Letter to Rilke

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Recommended Citation
Available at: https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.6448

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JEANNE LEVASSEUR

Letter to Rilke

I don’t know how to tell you this, but a child, let’s say a girl of nine, knows how to possess solitude perfectly. She stands at the little yard’s edge as if it were a prairie, the declining sun setting red angles of geometry on her forehead, lashes curved and drawn on her cheek with a compass, her whole body mapped.

When she stands at the hutch of pine and hay, a rabbit eats from her hand and she is patient as stone. Remember the small hands of children, how, in combing your hair, they pulled as if on reins and your head moved, dumb and grateful as a beast’s.

Sometimes the sun’s flush lies cupped on the horizon, and she stands in the midst of her prairie, eternity unconcernedly wide. Her small hands braid my hair in a buzz of sunlight. Each loop Infinity. Proof, you say, we haven’t lost yet, that god is always arriving.