

Penumbra

Stephanie Heit

Abstract

Do bodies create a city? Do minds create a city? How does movement shape geography? How does fragility alter architecture? This ekphrastic piece was created inside a structured movement improvisation. I invented a city, in the tradition of Italo Calvino, to contain the work influenced by my dance partner, who was experiencing extreme mind states of psychosis, and my own experiences with bipolar disorder.

the city stands
out the window
dreaming a night
with no voices
X's on a map
made of water
islands of skin

we reach the place hands die from too little touch

we help each other
down the train steps
into the city we shape
in the slow gestures
of a person adjusting
to too much light
the roads are breath sounds
we talk in errant time signatures
she unloosens her hair
shortens the distance
between where we are going
she visions Belgrade
blueprint for a peninsula

I have a ticket for something we forgot
city halflit & tired on a Friday
it is always Friday
we wear black to mourn
the other week days
streetlights numbered houses
dresses build themselves into turrets
we make silences except

I remember the ease of bodies before words

I hold the afternoon
white knuckled she
slips the dress
over geography
travelled by the careful
arrangement of water bottles
nightgown echo doorknob sister

I no longer find her with words

we don't need architecture

the city temporary

glass rock & metatarsal

always *the sea*

your hand

some kind of red

she sleeps in tourist office maps

latitude imprints face

the morning

she asks the color

we gave gravity

I feel her
trapped in
the city after
zip code washed
drunken by tides
rose petals birdsong
the bodies we touch for arrival
ghosts
the line torn from my notebook
we enter backs to the outside
disappeared

I send her a confidential message
where are you?
the city moves into the sea
quicksand shell invertebrate
soft insides of buildings lose foundation
yellow ball dry erase board static

Chopin ends the day in e minor

lines collapse
ceilings give weight to floors
we push the sky
with our spines
wish between vertebrae
a city less broken
where streetlights glow
instead of this dark mistaken for night
here stars deliver messages
a thousand years overdue
we breathe out the windows
light someone not yet arrived
will understand

About the author

Stephanie Heit is an artist who engages with herself and the world through multiple creative practices: movement as a dancer and massage therapist and words as a poet and teacher. She received a MFA in Writing and Poetics from Naropa University. Her work most recently appeared or is forthcoming in *Midwestern Gothic*, *Nerve Lantern*, *Spoon Knife Anthology*, *Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance*, and *QDA: A Queer Disability Anthology*. For more of her writing visit: <https://independent.academia.edu/StephanieHeit>