Hanging the Pictures

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.2685
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Every day I hang a different picture. They are mostly the same—Vermeer’s girl in blue turban—a woman, clothed or not, looks from the matte into distance, the first time knowing her name.

What holds together or binds, syllables roll on the tongue. No matter how late, how ordinary or not, the given covers the rapt body, wine-colored dress—Dolce—lowered into light.

Figures assume a shape she has always practised, cat and cricket shut out where sleep cannot touch them. The other night, good luck in the house, I killed a cricket, the second one got away.

The left-handed woman whose thought is awash on my wall, and the tree that is always a woman held in the storm’s wake, a sky not her own and larger: they are the same white body of the charcoal nude who brings back the strait and the water’s precision, gradually louder, lapping ashore. I drive two nails into wood to hang her. On the floor Modigliani’s red-haired woman falls forward into the room’s frame and a black leap I recognize but cannot stop from singing.