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A Woman Framed

Mary Ann Allison

Tonight,
a hot summer night,
tonight: late, quieter, hot; a Greenpoint summer night;
(a point in time and in eternity);

tonight,

I saw a real life;
a still life; a woman her face only
framed in the window
of an ugly building

her face, utterly

still;
fixed in time; but oddly (or resonantly, not)

a woman already

fixed in my mind: her face, all lines and planes,
endurance,
fixed,
not moving, but

looking out
looking out
looking out on a

dark street.

Few passing by.

Well, me... and,

(The summer heat a
comforting blanket;
probably too hot and, simultaneously,
not hot enough (in a minute or two)
for violence.) two teenagers with bikes and
wilted attitude.

It is her face that stays with me,
that lights my way home,
that disrupts the poem I want to write.

In complete remediation
(and layers of abstraction and knowing),

in complete remediation, I know this woman.

I have seen her in the brush strokes of a great artist.

I have seen her;
I have seen her over and over again.

In complete remediation,

a woman,
this woman, is already in my mind,
in my seeing,
in my heart;

I know her.

I know her. I do not, cannot,
should not, stop.

Whatever would we say to each other? The gulf too large.

(The absurdity of my knocking at the door
and

saying (even if true): you, I have
you, and

seen you,
your pain,
your endurance, and
your looking out;

most important, I have
seen you

in brush strokes;
in brush strokes from a master, who saw you on a thousand streets,
in Brussels (real time),
in Babylon (before his life),
in Brooklyn (after and forever.)

Surely she would (and rightly) call the cops.

And the cops, experienced, cynical,

the cops,

(originally) wanting to do good, would say:

“Lady,

“Lady, what do you think you are doing?

“Lady, where do you live?” “Lady, please show me some ID.”

(“Lady, are you completely nuts? You don’t look particularly dangerous...the worst kind.”)

“Lady, it’s time to go home.”

I have walked on.

In the darkness and heat, Greenpoint glows in from the windows of the third generation Polish, the artists, the students, the merchants, the poor, the new restaurants, the bodegas and

the eternal planes of endurance that refuses to die in spirit
and

looks out through
whatever
windows

are in this time.

And in their own eternity.

I saw a real life;
a still life;

a woman her face only
framed in the window
of an ugly building

and she followed me home and into eternity.

About the author

Mary Ann Allison, Ph.D., is an interdisciplinary scholar at Hofstra University who uses media theory, sociology, and complex systems theory to study the ways in which individuals, communities, and institutions are changing.