1988

Letter Via Stars

Robin Behn
and ah’s from those of us who glimpse her oh-so-recently tossed hair and think of the possible poses in which he tossed it, no doubt entering his name upon the deepest ledger of her body where it would count, or so we think she must have told him as she bent above him saying now yes now and he digs like a mole for the root

he thinks he left in her, and makes their small boat rock, nearly uproot the anchor. On the prow the lady remains a tighetlipped hero. The boat tosses with their motions and the lady bends like the stirrer in the drink the man just bought the woman. It’s possible they’ll go on like this. Probably the wooden lady will stay mute. Tomorrow they’ll sail on, anchor, do what’s called love and then enter

—enter what? —a harbor bar? the “world”? with the same heroic motions. At each watering-place along their watery route, she’ll bend and make her entrance through his proscenium wood arm. See, their bodies say, how love’s nightliness is possible?

LETTER VIA STARS

How hard it must have been for you — no roof, no body overhead — how hard to learn to count by counting stars.

And how hard it will be when you outlive them all, since they were born, and so have life-spans, star-spans. So do the whirls born in different hemispheres — one like sand, one like black earth —

who would have been your parents. I am writing for us both, you know that.
I think that you are going to be a fine cartographer, how else could we have found you in each other?

Last night, he taught me, your almost-father, if I tie a string to Orion’s right shoulder
and follow to its end in the steady wind that rises when the stars put on their names and sweep forward to be counted,

I will see an eddy of snow, a faint balloon. I think it is the galaxy
where certain children go to live out their first lives;
it’s full of smaller pinwheels and a sweet wind to wheel them so the ones who have no lungs

can use instead the breath of the world— the big world, the forgiving one.

QUINTET FOR FLUTE AND STRINGS

For years I’ve been sad over somebody you didn’t know, somebody who walked the earth while you did, but so what. Today you gave me a little piece of music you have written for the flute— the flute I learned to play so long before the angel was given his assignment to come down and uproot the garden of my heart— and when I looked at it I saw