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# The Lives We Invite to Flower among Us Flower beyond Us

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# The Lives We Invite To Flower Among Us Flower Beyond Us · *Wendy Battin*

*For just as a wild animal, if it shall have escaped and thus recovered its natural liberty, is no longer the property of its captor, so also the sea may recover its possession of the shore.*

—Hugo Grotius

So just as that wild animal, the sea,  
is never in our midst, is constantly  
our border, so also  
a leopard, even in a zoo  
escapes us. He prowls  
all our city's avenues by pacing  
cage corner to corner, even  
when we are most vigilant.

Set him free on a beach.  
A body in a halo of senses,  
he moves on the sand like water. The highest  
wave casts down the shore like a spotted cat.  
Nothing, our oldest lesson save one,  
nothing is harder than water. The cat  
on flat beach, the cat with no tree,  
no ledge, as if caged,  
cannot contain himself.

So also the thought containing the cat,  
set in motion in a woman's  
mind, a word  
in a halo of sense. She makes  
the leopard dark avenues  
into the city of men, and then  
she makes the seventh wave,  
ending in foam still short  
of the body poured out on the sand.  
But even when she is

most circumspect, her mind  
cannot contain itself, as a vase  
may hold a flower but may not hold  
itself. She loses the word  
that strokes her into sense, that moving  
cage and comfort.

The cat escapes  
into the oldest lesson: no thing  
is more yielding than water.

The woman rests  
her mind in her body in  
a halo of sense,  
as if she were the sea,  
and continent.