is still unhealable.

This Q-tip may end up
in a viral video,
a seahorse clinging to it.

As the composition's
tallest element,
the Q-tip should represent heaven.

City Bees

People buy artisanal honey
near the rainbow crosswalk.

Men are all working on balance
inside a gym.

I translate a Swedish cookbook that says
we should eat for Wellness.

If you don't use new vocabulary
at least three times, it vanishes.

In the Castro, there are few reminders
of those lost to AIDS—
a shuttered funeral home,
a forgotten legacy slated
for condos. Lamp posts plastered
with party posters
of boys in jockstraps.
When I was young,
I feared I'd grow up and never
be touched.

Christian Gullette's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in The Yale Review, Kenyon Review, New England Review, and other journals. He serves as the editor-in-chief of The Cortland Review.



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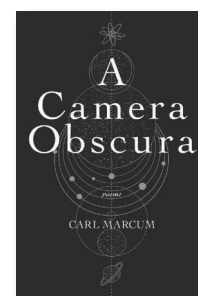
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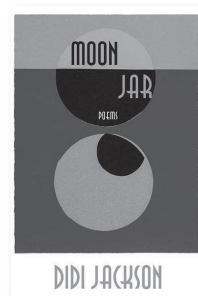
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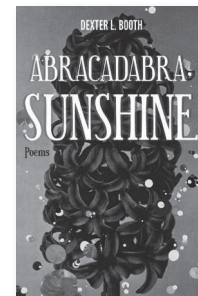
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