

Flecks of Mud

when molly dear was ecstasy I met you on the shaded quad of Bouton Hall / and sailed / we sailed /oh sailed the barque to bed

you were my Baudelaire Girl / star of my eyes and yours a serpent green with flecks of mud that I lapped up

love's season
between the quernstones

and your brows plucked like the Arc de Triomphe;
you were always reading the Symbolists / chasing flowers forged in mineral and gold in my black cloak

chasing New England's cross-bone drifts
love's season our wayward rhetoric

the college founded as an Academy for girls in 1803 / and now all the birds and clocks turn back / now all the freshman burn like Annabel Lee

serpent green
with flecks of mud that I lap up

John Singer Sargent's "The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit"

Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA

in the Art of the Americas wing
the herons walk wearily along / one by one
guards stand sentinel not seeing
the distinction between inside and outside break down

it is the same feeling I have when invited into the foyer of the family's Paris apartment;
the Boit daughters cast adrift, cramped and windowless
four corners and a void and the moonlit furrows of their pinafores.
In the great shadowed room on Avenue de Friedland

I am too far away to talk, too indistinct
and sit in half-night wringing drama from the color white;
I watch and wait for herons walking wearily along / to catch a crab
like rowers lost among

“Mansard Roof”

Cape Ann Museum, Gloucester, MA

Dressed in layers of lonely Hopper blue they set up easels in my backyard.
They come to Cape Ann from Boston or the banks of the Hudson to chase rope trim
in coastal sunlight
a chilly vision of two pale yellow awnings billowing in the breeze—
balustrades, shutters, pointed dormers
like a circus calliope my house in Rocky Neck
is windswept with clumsy hands;
all the eyes breaking cornices, trawling the backyard in watercolor
and I cannot find my Mansard roof
or the sun on telegraph wires,
I cannot see the inner harbor
or eat my bony songbird
until I pull the sickly awnings down

The Lepidopterist (Mad Song)

I never licked
a stamp on Seneca St
in Ithaca
the business of butterflies
had me begging the skies
like Tom o' Bedlam
the love of fine lines
and blue hues
started when I was a knickerbocker boy
in a sailor's cap
and so I fled
the Bolsheviks on wings
folios of scale row mappings
and markings
Melissa Blue
curios
the mystery of mimicry
I never licked
a stamp on Seneca St
in Ithaca
the business of butterflies
had me stark and dirty toed
like Mad Maudlin searching
for her Tom o' Bedlam