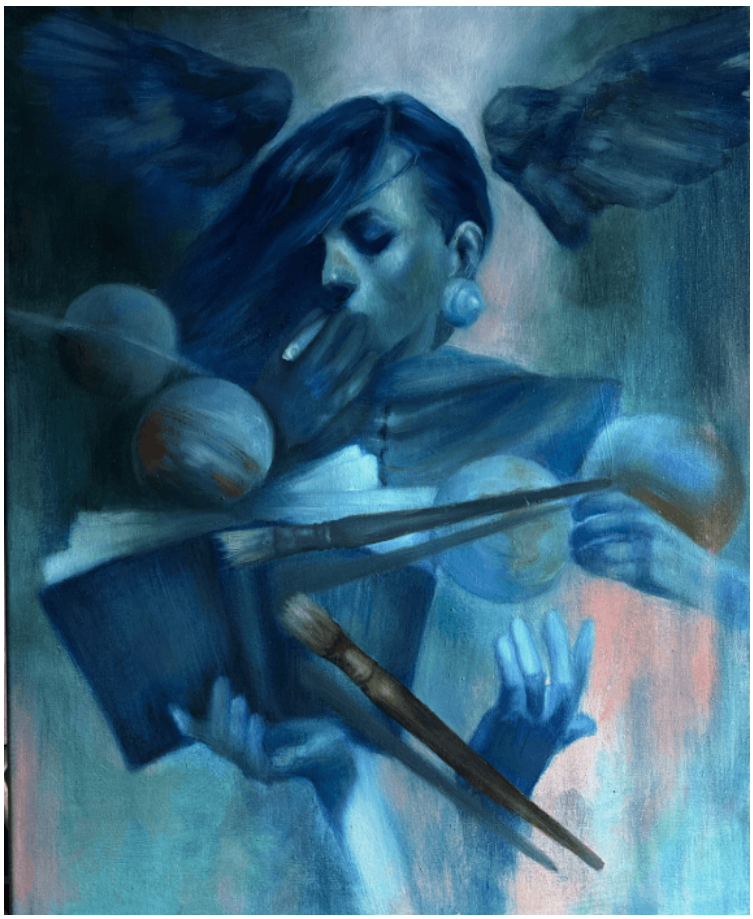
POETRY

bodhidharma

by Ajay Kumar



"Self Portrait" by Stasia Fisher

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the color of the room is a shade of blue
called sleep. i'm waiting beside you
like an oversoaked shirt losing color.

the doctor's rounds lynchpin the wheel
i made long ago in a forgotten cave.

i thought it would halo me but its shadows
on the chalkwhite wall showed nothing
but a swollen, unbearable head.

i cling to the nurse's clipboard like a tick.
somebody sends a word out about the winged
veenas hanging from my bronchioles, about

them lisping into flight. you turn over. my turn:
i cut off my eyelids and they drop like tealeaves
in the boil, moving there like tectonic shadows

on the milkwhite wall. i'll shroud you in an eyelid,
tie it up with a lash like a wish, and take you
away from the ghats of grief. you push me over

but i won't fall asleep. i still make tea the way
you taught me and it still tastes the way i want.

note: according to legends, bodhidharma was a buddhist monk who meditated for nine years inside a cave, gazing at the wall, saying nothing. in the seventh year, he fell asleep. angered, he cut off his eyelids. out of his eyelids emerged the first tea leaves.

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